

THE SELECTION AND TRAINING OF THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS.

PRINCIPAL MACVICAR, D.D., LL.D.

The selection of men for the Christian ministry is primarily the act of God. Both the call and the title to the sacred office, *in esse*, are from Him. In this sense God alone makes ministers. By the sovereign energy of His spirit He constrains and qualifies men to become His servants as teachers of the truth. It was so in the days of the apostles, and it is so still. "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said: Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work wherunto I have called them."

But it belongs to the Church as an organized body in which the Spirit dwells to seek from her Head the right sort of men, and to discriminate wisely in determining who should be regarded as divinely called. It is unsafe to leave this matter wholly to be decided by the individual, because there are many visionaries and enthusiasts who are ready to obtrude themselves into positions for which they are not qualified, and whose temerity should be restrained by the common sense of others. Hence the Reformed Churches have always exercised this right of restraint in various ways. And it seems to me that to-day the trend of sober religious thought and the clamant needs of the Church and the world demand resolute adherence to this practice. It is an injurious delusion to suppose that any devout person, regardless of capacity and education, is fit to preach the gospel. The teaching and the practice of Christ and his apostles sanction no such thought. They acted upon the principle of selection. He chose twelve, and they also gave very special instructions regarding the choice of those who should be counted worthy to be their associates, and who should afterwards continue their mission. "The things," said Paul to his son Timothy, "which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." And to Titus, another of his co-workers, he gave a more comprehensive summary of the qualifications of head and heart