

Symposium.

WHAT ATTITUDE SHOULD THE CHURCH ASSUME TOWARDS THE LABOUR QUESTION?

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THE question may be raised whether the Church has any business with the labor question—whether the proper work of the Church does not lie in a totally different sphere. It is often asserted that the Church abdicates its divine mission when it mingles, or even meddles with things purely mundane—that it should strictly confine itself to its vocation as the world's great light-bearer in spiritual things, and leave the control and adjustment of temporal things to men of the world.

Two classes of persons are sure to take this ground—(a) The promoters of doubtful or evil enterprises who instinctively feel that if they are to encounter the Church in their field of operation, it must be as an antagonist; and (b) the timid and narrow within the Church itself. These latter shrink both from effort and from criticism. They desire peace at any price. Many persons are so absorbed in the subjectivities of religion that they lack both the inclination and the ability to form opinions on public questions. They are too timid to utter their opinions even if they had them formed. These, unwittingly

perhaps, join with the world's malefactors in debaring the Church from any participation in the discussion of practical and worldly matters. Neither of these classes is actuated by special regard for the honor of the Church. Their motives are largely selfish and the position they take is quite untenable.

Christianity as a religious system, and the Church as a divine Institute can never be dissociated from the activities of life—nothing that really affects the well-being of mankind can possibly be a matter of indifference to the Church. It cannot afford to perch itself upon an eminence and, with folded hands, serenely look down upon the masses either smarting under oppression or struggling for the right. It must arm itself for the conflict and step to the front in proper effort for the relief of suffering or the redress of wrong. Unquestionably, in its failure to do this, may be found the cause of the much-lamented breach between the church and the laboring classes. If this threatening chasm is to be closed or successfully bridged it can only be by the prompt action of the Church in seeking the masses, studying