

ANGLICAN-ORTHODOX RELATIONS AND THE RELIGIOUS REHABILITATION OF THE SOVIET REGIME DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Church-State Relations

It was Christ's coming and his fateful command to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to render also to God the things that are God's, that engendered a distinction between religion and politics. During the Second World War, the debates within the Ministry of Information on the correct approach to the churches, and the trepidation with which it initially dealt with religious issues, plus the inherent caution with which the churches responded, indicated the extent to which church-state relations were an area of immense ambiguity in wartime.

The Ministry of Information was an innovation that existed in shadow from 1935 to 1939. While it is nowhere explicitly stated, the early decision to create a Ministry of Information was clearly a response to the example of Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda. Similarly, the decision to create a « Religions Division » was undoubtedly influenced by indications that religion was integral to Hitler's plans for conquest of the Continent. Worried that there existed a popular distaste in the twentieth century for the admixture of religion and politics, there was concern in Religions Division that religious propaganda could prove counterproductive and even identify Britain with Nazi methods. Nonetheless, the very existence of what was originally called the « Religious Relations Branch » revealed, if not a determination to make use of religious propaganda, a recognition that this was too important an area to neglect. The willing co-operation of the churches with Religions Division was vital to prevent the appearance of a cynical state exercise exploiting religion.

For several months prior to war being declared, Religions Division worked in informal consultation with the leaders of the churches. The work was under the general direction of Mr. Kenneth Maclennan, formerly General Secretary of the Conferences of British