

tion: "If any man affects this office he should be opposed in his ambitious purposes."

If I deprecate the proposal of the Overture, it is not because I do not put a high estimate upon the office of the Ruling Elder as distinct from that of pastor and teacher. No one has had better opportunities than I of judging of the value of the services they render to the Church. The elect of the membership, they lend both dignity and strength to the Church's deliberations and counsels, and this they do with their relative status as it is at present. Nor are the "Ruling Elders" to be held responsible for starting the agitation on the question at issue. It is ministerial brethren, meaning well undoubtedly, who have raised the question; but I venture to think that in doing so they have not adequately weighed it, nor have they considered the danger of marring the peace of the Church and disturbing the happy relations which for hundreds of years have subsisted between ministers and elders, by insisting that the latter are having their ecclesiastical rights withheld from them.

I have stated that the agitation of this question did not begin with the Elders. I might also state with the utmost confidence that no Elder would for a moment desire to occupy a position in the Church Courts, if his right to do so was open to serious doubt.

I have confined myself to the ecclesiastical aspect of the question, leaving to others to deal with other points of view.

Authorities consulted: Assembly Minutes, Minutes of Westminster Assembly, Records of the House of Lords and the House of Commons of Great Britain during the period of the Westminster Assembly, Books of Discipline of the Church of Scotland, Stewart of Pardovan's Collections and Observations, Hill's Practice in Church of Scotland, Forbes' Digest of Rules and Procedure, Free Church of Scotland, Works of Lightfoot, George Gillespie, Robert Baillie, and Samuel Rutherford.