

Symposium.

WHAT ATTITUDE SHOULD THE CHURCH ASSUME TOWARDS THE LABOUR QUESTION?

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FOR the purposes of this Symposium the Labour Question may be defined as consisting essentially in the conflicts and matters of controversy between working people and their employers. This definition may be defective, but it suggests all that is necessary.

We should gain much in the interests of truth and fair play in considering this and many other problems, were correct views of the constitution and functions of the Church more widely prevalent. Many erroneously look upon the Church as a body of religious teachers and rulers who claim practically unlimited authority; and labourers very commonly blame and censure this hierarchy for heartless indifference to their struggles and grievances. Now, whether these censures are just or otherwise, it is an obvious blunder to regard the clerical fraternity as the Church of God. They are rather the servants of Christ and of the Church for His sake. They are His gift to her along with the oracles and ordinances of God for the gathering and perfecting of the saints. And the saints are chiefly gathered from among the working-

classes. The wealthy, who need follow no occupation except to amuse and enjoy themselves, are a very small minority in the Church. This has always been the case, and is likely to continue so to the end. So that if labourers have serious complaints to make against the Church, they lie mainly against themselves as constituting the vast majority of the members of the body of Christ.

But the mention of this sacred and scriptural name of the Church reminds me of another flagrant misconception as to her nature and functions. She is deemed a sort of nondescript organization which may be used for all purposes secular and sacred. In her most highly developed "Institutional" forms it is alleged that she should take charge of preaching, sacraments, prayer-meetings, saloons, theatres, swimming-baths, billiard-rooms, horse-races and clubs for the discussion of Sociology, Political Economy, etc., etc. This view is gaining ground. It is advocated by Mr. Stead and many similar reformers whose imagination is stronger than their judgment, and who can hardly be counted