

Christian writers sometimes fall into an error similar to that of a book on a certain area of ancient history published early in this century. Although the author was a highly trained scholar, thoroughly familiar with the relevant archaeological evidence, his book showed a curious inversion of emphasis. Matters that all specialists in the field would recognize as clearly proven were briefly stated by the author. Wherever their interpretation of various authorities differed sharply, the author would present only one view, but would devote several times as much space to presenting it as he did to the matters that are accepted by all experts in the field. The untrained reader would naturally get the impression that these were the points at which one could be certain, and would not know that equally well-trained scholars took an opposite position, since the data were not sufficient to make a water-tight judgment about the matter. In a few cases absolutely new hypotheses that perhaps had not yet occurred to anyone except the author were presented with such strong assurance and emphasis that the reader would gain the impression that these conclusions were the most certain of all. As a means to stimulate other scholars in the field the book might have had a real value, but as a manual for study by those entering the field or desiring to learn its principal features, it was utterly misleading.

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