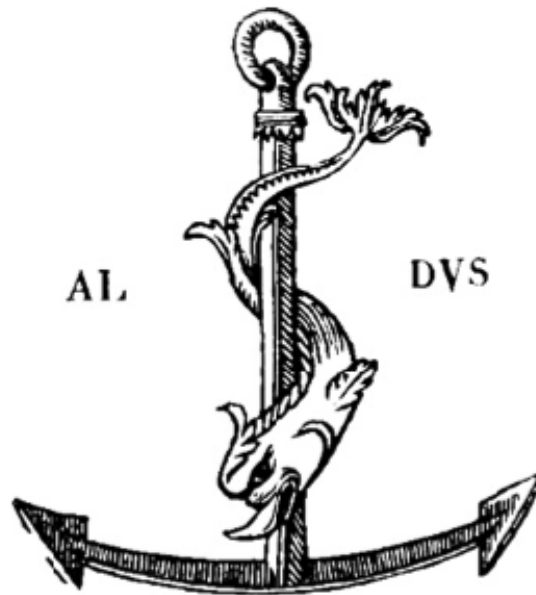


# The English Sailor as Compared with the Landsman:

Beliefs, Folklore & Religion,

1570-1625 and beyond



Thomas D. Horton



## England 1570-1625



*Elizabeth I  
(1558-1603)*



*King James I (1603-  
1625)*

Plague

Famine

Witchcraft  
Trials

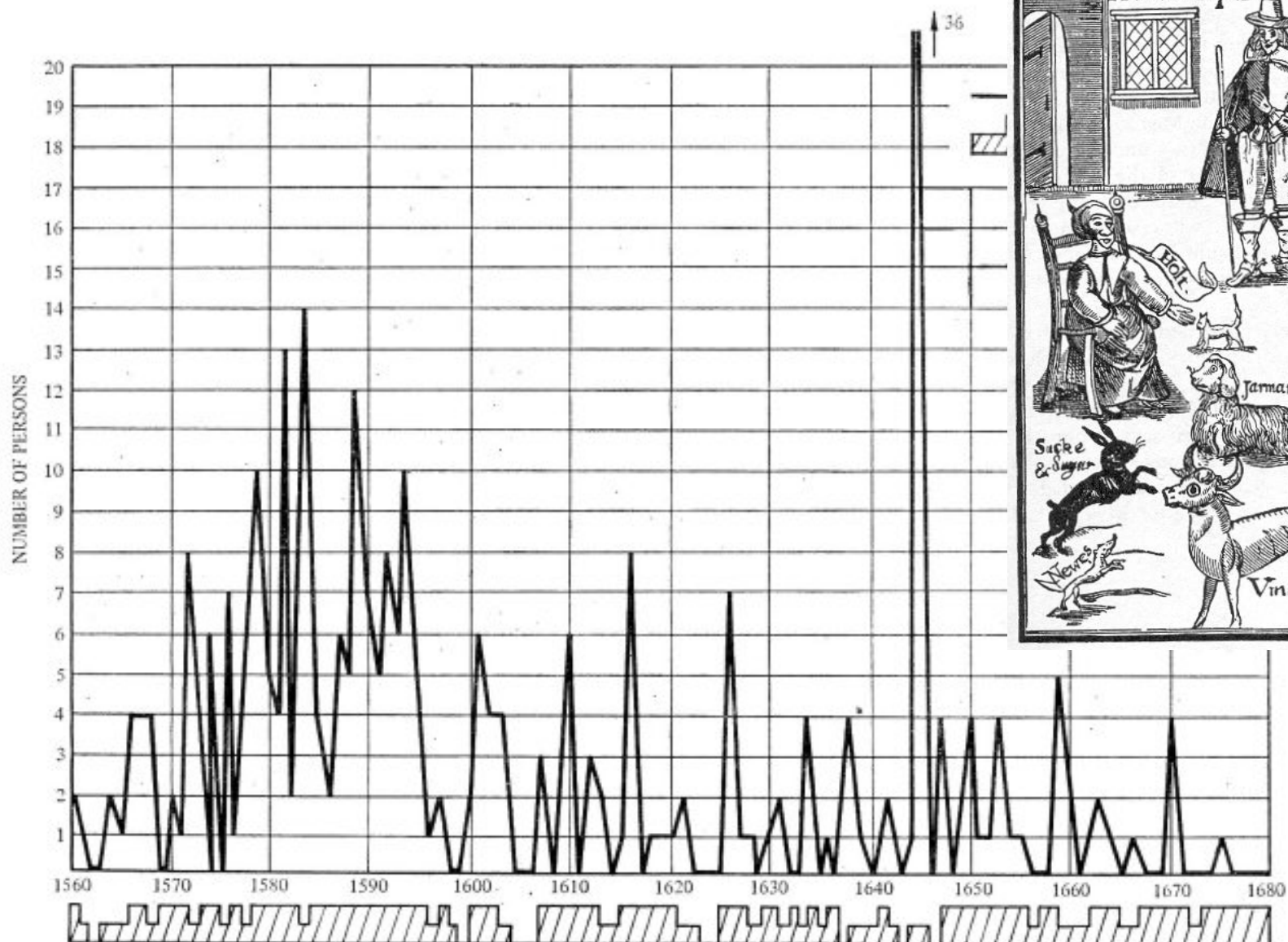
War

Reformatio  
n

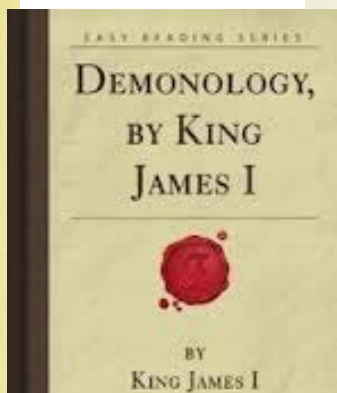
Poverty



Number of persons accused of witchcraft at the Essex Assizes, 1560–1680,  
and number of Assize files surviving







# THE WONDERFVL DISCOVERIE OF THE Witchcrafts of *Margaret and Phillip*

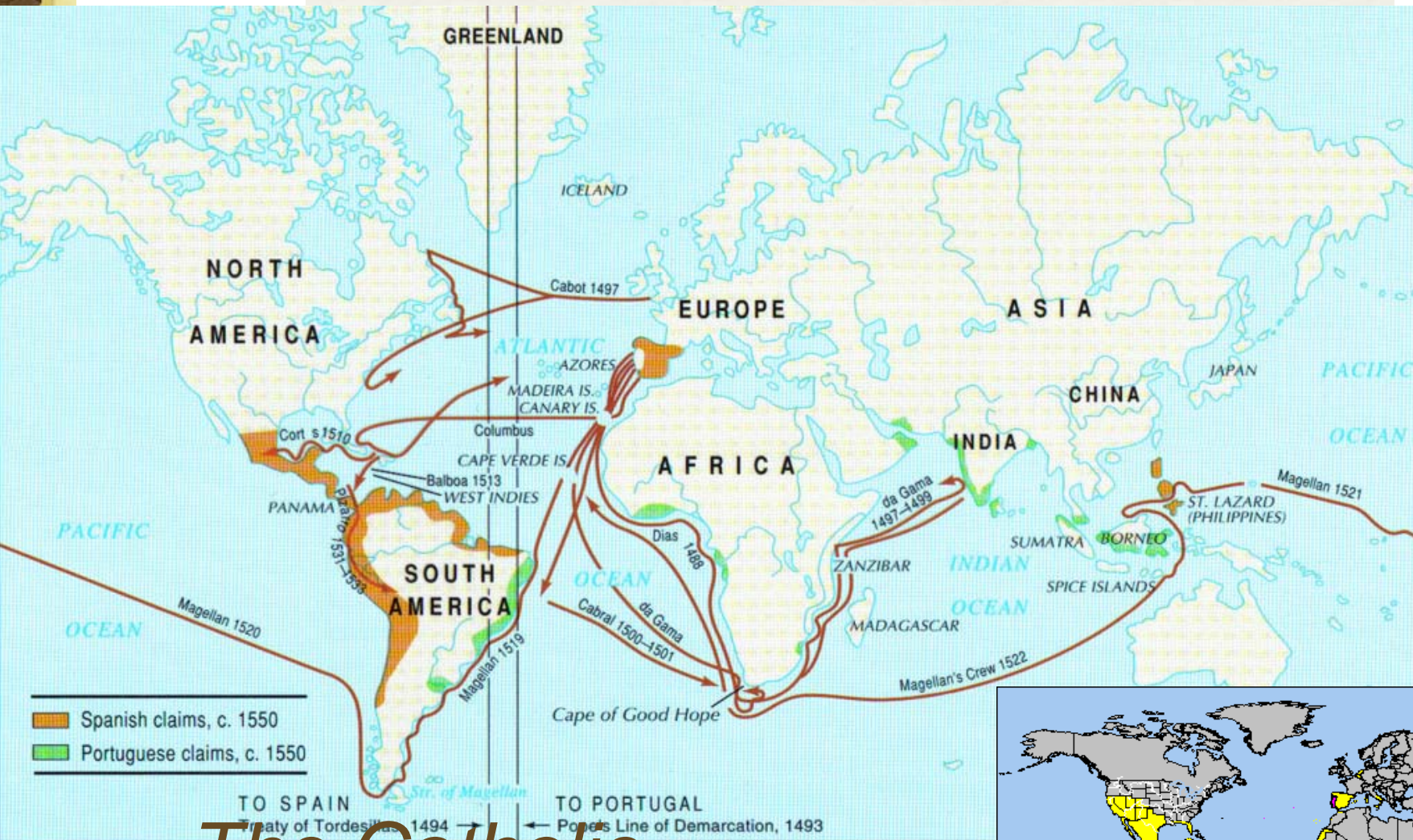
*Flower, daughters of Jean Flower neere Beuer  
Cafle: Executed at Lincoln, March 11. 1618.*  
Who were specially arraigned and condemned before Sir  
*Henry Hobart, and Sir Edward Bromley, Iudges of A.C.*  
for confelting themselves actors in the destruction  
of *Henry Lord Roffe*, with their damnable practices against  
others the Children of the Right Honourable  
*FRANCIS EARLE of Rutland.*  
Together with the severall Examinations and Confessions of *Anne  
Baker, Leon Willmet, and Ellen Greene, Winches in Leicestershire.*



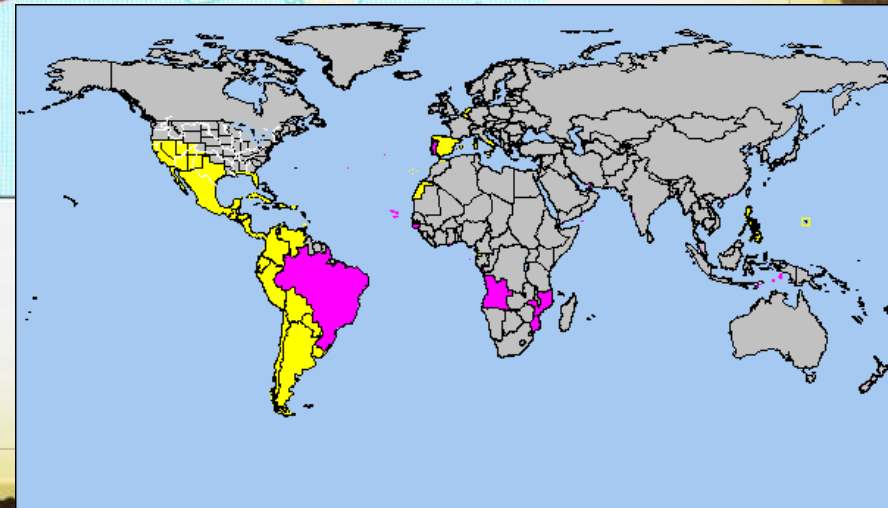






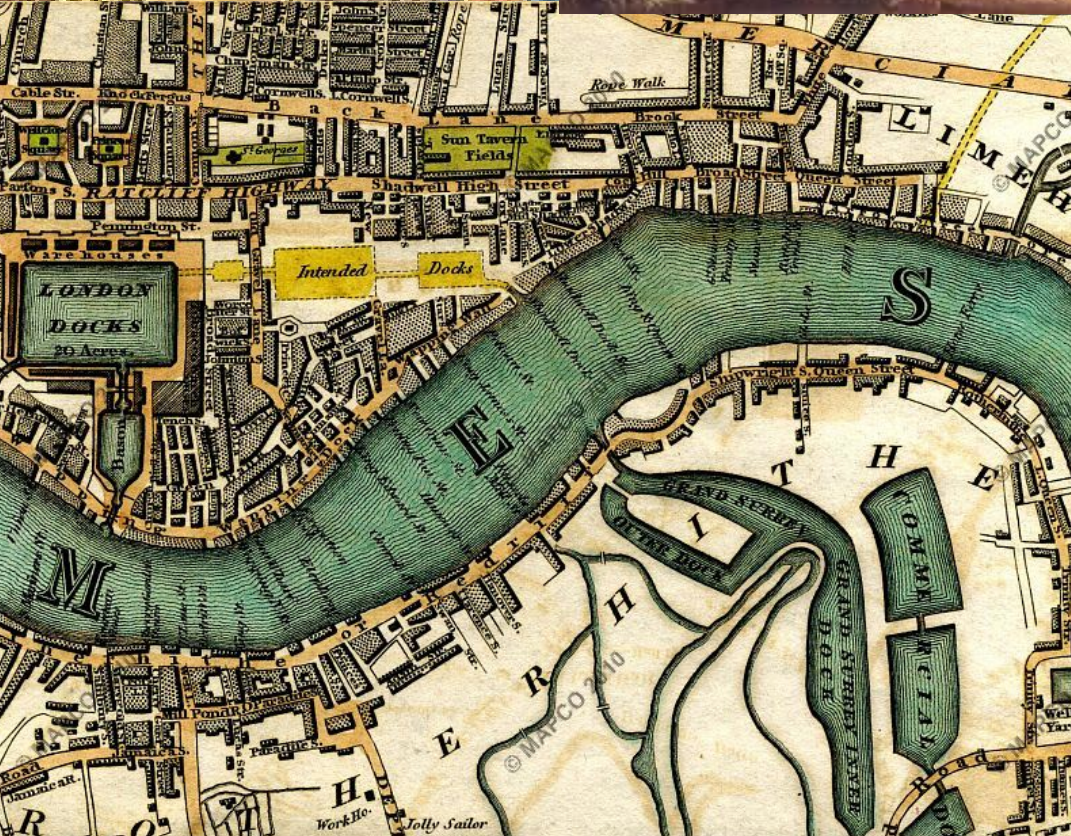


# The Catholic Spanish & Portuguese





# The English Sailor





# Culture

Maritime language was not reflective of any local or regional ways of speaking, but a commonly understood fluency among seafaring folk.

## Expressions Still Used Today:

- to flog a dead horse (or beat a dead horse)*
- to lose one's bearings*
- to blow over*
- first rate or first class*
- to come adrift*
- between the devil and the deep blue sea*

## The words:

skiff,  
schooner,  
skipper,  
hooker, boat,  
and yacht all  
have Dutch  
origins, while  
frigate and  
captain are  
two notable  
terms coming  
from French.



# Belief & Superstition

## Topics:

*Burial at Sea*

*Sharks & Dolphins*

*Mermaids*

*Monsters & Sea Serpents*

*Witchcraft at Sea*

Henry Hudson departed from London in April of 1608 to find the northwest passage to India. Hudson kept a logbook of daily weather observations along the way.

On June 15th, the explorer marked clear sunny skies, an eastward wind, and included the following excerpt:

This morning, one of our companie looking over boord saw a Mermaid, and calling up some of the companie to see her, one more came up, and by that time shée was come close to the ship's side, looking earnestly on the men: a little after, a Sea came and overturned her: from the navel upward, her backe and breasts were like a womans (as they say that saw her) her body as big as one of us; her skin very white; and long haire hanging down behinde, of colour blacke; in her going downe they saw her tayle which was like the tayle of a Porpoise and speckled like a Macrell. Their names that saw her were Thomas Hilles and Robert Rayner.



Richard Hawkins's most revealing writing about the shark's relationship with sailors, and also the nature, and possibly morality of the English Seaman, lies in his passage regarding how seamen tortured the beast:

Every day my company tooke more or lesse of hem, not for that they did eat of them (for they are not held wholesome; although the Spaniards, as I have seene, doe eate them), but to recreate themselves, and in revenge of the injuries received by them; for they live long, and suffer much after they bee taken, before they dye.

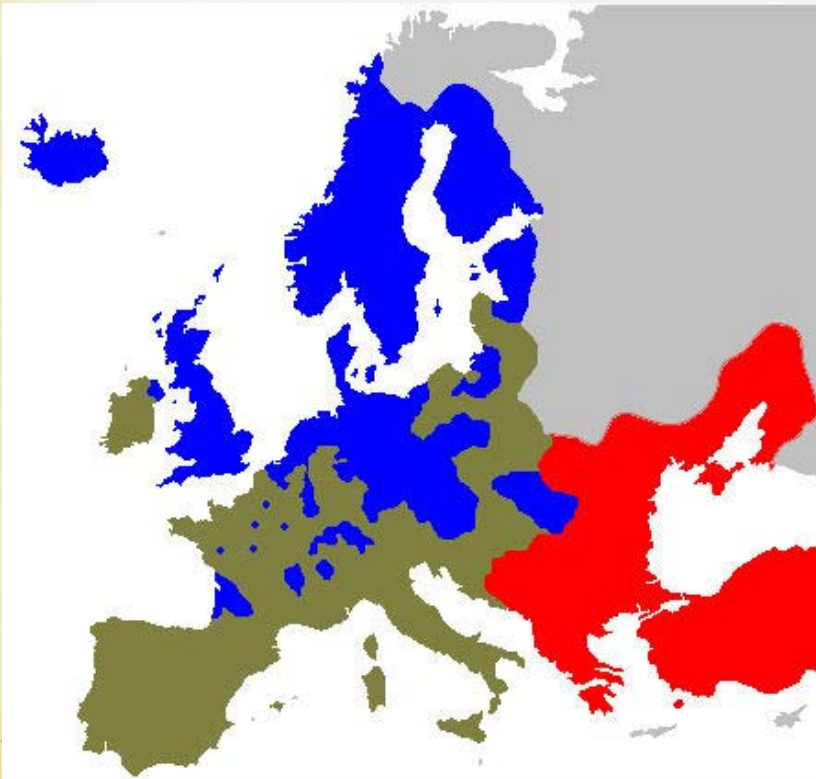
At the tayle of one they tyed a great logge of wood, at another, an empty batizia, well stopped; one they yoaked like a hogge; from another, they plucked out his eyes, and so threw them into the sea. In catching two together, they bound them tayle to tayle, and so set them swimming; another with his belly slit, and his bowels hanging out, which his fellowes would have every one a snatch at; with other infinite inventions to entertayne the time, and to avenge themselves; for that they deprived them of swimming, and fed on their flesh being dead.



# Religion & Worship

Although the sailors, mariners, merchant seamen, explorers, pirates, privateers and naval seafarers are the last occupation you might associate with religious fervor, they were a the first individuals to fully embrace Protestant theology and undoubtedly had more anti-Catholic sentiment from the unset of the Anglo-Spanish war than the English landmen.

"While the Reformation changed the substance of English seamen's beliefs, it did little to alter the fact that seamen praised God as they always had, with prayers and songs conducted by laymen and on a schedule determined by shipboard rhythms."  
~Cheryl Fury





# Conclusion

*Members of maritime culture were extremely pious, often immoral, deep believers in folklore of the sea, but yet at times referred to as crusaders stealing loot while fighting for Anglican Protestantism on a divine mission from God. The English maritime culture following the Reformation was an isolated yet heightened version of popular culture inside the shores of England. Protestant beliefs were concentrated, adapted to new environments, and outside the reach of society's demanding framework ashore.*



*The seaman under Elizabeth I and King James I was enigmatic, unpredictable and an invaluable resource for an examination of social history in early modern England. The English sailor of the expanding maritime and naval empire in the early modern England, is an estranged relative of the English landsman. Yet the two archetypes share the same social context, of what was, overall, a horrifying era in English history. Witchcraft, demonology, plague, famine, war, over population, Reformation, and uncertainty were shared components in the psyche of both the landsman and the seaman.*

*The interpretations of those misfortunes were manifested by the sailor in a quintessential maritime fashion. Because sailors were faced with unknown and exotic environments that trumped the mundane climate of the English village in all forms of arousal. Because the mariner was absorbed into an entirely distinct subculture in the shipboard machismo of young fearless crewmates under sail. Because the English seaman was absent from the grasp of society's moral framework, Jack Tar was defined by his experiences as a mariner. What happened on shore was only secondary. The maritime community holds on to its defining characteristics throughout much of history, but makes subtle accommodations reflecting the context of the year's collective conscience.*

