

which is exceedingly valuable. I think in my experience it has been of untold value. When you find men to whom every one says you should bow, because of the superiority of their intellect, perhaps the advantage of their opportunities, and the amount of work they have done in any given sphere, and you differ from them, then stop a moment. Possibly you may be right and they may be wrong. How, then, shall you discriminate the judgment of these men of great names? I believe here is one of the most living and incalculably important uses of ecclesiastical history, which is not a mere chronology of events nor a mere philosophy of the life of the Church. It is the setting of living men. Go back to the age in which they lived; study the circumstances of the times; estimate the influences that surrounded them; get at the incentive which urged them to their work; find, if you can, that tendency which gave a bias to their thoughts, and possibly you may discount their mighty thinking in view of that. Certainly the men with whom we have to deal are great men, take any system we will. If we can question their opinion, notwithstanding the majesty of their intellect, the breadth of their opportunity, and the might of their endeavor, then we are released from that deference to them which we owe from a comparison of our littleness with their greatness.

The other thought is this: Go back to the Word of God constantly, as a child, and sit before it and interpret it according to the laws of interpretation in those mysterious rules which are the corollaries of a system, in order to keep you from so understanding the Bible as that you may possibly modify the system. I should like to read the Bible, burying out of conscious memory, if possible, all I ever knew of systematic theology. There is always peril in systematizing, and peculiarly in a sphere where the facts are not all present to the mind of him who is constructing his scheme. The difficulty is that a scheme looks exceedingly like one of the half-ruined temples in the old land. If all its parts are not filled out in due proportion, and if there is a gap for which no stones have been chiselled in the quarry, men are very apt to mix up a little paste and run it into the vacant space. If you try it with the criticism of pointed and tempered steel, you can find which is stone and which is mortar. We are so in love with the system; we are so engaged in bringing out its symmetry, and we are so eager to accomplish its completeness that, when we have no facts, we make them, or we twist the Scripture possibly into a semblance of it. Every man who attempts to construct systematic theology ought to remember that we know only *in part*. We have not all the facts. We never shall make a full system, and it will never be built in all its