

THE JUST PRICE

**THE MINERS' DISTRESS
AND THE COAL PROBLEM**

**AN OUTLINE FOR CHRISTIAN
THOUGHT AND ACTION**

**Submitted to the Christian
Social Council by its Research
Committee**

Prepared by
V. A. DEMANT, B.Litt., B.Sc.

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THE JUST PRICE

**AN OUTLINE OF THE MEDIEVAL
DOCTRINE & AN EXAMINATION OF
ITS POSSIBLE EQUIVALENT TO-DAY**

ESSAYS

**CONTRIBUTED TO THE RESEARCH WORK
OF THE CHRISTIAN SOCIAL COUNCIL**

EDITED BY

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STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT PRESS

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PREFACE

ATTEMPTS to apply or maintain Christian standards in business and industrial organization are continually bringing Christian participants to a point at which they have to choose between a partial renunciation of their principles and the necessity of contracting out of the system altogether. "You cannot live a Christian life within the system," declared one speaker at a conference (1928) on the possibilities of *Christian Action in Modern Social Life*, with an adjective which would be out of place in a formal notice. That conference had been arranged under COPEC auspices, and a report of it appeared in the April (1929) number of *The Review of the Churches*. At the 1929 Conference, arranged by the Research Section of the Christian Social Council inheriting the work of COPEC, in connection with which the following essays are written, we took up the problem at the point where these possibilities appear to reach their limits.

To judge the whole economic structure of Industrialism in the light of Christian social principles (and to value their compatibility with economic solvency) would be grotesquely beyond the powers of a single conference or even

of a year's thought and work. But, as a beginning, we can consider one aspect of the economic structure which raises most of the issues. That is the aspect of Price. For example, the whole future of many industries turns on the question of whether a lowering of price is economically and socially possible. A further example of the incidence of Price to Christian standards is the question of the producer's standard of life and conditions of work. This is involved with the possibility of selling enough at a price these standards demand, and at the same time keeping the concern going. Price therefore raises the main conflict of interests—that between employers and employees and between producers as a whole and the consuming public generally.

Our method is not to attack the problem as a whole, but to consider the doctrine of Price as it was known in the Middle Ages where these clashes of interest either had not arisen or were resolved by a comparatively successful moulding of commercial custom by Christian ethics. We have to consider—and it is a matter which has received scant attention—whether the change from mediæval economy to the economic structure of industrialism was really so revolutionary as to make inevitable the abandonment of moral principles as the standards of economic relationships in the new industrial era. In fact, some economists, notably in Germany, are to-day bringing the mediæval economic practice within their purview, in their discussions of such modern

tendencies as trustification. This Conference started with the realization that it was probably the failure of the Church to apply her sociology to a world flooded with new economic and social factors that has led to the absence of any Christian philosophy in economic life for 300 years; and that, therefore, it is still a very open question whether the idea of the Just Price may not have a message for our age which would cause something of a social miracle.

It is towards an answer to this question, to be worked out by Christian thinkers and those practically involved in industrial and social affairs, that the following essays are published. Neither the Christian Social Council nor its Research Committee assume any responsibility for the views expressed in these essays, for each of which its author is alone responsible.

V. A. D.

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