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**How the National Security State became the Crucible:
Ideas of Conscience and the Postwar Moral
Revival, 1943-1950**

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“...the word *conscience* points to a definite reality which in spite of its complexity can and must be described adequately, and the history of the idea of conscience, in spite of the bewildering variety of interpretations it has produced, shows some clear types and definite trends.”

-Paul Tillich, “A Conscience Above Moralism”
(1945)

“At times it appears that the duty to protect the state from enemies and the obligation to respect the conscience of the individual are irreconcilable.”

-G. Bromley Oxnam, “Freedom
of Conscience in the USA”
(1946)

During and just after the Second World War, a cross section of religious and secular communities – the Catholic Church, international lawyers, racially progressive Protestants, New Deal Liberals, Freudian psychoanalysts, and the architects of “Judeo-Christianity” – looked to the conscience optimistically as the locus of a nation-wide moral revival. An editorial published by the *Wall Street Journal* in May of 1945 could be read as this moral revival’s manifesto. The *Journal* called for a new world order founded on a global bill of rights. Rights, the editors argued, ought to be formalized and codified in an international code that resembled the American Constitution. Calls like these, historians have noted, came from many corners of the postwar world.¹ But the *Journal* hastened to make an important addition. Rights ought to be supported by “conscience,” it argued, so that the laws – mere words – were accompanied by a human faculty capable of “judgment between right and wrong.”² Rights rested upon the “people’s will” and the people’s will, in turn, “rest[ed] for motivation on the people’s conscience.” Rights had to be enshrined in constitutions, but consciences were necessary because they gave rights (freedoms *from*) a much-needed gravitas (motivations *to*). “The conscience,” the *Journal* trumpeted, “believes in notions of rights as being right and not merely expedient.”

By 1950, when Republican Senator Margaret Chase Smith made her famous “Declaration of Conscience” – a plea to preserve independent thought in the face of McCarthyism and an indictment of the Truman Administration’s use of “totalitarian techniques” – the optimism

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¹ Sam Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History* 91 (March 2005): 1233-1263.

² “Rights in the New World Order,” *The Wall Street Journal*, May 17, 1945, 6.

invested in conscience's moral power had been replaced with a posture of embattlement.³ Smith's was hardly a voice howling alone in the wilderness. Famous playwright Arthur Miller, withholding names of alleged communist perpetrators from his congressional inquisitors, explained to the House of Un-American Activities Committee in 1956 that, "it is my conscience that will not allow me to name another person." This idea of the embattled conscience, crucial to Miller's career, gained notoriety on silver screens in America when Robert Bolt's *Man for All Seasons* – adopted from the British play that placed a conscience-driven Sir Thomas More against a vile power-brandishing King Henry VIII – won multiple academy awards in 1966. The change in tenor from the *Wall Street Journal* editorial to Smith's declaration (and beyond) raises a pair of historical questions worth considering. First, how did conscience come to emblemize hopes for a moral revival? And why, in a space of just five years, had Americans sundered the link between conscience and moral optimism?

The obvious answer, especially in the case of the second question, is the growth of the Cold War national security state. The national security state, what Michael Hogan has called a "cross of iron" and what Melvyn Leffler has dubbed a "preponderance of power," was taking its initial, sinuous form in the late 1940s.⁴ In 1947, the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) held a nine-day hearing on Communism's alleged infiltration of Hollywood; that year too, congress passed the National Security Act, merging the Department of War and the Department of the Navy into the National Military Establishment and creating the

³ *We Shall Be Heard: Women Speakers in America, 1928-Present*, ed. Patricia Scileppi Kennedy and Gloria Hartmann O'Shields (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1983): 299-309.

⁴ Michael Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1993).

Secretary of Defense to oversee the new operations. Joseph McCarthy was on the verge of becoming a household name; and 1947 also witnessed the birth of the Central Intelligence Agency. It would seem at first blush that Cold War state growth crushed the free conscience the same way that a pile of stones crushed the chest of Giles Corey, the character in Arthur Miller's *Crucible* who refused to name names during witch hunts of an earlier era. But the extension of state power, *tout court*, does not explain the passion of Margaret Chase Smith's "Declaration of Conscience." It was not inevitable that Smith would see the state as a leviathan. Smith could have construed the national security state as the perpetuator of the postwar moral revival. Why, then, did she not? This essay shows that Smith had an ideological kinship with many prominent American Protestants who had already offered such critiques many times over. The appearance of the national security state, this essay shows, marked the failure of American Protestantism's postwar march to make the American social contract honor a theology of conscience that asserted conscience to be radically individual and radically transcendent. Before 1947, Protestants had denounced definitions of conscience like the one offered by the *Wall Street Journal* (and the constituencies noted above) as too integrated with temporal politics, too immanent for a meeting with the divine, and too collective to enable the individual's quest for salvation. By the time Smith took to the Senate floor, such evangelism had paid off. The legitimacy of Cold War power was dead on arrival; it was identified and denounced by Protestants as a threat to free consciences before the Truman Administration's extensions in 1947.

Before this essay's end result, however, it suggests that with an examination of the ideas and rituals of conscience, historians can reinterpret the immediate legacy of the Second World War as a moral revival that, like the *Wall Street* editorial, took states to be emancipators and

consciences to be motivators. Historians have produced several compelling studies demonstrating that World War II had a transformative impact on American society. The war marked the diffusion of rights language and human rights-driven politics (Mary Dudziak, Martha Biondi, Elizabeth Bogwardt, Tomiko Brown-Nagen); the springtime of liberal religion, liberal spirituality, and the spread of religious ecumenism (Matthew Hedstrom, David Hollinger, Kevin Schultz, James McCartin); the acceleration of mass production and the ascendancy of Keynesian-driven consumerism (Alan Brinkley, Lizabeth Cohen); and the genesis of political and religious right (Kim Phillips-Fien, Darren Dochuck, Elizabeth Fones-Wolf).⁵ This essay builds on this historiography and demonstrates that on the registers of politics, law, religious ritual, and ideas, the Second World War produced a moral revival. After Nazism and the holocaust, moral revivalists made the case that America's citizens needed to balance individual autonomy with duty to the democratic state. It was, as I show in Part II, a revival of the type of morality well suited for a mid-twentieth century understanding of democracy. By using the conscience to encourage a balance of autonomy and democratic solidarity, the moral revival promised to check "totalitarian" governance as it produced a polity cohesive enough to resist atomization.

⁵ On rights, see, See Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University, 2000); Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle For Rights in Postwar New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2003); Tomiko Brown-Nagin, *Courage to Dissent: Atlanta and the Long History of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Elizabeth Bogwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); on ecumenism, spirituality, and religious liberalism see, Kevin Schultz, *Tri-Faith America: How Postwar Catholics and Jews Held America to its Protestant Promise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Jim McCartin, *Prayers of the Faithful: The Shifting Spiritual Life of American Catholics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); David Hollinger, "After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Ecumenical Protestantism and the Modern American Encounter with Diversity," *Journal of American History* 109 (June 2011): 21-48. On the slow but concerted rise of the right, see, Darren Dochuck, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free-Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-1960* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Kim Phillips-Fien *Invisible Hands: The Businessman's Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). On the victory of Kenseyian-driven consumerism, see Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Knopf, 1995); Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Modern America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

This essay unfolds in three sections. In part I, I identify the components of the postwar moral revival and explain why revivalists asked the conscience to play a crucial role. In Part II, I discuss six intellectual and political communities where the moral revival, as American liberalism understood it, took root. These include: (1) advocates of a “Judeo-Christianity”; (2) the United Nations imagined as world conscience; (3) racial and religious minorities’ appeals to “America’s democratic conscience”; (4) mainline Protestant racial progressives; (5) Freudian psychoanalysts; and (6) Catholic natural law political philosophers and American Catholics’ examination of conscience manuals. In the final part of this paper I show how this moral revival failed, almost immediately after these communities conceived of it, when mainline and evangelical Protestants, turning to a theology of conscience that made conscience radically individualistic and completely transcendent, transformed the idea of the state from integrator of a conscience-based civil morality into the leviathan that enslaved inherently free consciences.

Part I: The Moral Revival

Before the conscience could be freed, it had to exist. American moral authorities brought the conscience into being with printed words and rituals, offering a 1940s spin on an idea in circulation since the Roman Republic. The conscience served a particular democratic purpose during the Second World War: it gave the citizen the proper measure of political autonomy along with a nagging concern for the consequences of not using autonomy properly. Totalitarian governments, conversely, sedated the conscience completely, enabling collective acts of violence when they nullified individual culpability. Catholic University of America professor Fulton Sheen, then a budding religious celebrity in America, told Catholics gathered for mass during Lent 1943 that participation in “mobs” allowed individuals to “use the anesthesia of pleasure” to

forget they had consciences. God placed the conscience in the individual, Sheen said, but herd-like behavior suppressed the conscience's demands, allowing participation in reprehensible group activities.⁶ An individual citizen forfeited his or her political autonomy when they silenced the conscience. In a 1946 article for *Harper's*, Army intelligence officer William Harlan Hale argued that Germans "abdicated" and "surrendered" their consciences to the Führer to commit heinous acts with legal and psychological impunity.⁷ The conscience had to be lively so it restrained and, as the moral theory went, freed.

Moral revivalists also made conscience real through "examinations of conscience," a specific habit of secular and religious devotion. Women's wartime examinations of conscience demonstrate how individuals joined the moral revival: self-conducted scrutiny of conscience generated productive external religious and political actions. Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, citing the dearth of laborers needed to fill home front jobs in manufacturing, teaching, and nursing, asked American women in 1943 to "canvass their consciences" hoping American women found in conscience the duty-laden resolve to convert themselves from private housewives into public workers.⁸ The wartime canvassing of a conscience helped women replace domesticity with appropriate public action. *Soul Clinic*, a conscience examination manual for American Catholics published by two anonymous nuns in 1943, shared this aspiration. The authors wanted conscience-examiners to understand that inner blemishes manifested themselves as sinful external action. An examination of conscience clarified inner values so that external actions pleased God and strengthened the body politic. Much of *Soul Clinic* offered readers

⁶ "Repentance Held Essential of Man: Sheen Tells of Peril of Using Anesthesia of Pleasure to forget the conscience," *New York Times*, May 29, 1943, 13.

⁷ William Harlan Hale, "Germany's Deformed Conscience," *Harper's Magazine* 1946 (192): 1-9.

⁸ "WMC Tells Women that Retail Jobs Call," *New York Times*, October 4, 1943, 14.

gender-neutral queries, but the anonymous authors did direct questions specifically to women religious: on the Feast of the Epiphany, celebrated by Catholics annually on January 6, a women religious was to ask her conscience, “if the flow of my virginal consecration [is] becoming daily more radiant in whiteness of the hedge [with] which I surround it, the hedge of self restraint and modesty?”⁹ The examination of conscience helped to produce the radiant whiteness by bringing a woman religious to confront *herself* on the depth of her commitments to restraint and modesty.

Much was at stake in how women examined the conscience: labor in a wartime political economy, discipline in religious communities, the salvation of souls, and even the global cause of “American Freedom.” The *New York Times* reported that the Office of War Information (OWI) was blasting radio transmissions into Germany in March of 1943 aimed at the “Nazi female conscience” hoping to fill it with messages about the rights of individuals, the United Nation’s commitment to individual liberties, and how to raise children “healthfully.”¹⁰

The OWI’s radio transmissions articulated a crucial ideological and political aspiration of the Allied powers: after the war, America, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain planned to rebuild the world upon free consciences. But, as it stood in 1943, the conscience languished in imperial and fascist captivity. The Allies wanted to make a world where all men and women worshipped freely according to the dictates of their own consciences. They made this clear in the penultimate line of the Tehran Declaration. Promulgated on December 1, 1943, by Joseph Stalin, Winston Churchill, and Franklin Roosevelt, the Tehran Declaration proclaimed that the Big Three, “look[ed] with confidence to the day when all peoples of the world may live free lives,

⁹ Sisters of Notre Dame, *Soul Clinic: An Examination of Conscience for Religious Teachers* (Cleveland, OH: Frederick Pustet Co., 1943), 47.

¹⁰ “OWI Radio Aimed at Nazi’s Women,” *New York Times*, March 31, 1943, 14.

untouched by tyranny, and according to their varying desires and their own consciences.”¹¹ Liberal subjects — under an Anglo-American or Soviet aegis — needed free consciences so that a citizen’s creed did not exclude him or her from the political community or earmark them as targets for state-sponsored violence. Franklin Roosevelt viewed the war as an opportunity to chisel this freedom of conscience onto the tablets of world law. Lutherans congregated in the nation’s capital to celebrate their church’s 50th anniversary received a celebratory letter in 1943 from Franklin urging them to “work and pray for an enlightened understanding among the nations of the world in which freedom of conscience shall be a cornerstone.”¹² Worshipping according to one’s own free conscience, policy makers and ministers argued, produced free and prosperous peoples thoroughly resistant to fascist goose-stepping. Roosevelt told a Unitarian Church in 1945 that the freedom of conscience must therefore be defended “as a bulwark of democracy and civilization.”¹³

After the Allied victory in World War II, international lawyers built the Allies’ ideas for moral revival through free consciences into codes of national and international law. The laws carried the Allies’ hopes for moral revival because, by freeing consciences from the state, laws made citizens independent enough to sufficiently resist imperial or collective ambitions but, by freeing a faculty meant to motivate reasonable political commitment, citizens would not be so independent as to not feel a duty to the democratic state and its institutions. New Deal liberals and international lawyers took this aspiration worldwide in the mid-to-late 1940s;

¹¹ Franklin D. Roosevelt: "The Teheran Declaration," December 1, 1943. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16346>. (Accesses 21 July 2013).

¹² “President Extends Greetings to United Lutherans on Silver Anniversary,” *The Washington Post*, November 15, 1943, B1.

¹³ “Brooklyn Church Marks Centenary: All Souls Universalist Gets a Message from the President on the Freedom of Conscience,” *New York Times*, April 9, 1945, 15.

Pronouncements on conscience like the one made in the Tehran Declaration appeared in postwar German and Japanese constitutions. The Constitution of Japan, promulgated in 1946 and implemented in 1947, declared in Article 19 that, “freedom of thought and conscience shall not be violated.”¹⁴ Issued in 1949, the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany held that “freedom of faith and of conscience, and freedom of creed, religious and secular are inviolable.”¹⁵ The initial wave of the decolonization of the British Empire proceeded with this decolonization of the conscience. The Declaration of the Establishment of State of Israel (1948) and The Constitution of India (1950) both guaranteed freedom of conscience.¹⁶ The conscience’s finest postwar legal hour, however, came in the United Nations’ 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration placed the conscience in a package of postwar liberal ideas: human beings were born free and equal in dignity and rights, it noted, and they were “endowed with reason and conscience.” Like the wave of postwar constitutions, the UN also codified the freedom of conscience, along with freedom of thought and freedom of religion. These freedoms allowed the citizen to change religion or belief, alone as an individual, or in community with others.¹⁷ As the state-heavy projects of National Socialism, Japanese Imperialism, and global colonial empire either ended or attenuated, the free conscience took on a profound importance as a means to have freedom from the state and a motivation to participate in democracy.

¹⁴ *The Constitution of Japan*, 1947. See Article 19. The Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html (accessed 9 August 2013).

¹⁵ *The Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany*, 1949. See Article 4, points 1-3. German Historical Documents Initiative. http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=2858 (accessed 8 August 2013).

¹⁶ *Declaration of Establishment of the State of Israel*, 1948. Declaration notes that “the State of Israel will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education, and culture. See also, *The Constitution of India*, 1950. The Government of India Ministry of Law and Justice Website, <http://lawmin.nic.in/olwing/coi/coi-english/coi-indexenglish.htm> (accessed 15 August 2013).

¹⁷ The United Nations, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948. The United Nations Online. <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/> (accessed 12 February 2013).

Part II: The Moral Revival Finds Roots

I now turn our attention to six sites where the revival took root: (1) advocates of a “Judeo-Christianity;” (2) theorists of the United Nations as world conscience; (3) racial and religious minorities’ appeals to “America’s democratic conscience;” (4) mainline Protestant racial progressivism; (5) Freudian psychoanalysts; and (6) Catholic natural law political philosophy and conscience examination manuals. The sites were disparate — representing as they did the many corners of America’s secular and religious modernity — but they shared three persistent themes. First, promoters of the moral revival aimed to nurture an integrative conscience; that is, they wanted to produce consciences that belonged simultaneously to both an individual citizen-believer and a democratic collective. This conscience, as shown above, made citizens independent enough to resist imperial or collective ambitions but not so independent that citizens did not feel a duty to the democratic state. Second, like *Soul Clinic*, revivalists’ moral theories and rituals posited a linear trajectory: self-conducted scrutiny of internal conscience produced proper external political and moral action. In the shadow of the Holocaust, moral thinkers from these communities thought it necessary to go from internal to external because the reverse seemed only to produce, as Fulton Sheen put it, the “herd mentality.” Third, moral thinkers who produced integrative consciences were committed to the liberal projects of the immediate postwar era: America’s participation in global governance, the spread of democracy, decolonization, racial integration, and religious ecumenism.

During and just after the war, architects of “Judeo-Christianity” promoted the postwar moral revival by arguing that a religious devotee who worshipped with a free conscience, regardless of creed, made a worthwhile contribution to the strength of American democracy.

Norman Rockwell captured this aspiration perfectly in a 1943 poster – published in the *Saturday Evening Post* – that depicted American Jews, Protestants and Catholics praying together under the Four Freedoms-inspired shibboleth: “Save Freedom of Worship: Each According to the Dictates of His Own Conscience.” Promoters of the free Judeo-Christian conscience manifested their ideas with printed pictures and in the religious landscape. In the summer of 1943, the American military built a “tri-faith chapel” at Sampson Air Force Base near Seneca Lake, New York where Jews, Catholics and Protestants could worship. At the chapel’s dedication, the Navy Chief of Chaplains told those gathered that America fought the Nazis and Japanese to “give man freedom of worship according to his own conscience.”¹⁸ The free conscience, as the moral theory went, matched the rights guaranteed by states with an individual’s internally-generated duties to church and nation, eschewing heavy-handed statism but still integrating Jews, Catholics and Protestants into a democratic collective. “Judeo-Christianity” and freedom of conscience laws multiplied the paths by which a believer could wed autonomy to democratic duty. In 1948, Congregationalist minister Victor Obenhaus assembled *The Hebrew Prophets and America’s Conscience*, an examination of conscience guide for Protestant Sunday school students based on the Hebrew Prophets’ contributions to Israel. The devotional guide highlighted particular prophets (Amos, Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, etc.) and furnished the reader with a list of questions for examining the conscience in light of each prophet’s contribution to ancient Israel’s moral order. Obenhaus hoped that, by reading his guide, Protestant students would encounter the Jewish Prophets, ponder the prophets’ contributions to building moral nations, and then, with an

¹⁸ “Royce Chapel Dedicated: Sampson Naval Training Station gets non-sectarian memorial,” *New York Times*, August 16, 1943, 13.

awakened conscience, find “unity [with Jews] in the work for universal recognition of the ideals of justice and democracy.”¹⁹

Moral revivalists gave the United Nations a privileged role in the making of the new moral order as the representative of the “conscience of mankind.” The Declaration of Human Rights itself had acknowledged the existence of a “conscience of mankind” that was offended by “barbarous acts.” Before the ink had dried on that proposal, however, moral revivalists had already expressed hopes that the United Nations spoke to and for the collective conscience of mankind. British trade union official Arthur Creech Jones, who published a pamphlet entitled *Colonies and the International Conscience* in 1945 just after the famed San Francisco Conference, argued that imperial powers ought to be accountable to the conscience of mankind as manifested by the United Nations so imperial powers were motivated to govern colonies in the interests of the native inhabitants. If the United Nations represented the conscience of mankind properly, Creech argued, it checked arbitrary power and transformed native peoples from colonized subjects into trustees.²⁰ Creech was not alone in expressing such sentiments – arguments that the United Nations galvanized mankind’s conscience came down from storied religious and political heights. John Foster Dulles, a Republican senator from New York and a dedicated religious ecumenist, argued in 1947 that the United Nations represented the “moral conscience of the world.”²¹ Pope Pius XII told a Vatican audience in 1947 that, as a voice in the postwar wilderness, the United Nations stirred up “the conscience of the world from a place so

¹⁹ Victor Obenhaus, *The Hebrew Prophets and America's Conscience* (Boston-Chicago-Dayton: The Pilgrim Press, 1948).

²⁰ Arthur Creech Jones, *The Colonies and the International Conscience: A Report to the Fabian Colonial Bureau* (London: The Fabian Society, 1945).

²¹ “Dulles Backs UN on Right to Rebuke,” *New York Times*, October 8, 1947, 12.

high and clear.”²² As the voice of mankind’s conscience, the United Nations reminded the world that to make a democratic world was to make a moral world.

As the United Nations spoke to and for the world’s conscience, Jewish and African-American authors called on “America’s Democratic Conscience” to fulfill the promises of the moral revival: namely, to integrate racial and religious minorities into postwar democracy without resorting to a heavy-handed statism. With articles in major urban newspapers and declarations, Jewish and African-American authors aimed to awaken the conscience of American democracy, hoping to motivate policy makers to address refugee crises and racial violence. The Women’s Zionist Organization of America passed a resolution in October 1943 calling for the “consciences of democratic peoples” to prod British officials into distributing passports to 29,000 Jewish children orphaned by the war.²³ The democratic conscience, given this charge, compelled the integration of racial and religious minorities into postwar democracy. Rabbi Israel Goldstein, president of the Zionist Organization of America, placed a political cartoon in the *New York Times* in 1945 pleading with the paper’s readers to donate funds so 100,000 European Jews dislocated by the holocaust and the war remembered that “the conscience of America was on the side of justice.”²⁴ African-Americans, responding to segregation and violence in the American south, also called on the conscience of American democracy, demanding justice. In the summer of 1946, after two young African American married couples were lynched in

²² “Pope Urges Faith in UN as a voice in the Wilderness,” *New York Times*, October 29, 1947, 12.

²³ “Mrs. M.P. Epstein Named Hadassah Head; She Appeals for Justice for Jewish People,” *New York Times*, October 29, 1943, 14. Importantly, eighteen Protestant Clergyman drawn from various mainline denominations issued a statement that same month in 1943 proclaiming that “as never before in the Western World...the hearers of the Christian word have been stirred and the consciences of Christian peoples everywhere have been touch by the spectacle of suffering by the Children of Abraham.” See “Hope for Future New Year Theme,” *New York Times*, October 1, 1943, 24.

²⁴ “Display Ad 74: How Many More Than 5,000,000 Jews Have to Die Before Palestine is Open?” *New York Times* October 12, 1945, 16.

Georgia, Blindley C. Cyrus appealed to the “conscience of all America” on the pages of the *Chicago Defender*. “How long,” he asked, “must the Negro sit in silence patiently waiting for the conscience of America to assert itself and stamp out these outrages?”²⁵ A democratic conscience, so imagined, compelled policy makers and citizens to address violence against racial and religious minorities – flagrant violations of the moral revival.

According to Protestant racial progressives, the Christian conscience compelled the end of racial segregation by raising the specter of permanent inward and outward alienation. In her 1945 pamphlet, *The White Christian and His Conscience*, novelist Lillian Smith argued that white Southerners were in a psychologically and socially debilitating conflict with conscience. Unwilling to give up Christianity and democracy, but intent on maintaining Jim Crow, southerners managed to send their consciences into temporary reprieves by separating self from conscience.²⁶ When consciences returned, as they often did when whites interacted with blacks, the conscience divided southerners internally with conscious and unconscious guilt that segregation and racism violated cherished Christian and democratic ideas. According to Smith, conscience affected whites physically: when whites dined with blacks, “guilt feelings seeped up to the surface as sensations of physical illness.” To make Southerners healthy again in mind and body, Smith counseled, what the conscience knew to be right (democracy and Christianity) had to be manifested as external acts that integrated southern society. Racial integration would reunite men and women of the south with their consciences. The conscience made a divided self – a state of internal grace juxtaposed with the bad fruits of wrong-doing – painful. Like Smith,

²⁵ Blindley C. Cyrus, “Appeals to the Conscience of All America,” *The Chicago Defender*, October 12, 1946, 14.

²⁶ Lillian Smith, *The White Christian and His Conscience*, (Clayton, GA: The South Today, 1945), 27. The pamphlet notes that, “This article as reprinted here has appeared in several religious journals of the country, and was given in a slightly altered for as a speech at Ford Hall Forum in Boston, The Institute of International Relations, Columbus, Ohio, and the Community Church in New York and at several other places.”

Buell G. Gallagher, professor of Christian Ethics at the Pacific School of Religion, argued that the racial “caste system” presented Christians with a “dilemma of conscience”: when Christians clarified the demands of conscience, Gallagher argued, the conscience condemned social inequality without equivocation, amplifying the tensions and difficulties of remaining indifferent to segregation instead of taking the political action necessary to ensure equality.²⁷ Gallagher thought that so long as conscience and the racial caste system coexisted, the South experienced social, political, and psychological tensions that clouded minds and bedeviled politics. When consulted, the conscience clarified the path to integration: the universal brotherhood of man, Gallagher argued, was the only way to meet the insistent demands made by conscience.

Freudian psychoanalysts also looked to the conscience to bring about the moral revival. The ghastly crimes the Nazis committed against the Jews compelled two Freudian psychoanalysts to revise Freud’s understanding of the conscience. Freud argued that the conscience, what he called the “super-ego” or “ego-ideal,” developed through social forces (parents, friends, institutions) that restrained the individual’s natural inclinations for aggression with fear of punishment and social exclusion. The super-ego conscience became problematic in light of Nazi violence because it seemed too subservient to local and embedded authorities. To become a site of moral revival, the conscience needed to work as an independent force to make men and women responsible members of a global – rather than local or national – political community. British psychoanalyst Raynard West, who published *Conscience and Society: A Study of the Psychological Prerequisites of Law and Order* with Emerson Press of New York in 1945, argued that the conscience was as an “independent ego” that was “more moral” than a

²⁷ Beull G. Gallagher, *Color and Conscience: The Irrepressible Conflict* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1946).

super-ego developed through a strictly national or communal pedagogy. Men and women each had a pre-existing, in-dwelling conscience, West argued, but Freud's contentment with super-ego training had blunted the conscience's capacity to restrain community against community. West urged the postwar world to craft a set of new world laws (a global super-ego) that formed an immanent conscience in men and women all over the globe that restrained their desires to participate in collective nation against nation violence; the conscience, so respected, made global citizens. "Our consciences," assured West, "are waiting to make us good and happy members of the world."²⁸

Fellow psychoanalyst Edmund Bergler posed the same question – how were entire nations driven into criminal madness? – but he answered it by arguing that criminals appeased consciences as "sadistic neurotics." Based on his fieldwork as a practicing psychoanalyst, Bergler separated the conscience onto two tracks, the "aware conscience" and the "unconscious conscience."²⁹ Sadistic neurotics bribed the aware conscience, allowing them to commit violent acts so that the unconscious conscience punished them later with guilt. The unconscious conscience did not prevent action; it punished transgressors *ex post facto*, and criminals like the Nazis knew the unconscious conscience's wrath awaited them. Bergler argued that the moral revival depended upon strengthening the ability of the aware conscience to prevent criminal behavior on a mass scale. Like West, Bergler argued for new modes of communication – "global talking cures" – that helped internal dispositions resist communal pressure.

²⁸ Raynard West, *Conscience and Society: A study of the Psychological Prerequisites of Law and Order* (Emerson: New York, 1945), 250.

²⁹ Edmund Bergler, *The Battle of Conscience: A Psychiatric Study of the Inner Working of the Conscience* (Washington DC: Washington Institute of Medicine, 1948).

Liberal Catholic intellectuals argued that with the proper moral and religious efforts, the democratic state could facilitate the postwar moral revival. Jacques Maritain and John Courtney Murray argued in the mid-1940s that, if the state aligned its laws with natural laws, the modern democratic state gained the legitimacy to bind citizens' consciences to its laws. Maritain, who included a chapter on "the evangelical inspiration and the secular conscience," in his 1943 book *Christianity and Democracy*, argued that only when secular conscience returned to its Gospel origins, naming God the font of political authority, did it acquire the authority to bind a citizen's conscience to a set of rules. The conscience was an ideal fulcrum to balance freedom and responsibility because as it bound citizen to law, it honored a citizen's autonomous apprehension of a law as a just law. Maritain, who took his notion of conscience from Thomas Aquinas, argued that conscience, properly understood, helped a person to apprehend natural laws, motivating them to be obedient to laws that reflected natural law. But to bind a conscience this way, the law had to be a just law; otherwise a citizen would not motivate themselves to obey. When God was the source of the law, the laws bound consciences and helped usher in a kingdom of equality, progress and emancipation. This process lent legitimacy to the democratic state because it honored the movement from self-generated apprehension to reasonable external acts. This natural law conscience, Maritain argued, condemned the "perversities of incorrect political arrangements" of National Socialism, Marxist materialism and totalitarianism.³⁰

In a 1945 article for *Theological Studies*, John Courtney Murray argued that modern citizens, particularly Protestants and Catholics, had a right to a government that produced this consonance of law and conscience. The state owed it to the *person* to align itself with God's

³⁰ Jacques Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986): 40-41. *The Atlantic* published a slice of Maritain's books in April of 1944 for an American readership. See, "The Leaven of Conscience," *The Atlantic* (April 1944): 92-95.

authority so that civil power helped souls get to heaven. If the state took seriously these otherworldly goals, making it an intermediary between God and persons, it obligated citizens through consciences to build a common good as, in the same stroke, citizens developed social obligations by binding their own consciences voluntarily to the natural law.³¹ Murray and Maritain argued that if democratic states bound consciences by recognizing God as the source of political authority, these states, balancing autonomy and solidarity, became instruments in the postwar moral revival.

But most Catholics did not encounter the conscience in theology journals or transatlantic philosophical treatises. Perhaps some read “The Leaven of Conscience” – a slice of Maritain’s book that appeared in *The Atlantic* in April of 1944. Rather, Catholics read about the conscience in widely circulated manuals, authored by clerics and laypeople alike.³² In the 1940s, spiritual directors tailored conscience examination manuals to the Church’s many communities: priests, nuns, lay adults, teenagers, adolescent boys and girls, and vowed religious like the Jesuits, the Franciscans, and the Ursulines.³³ With these guides, Catholics regularly undertook a habit of devotion called the “examination of conscience.” Using Catholic social teaching and the Church’s many laws as sources for their questions, Catholics asked the conscience where they went wrong – hoping to uncover sins that could be confessed to a priest and forgiven. According

³¹ John Courtney Murray, “Freedom of Religion: The Ethical Problem,” *Theological Studies* 6 (June 1945): 229-286.

³² For a guide authored by laypeople for laypeople, see “Search Your Hearts,” *Action Now*, (February 1950): 23-26; (March 1950): 29-32; (April 1950): 21-24; (June 1950): 25-29.

³³ The Jesuits examined the conscience twice a day, once at noon and in the evening. See James A. Kliest, “The Daily Examination of Conscience,” *Review for Religious* (January 1945): 37-37. Kliest directed his fellow Jesuits to observe a five step examination of conscience: (1) prayer to God based on the mass; (2) a request for grace to cast out sin; (3) scrutiny to know thyself, setting one up as judge, witness, prosecutor, defendant, who use the ten commandments to know the rules of order; (4) Asking God for pardons; and (5) propose an amendment with god. Kliest also told his Jesuit confreres that the examination of conscience was vital for the spiritual well-being of the vowed religious and that a good examination – done passionately and sincerely – would reward good work with a plenary indulgence. See also, Reverend Edmund, CP. *Monthly Recollection with Examination of Conscience for Sisters* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1949).

to conscience examination manuals, each individual Catholic had a conscience, but the conscience was simultaneously a particle of an in-dwelling and omniscient divine. As a particle of God's objectivity, a Catholic's conscience worked as a bank that, even when a Catholic failed to notice, stored up sins and transgressions, of recent memory and from the distant past. Interrogating the conscience thus made Catholics aware of how they stood before God. The conscience, according to the guides, viewed the individual Catholic as God viewed the individual Catholic. The God-particle conscience (like God) remembered all: sins big and small, social and individual. A 1950 examination of conscience authored by two Jesuit priests, moving back and forth between social and individual sin, directed penitents to ask their consciences: "Did I neglect to pay a laborer a living wage?" "Did I fail my obligations as a citizen?" "Did I make fun of old people?" and, referring to the ritual obligations of the Catholic Church, "Did I eat meat on Fridays or other forbidden days?" and "Did I miss mass on Sundays and Holydays through my own fault?"³⁴ Because the penitent was to interrogate the internal self, such questions dovetailed nicely with the postwar moral revival. Fulton Sheen's 1949 bestseller, *Peace of Soul*, makes precisely this connection. The lay conscience examiner, Sheen argued, got outside him or her self, illuminating the sinner's rebellions against God's moral laws. This initiated the process that moved a Catholic from internal scrutiny to self-generated proper external action. First, the Catholic clarified his or her rebellion against God (Did you miss mass on Sunday? Yes, I did); the Catholic then apprehended the proper behavior (I should go to mass); and finally the Catholic

³⁴ Aloysius J. Heeg and Aloysius J. Wilwerding, *An Adult's Confession Booklet: With Prayers, Directions, and an Examination of Conscience, Especially for Converts*. (The Central Office of the Sodality of Our Lady, June 1950), 17,13.

executed the proper external action (confession to the priest of having missed; attendance the next week).³⁵

Part III: The Failure of Liberalism's Revival

For this cross-section of religious and secular communities, the conscience was essential to the postwar moral revival because it allowed religious and moral revivalists to match the negative rights granted by the state with a citizen's positive self-generated duties. But why did Margaret Chase Smith take to the Senate floor in 1950 to make her "Declaration of Conscience"? McCarthyism and the growing national security state – too collective for the internal-external dynamic of the postwar moral revival – are obviously responsible to a large degree. But the Cold War, this essay shows, does not simply explain itself. There is yet another explanation for why Americans had sundered the link between conscience and moral optimism: Protestant theologies of conscience. American Protestants, in the immediate postwar years, had an indefatigable commitment to a theology of conscience that defined conscience as radically individual and radically transcendent.

American Protestants shared a different relationship with the conscience than did American Catholics, Freudian psychoanalysts, or Franklin Roosevelt's New Dealers. The conscience did not require church's illumination; it did not require a talking cure or a benevolent law to become "aware;" and it could not be freed by a national or international state. For American Protestants, the conscience was inherently free and it was the Protestant individual's to energize (the road to salvation had to be determined by the individual) with an exclusive faith in Jesus Christ. The most outspoken expounders of this theology were American Methodists. As a

³⁵ Fulton J. Sheen, *Peace of Soul* (New York: Garden Books, 1949), 92.

1945 sermon published by Methodist minister Richard Campbell Raines shows, the way to energize a Protestant conscience was with the teachings of Jesus Christ. Raines offered listeners and readers the classic Christo-centric and Lockean-Wesleyan definition of conscience. John Locke argued that the conscience, far from an integrative nexus or a divine pre-programmed database, learned its moral lessons through culturally specific exercises: right and wrong were learned in Christian community, not imbued *a priori*. Conscience was not the voice of God, or a universal, Raines argued, because Nazis or “head-hunting natives who killed our boys in the Pacific” claimed to have such consciences. The path to a correct conscience was, Raines preached, like a placing a record on a victrola; you had to put the right record on the victrola and play that record over and over again. If a conscience was to be a Christian conscience – a real conscience – it must be trained, educated and disciplined by the mind, the spirit and the teachings of Jesus Christ.³⁶ Christian conscience formation was not a passive process. Raines urged Methodists to join institutions and undertake activities that always kept such a conscience’s tune within a Christian’s proximity so that Jesus’ moral teaching always guided an individual believer’s behavior. All activities – drinking, working, politics, labor-management relations – should be evaluated according to whether or not they spun Christ’s record on the conscience-victrola.

The Methodist theology of conscience resonated with the most important trends in postwar Protestant theology. Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, two giants of neo-orthodoxy, the theological movement that criticized liberal Protestants’ efforts to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth with their humanly effort, argued that consciences were not capable of

³⁶ Dr. Richard Campbell Raines, *Concerning a Christian Conscience* (Washington DC: Tem-Press, 1945).

motivating Christians and citizens to underwrite social and political progress. Conscience had neither the strength nor the perspicaciousness to power a society-wide moral revival. In his Gifford Lectures, given to an audience in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1939 and 1941, Niebuhr set the tone. He argued that moderns had “easy consciences” because, as moderns made plans for social utopias or broader common goods, they forgot that mankind’s inherent sinfulness made it impossible to solve problems on national scales. Immoral men and women could not build a moral society. An “uneasy conscience” – which made all men and women tremble because their personal sins might mean damnation – took men and women out of political and communal contexts and directly to God.³⁷ The conscience did not balance duty to the state with self-generated volition; conscience engrafted individuals with the motivation necessary to seek a transcendent divine. German émigré Paul Tillich agreed. In a 1945 article, he rejected the proposition that consciences ought to be concerned with obedience to the temporal law. Tillich marshaled an interpretation of history to support his efforts. From Jesuit confessors who made penitents scrupulously adhere to Church formalisms, up to the capitalist bourgeoisie who made the workers ridden with guilt when they broke laws, authorities, Tillich argued, had forced individuals to find guilt only in relation to laws. Tillich argued that individuals should not weigh behaviors in relation to the laws, but, instead, that individuals should enlist conscience in the effort to achieve a communion with transcendent grace, outside and above the realm of moral laws. The failure to obey law should not induce guilt; the conscience would be salved only when a believer had a “breakthrough” to grace and a “unity” with God. He argued for a “transmoral conscience” that “does not judge in obedience to a moral law but according to the participation in

³⁷ Reinhold Niebuhr, “The Easy Conscience of Modern Man,” in *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1941), 98.

reality which transcends the sphere of moral commands.”³⁸ Tillich urged readers to move the conscience beyond the measuring stick of the law so that they could transcend such guilt and participate in an “enthusiastic unity of life.” The transmoral conscience let the believer accept his or her flaws and encouraged unity with God through grace.

Well after the war, however, the state still judged – incarcerated, even – according to its laws. In the late 1940s, over one thousand conscientious objectors remained in prisons for objections to wartime service. Protestant ministers looked upon such demonstrations of power as enslavement of consciences and took it upon themselves to make consciences freer than a state or international body’s promises of freedom of conscience provided. Harry Truman touted the freedom of conscience in speeches given during his initial years as president and Protestants did not fail to notice the paradox of his adulation for conscience in the context of a burgeoning security state. “Now that we have preserved our freedom of conscience and religion,” Truman told a group of ministers in 1946, “let us make use of it to save [the] world.”³⁹ Protestants had a response: three months later, 300 clergymen wrote Truman demanding that he free the 1500 conscientious objectors still in jail and to restore full civil rights to the paroled. “This treatment of a minority group more than a year after the end of hostilities with Japan is not in keeping with the heritage of freedom conscience and religion which you and all of us cherish,” they wrote.⁴⁰

³⁸ Paul Tillich, “Conscience in Western Thought and the Idea of a Transmoral Conscience,” in *Conscience: Theological and Psychological Perspectives* ed. C. Ellis Nelson (New York: Newman Press, 1973), 57. Originally published in *Crozer Quarterly*, Vol. XXII (October 1945): 289-300. Two other moves stand out in Tillich’s article. First, Tillich endorses the psychoanalyzed conscience because it too transcends the realm of law and breaks through to a type of grace: it promotes an acceptance of one’s conflicts and submerges them beneath joy. Second, Tillich was aware that his transmoral and vitalist conscience (it broke laws and accepted flaws to “live” in grace with God) could become a fascist conscience. He pointed out that as it transcended legalism it could also sink to a point below morality where it could destroy morality.

³⁹ Harry S. Truman: “Address in Columbus at a Conference of the Federal Council of Churches.,” March 6, 1946. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12599>.

⁴⁰ “300 Clergymen Ask President to Free Imprisoned Objectors,” *Daily Boston Globe*, August, 18, 1946, C22. See also Josephine Johnson, “Why is Conscience a Crime?” *Christian Century*, November 27, 1946, 1437.

Protestants took the lead in criticizing the state's treatment of conscientious objectors. G. Bromley Oxnam, Methodist bishop and mid-century media darling, published a detailed article in 1946 on the dilemmas conscientious objection (how to protect the state but honor the conscience) and offered the Truman administration a 10-point program to end the crisis. Oxnam argued that the democratic community had to restrain those who broke the law but that democratic communities, knowing that their laws were imperfect, had to respect the sincere conscience of an objector who was convinced that the law was wrong.⁴¹ Oxnam concluded that individuals who followed their consciences into labor camps or jails should be released from prison and commended by fellow Americans for having kept "the contract of our forefathers" and honored "the blessings of liberty." To do otherwise, Oxnam warned, endangered the freedom of all.

Protestants understood the conscience's transcendence and individuality to be a dynamo of democratization and Christian evangelization, and they interpreted any attempts to integrate individual conscience with law as prologue to totalitarian rule and anathema to scientific and economic progress. When Catholic officials argued in 1943 that Protestant missions to Latin America were a violation of the long-standing Good Neighbor policy of non-intervention, the Reformed Synod of America shot back with a letter to Secretary of State Cordell Hull that states

⁴¹ G. Bromley Oxnam, "Freedom of Conscience in the USA," *Survey Graphic* 35 (1946): 309-313. Importantly, Oxnam recommended that objectors who cited philosophical and humanitarian (secular) reasons for refusing to fight should also be granted exemptions. Bromley's ten point program: (1) democracy must respect conscience of every individual citizen. Those who chose to break the law should know that they will be punished. There should be absolute exemption for an individual whose sincerity is unquestioned; (2) CO should not be based on religion alone; if a man is a sincere and cites humanitarian or philosophical grounds, he should not be penalized; (3) Government should form a civil board to move them; (4) noncombatant services should be open to them; (5) they should provide national service in other ways; (6) They should be rewarded with family allowances; (7) conscience cannot be a protection for cowards; (8) CO who strikes should face the same punishment as a soldier who strikes; (9) COs need to avoid a holier-than-thou attitude; do not parade as martyrs; (10) the only real answer is to create a warless world under "democratic control."

and Catholics “cannot restrain what is a duty of conscience of all faiths” – to take the Gospel to people who did not know it.⁴² Protestants regularly identified their version of Christianity as a religion of “conscience and conviction” that made possible democracy, freedom and liberty. On Reformation Day in 1944, Reverend Samuel Calvert told fourteen Protestant churches in Manhattan that freedom was rooted in “Protestantism’s concern for each man’s direct religion to God and this made for a religion of conscience and conviction, free from compulsion from without.”⁴³ In an article for *The Boston Globe*, Oxnam suggested that Catholics’ obeisance made them susceptible to communism and argued that Protestants’ freedom from external authority explained the failure of communism to take root in historically Protestant nations.

Despite Protestants’ insistence that American Catholics join the moral revival on their terms of individual and transcendent conscience, Catholics’ natural law-informed conscience stood its ground in the late 1940s and even returned the theological ill-will. *The Christian Century* and the *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* exchanged passing reformation-style polemics on interpretations of conscience in 1949. After Pius XII issued a statement that year allowing Catholic judges to “go against conscience” and occasionally condone divorce, *The Christian Century* argued that the Catholic conscience was bound so tightly to Church laws that Catholics did not possess a conscience at all.⁴⁴ Catholics returned the ball by judging Protestants’ transcendent and individualist conscience to be merely the simulacra of a pusillanimous secular liberal individualism. The Catholic priests who wrote for *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, responding to a question about the possibility of Catholics becoming conscientious objectors to

⁴² “Reformed Synod Defends,” *New York Times*, June 6, 1943, 35.

⁴³ “Churches Observe Reformation Day,” *New York Times*, October 30, 1944, 11.

⁴⁴ “Conscience and the Law,” *The Christian Century*, December 14, 1949, 1478;

war, observed confidently: "I don't see how a Catholic can honestly say his conscience forbids him to engage in war [for America] because that very declaration would make him in effect a Protestant who takes his faith and morality from fallible private judgment instead of the infallible Church of Christ."⁴⁵ Such polemics on conscience undermined the moral revival.

For American Protestants, the envelopment of Catholic conscience into church laws mirrored the potential destruction of the free conscience at the hands of HUAC and the machinations of Joseph McCarthy. Protestants shuffled critique of conscience enslavement back and forth from Catholic Church to national security state easily in the late 1940s. As Truman extended the national security state, Protestant defenders of the free conscience made their criticisms known: by launching "inquisitions" and making the state a secular leviathan, anti-communist stalwarts threatened the free conscience. The House of Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church adopted a resolution in 1947 proclaiming that "an inquisitorial investigation of men's personal beliefs is a threat to freedom of conscience."⁴⁶ In the late 1940s, an understanding of the conscience as free and transcendent trumped the conscience that motivated citizens to participate in the moral revival. The Episcopalians were joined by 22 prominent Boston Jewish groups who, suggesting that the US might soon slide into totalitarianism, asked: "Are we wise if we throttle freedom of conscience in the name of Americanism, one of the chief tenets of which is freedom to think and believe?"⁴⁷ The Boston Jews suggested that Americanism cut two ways: Americanism was an anti-communist security state and simultaneously a promoter of free consciences at home and abroad. It was failing in 1950 to promote free consciences at

⁴⁵ "Can Catholics be COs?" *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 49 (1949): 325-326.

⁴⁶ "Bishops Denounce any Probe of Men's Personal Beliefs," *Daily Boston Globe*, November 8, 1947, 1.

⁴⁷ "Freedom of Conscience Imperiled in U.S., Jewish Council Charges," *Daily Boston Globe*, December 31, 1947, 1.

home. Margaret Chase Smith made her “Declaration of Conscience” in the same key. Smith accused the Truman Administration of fear mongering and using “totalitarian techniques,” and she told Senators and members of the House of Representatives that they were abusing their privileges. The Constitution, she argued, allowed criticism, protest, and independent thought – all manifestations of the free conscience. Smith’s solution – the paradox that ends this essay – was to use American military power to free consciences from Communist states abroad without endangering freedom of conscience in America.⁴⁸

Looking back at the Cold War from a 1978 perch, Arthur Miller reminisced in an introduction to his collected plays that during those years, “conscience was no longer a private matter but one of state administration.” “I saw,” Miller continued, “men handing conscience to other men and thanking other men for the opportunity of doing so.” This deference and collectivism inspired Miller to write *The Crucible* in 1953. Miller wrote the play to “show the sin of public terror is that it divests men of conscience.”⁴⁹ Famously, Arthur Miller portrayed Puritans as the totalitarians of early American history. Driven by paranoia and hysteria, Puritans used committees, judges, and cumbersome laws to eliminate heretics and political opponents. *The Crucible* was a tale of hysterical Protestants crushing the heroic free thinkers of conscience. Miller’s interpretation of American history, along with Richard Hofstadter’s notion of the “paranoid style,” made the early Cold War seem as if the era were dominated by religious martinets and crazed populists who snuffed out secular free thought with domineering political structures. If this interpretation of the past conveys a truth about history, it is perhaps a half truth.

⁴⁸ Margaret Chase Smith, *Declaration of Conscience*, June 1, 1950. American Rhetoric Website <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/margarechasesmithconscience.html> (accessed 10 June 2013).

⁴⁹ Miller, “Introduction to *Collected Plays*,” in *The Theater Essays of Arthur Miller*, ed. Robert A. Martin, (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 154-155.

But half truths about history, *ipso facto*, obfuscate as much as they illuminate. There is much evidence that religious leaders called for and supported domestic anti-communism and encouraged anti-Communist American imperialism in Korea, Vietnam and Latin America. But this essay has attempted to exhume what *The Crucible* obfuscated: namely, how Protestants' indefatigable defense of the individualistic and transcendent conscience helped to transmogrify Americans' idea of the state from integrator of a conscience-based civil morality into the leviathan that enslaved consciences that were inherently free. Crucibles are made, not born. Ironically, and in important ways, Arthur Miller and Margaret Chase Smith made very good American Protestants.

