Iona School for Ministry

Old Testament

November 5, 2022

Discussion question for Session 1

The writer of DtH was looking back on the history of his people from the situation of exile, retelling the story so as to understand what factors had resulted in their deportation and loss of their land. We are currently looking back on the history of our country from the situation of a crisis in race relations, retelling the story so as to understand what factors have resulted in the systematic inequality that pervades every dimension of American social life. How are these two perspectives on the past similar, and how are they different?

Discussion question for Session 2

One of the implications of the central message of DtH is that although the forms which the covenant community has taken are divinely instituted, they are nevertheless historically relative, based on the criterion of whether they serve to maintain covenant faithfulness in a particular set of historical circumstances. What does this say to churches like ours, which are still organized on the basis of socio-political forms inherited from the Roman Empire, concerning the amazing variety of forms that Christianity is currently taking all over the world? What criteria should we employ to critique as well as learn from these new Christianities?

Discussion question for Session 3

As we have seen, historiography by definition entails the reinterpretation of the past in light of the historian’s own contemporary concerns. For example, the main issue in the Chronicler’s day was the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple, and so he retells Israel’s past in a way that makes the original building of the temple, the precedent for the rebuilt temple, the central and most important event. Every example of historiography reflects the preoccupation of the historian. Does this mean that there are “alternative facts”? What’s the difference between good and bad history writing, with respect to the subjective perspective of the writer?

Session 4 Discussion Questions

What episode from your second reading from Gafney made the strongest impression on you? What is the main point that you would take away from this episode?

What can we learn from Gafney about how we can be intentional about the way our application of biblical texts is related to the interests of some group?