

The 65th Free Church School in Theology, which receives support from the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), met in Carronvale House, Larbert, from 4th to 7th September 2017. It was encouraging this year, that numbers were up on the previous year and as usual there was plenty of warm and joyful fellowship, that included brethren from various churches throughout the United Kingdom, Ireland and The Netherlands.

The School begins with the brethren meeting together for dinner at 06:00pm on the Monday night, and is followed by the first paper of the School at 07:00pm. As 2017 is the year of commemoration of Martin Luther, it was fitting that the first paper was a historical paper on 'Luther the Reformer' by the Rev John W Keddie. Rev Keddie reminded us that Martin Luther was God's man for the times. He was a man of courage. He was a man of conviction. He was a man of prayer. He was a man of the gospel and evangelical religion which he came to embrace with his whole being. He was a man of vast intellect and industry. He believed in the authority of Scripture. He believed in the sovereignty of grace. That we cannot but admire him and thank God that He raised him for the work of reformation. That it stirs us, surely, to cry out to the Lord with great urgency and importunity today for such a man of God for the Reformation of the Church in our land and the western world. And that we are encouraged surely to follow him as he followed Christ. The evening was suitably closed by a time of worship and fellowship.

Each day began with a prayer meeting, followed by a hearty breakfast, which in turn was followed by a time of devotion led by one of the men. Then the morning session began which included either a missionary report or various book reviews, a tea and coffee break and then that morning's theological paper.

The men would then break for lunch, and much theological discussion around the morning's deliberations would take place around the various dining tables. After a short period of free time, which was either spent in walking the grounds of Larbert, visiting the book table provided very kindly by the Evangelical Bookshop Belfast, or spending the time on the 18 hole putt course of Carronvale House, the afternoon session would take place where another paper would be delivered and discussed. Dinner and plenty more of discussion would follow and was enjoyed. In the evening session, the final paper of that day would be given.

Tuesday's missionary report was brought by the Rev Gerald Procee a board member of Come Over and Help Us (COAH), a missionary organisation that aids Churches and Christians in Eastern Europe and Russia. He gave an insight to the brethren of the challenges and encouragements of the church situation in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Tuesday's theological paper was given by the Rev Iain Smith on the Typology of the Tabernacle, a study that helpfully looked at the types found in the Tabernacle that all point to Christ.

Tuesday's afternoon paper was given by the Rev Dr Pieter De Vries, minister of the Restored Reformed Congregations, on an 'Overview of the Church in the Netherlands'. It explained the complex nature of the history of The Netherlands Church situation, which was not dissimilar to the

complexity of the history of the Scottish Church situation, with its various splits and unions over the decades.

Tuesday evening's paper was 'What is Allegory in Galatians 4:22-31?', given by the Rev Murdo Maciver. Mr. Maciver explained, that Galatians 4:22-31 is an allegory of the two dispensations of the one Covenant of Grace, the one perverted into a Christ plus law/works based salvation; the other the true means of salvation through the Gospel; a man is justified by faith alone, no confidence in the flesh; law or works, but looking and trusting and relying on the promises which, in Him are yea and in Him Amen unto the glory of God by us (2 Cor 1:20.).

Wednesday morning's session was spent on a very helpful hour on book reviews, and the theological paper on the 'Pastoral Implications of Marriage and Divorce', by the Rev James I Gracie. This helpful paper managed to create much discussion, comments and questions which carried on into the break.

Wednesday's afternoon session was spent on a business meeting, where all the decisions for subjects and speakers are discussed and decided for the forthcoming School of Theology 2018.

Wednesday's evening paper was given by the Rev Malcolm H Watts on 'The place of Faith in Justification', which was found by the brethren to be a moving, experiential and Christ honouring session. The meetings would come to a close with a time of worship and then the fellowship and discussions would often carry on into the early hours of the next day.

Thursday morning's paper was given by the Rev James MacInnes on the 'Use and Abuse of Digital Media', which focused on social media. It recognised that social media presents a great gospel opportunity - but this must be used wisely so that the message is not compromised by the constraints of the medium. In the providence of God the development of the printing press was key in advancing the Reformation and allowed Luther's writings to be 'retweeted' and 'liked' and 'shared'.

As per usual the School of Theology would close after the Thursday morning's theological paper, when thanks would be given to God for His many mercies, to the staff of Carronvale House for their feeding and looking after the brethren, the committee and the secretary of the School of Theology for all their work in organising the School, and Mr Colin Campbell the manager of Evangelical Bookshop, Belfast.

All the lectures were recorded and can be found by visiting Partick FCC SermonAudio website.

Lord willing the 66th School in Theology is due to take place on 3rd to 6th September 2018 at Carronvale House, Larbert.