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**SOCIETY**

Perhaps, the authors conclude, historians should focus less on the South and more on what William Faulkner called the North's "volitionless, almost helpless capacity and eagerness to believe anything about the South."

*Witchcraft: Off  
on a Technicality*

"Les procès de sorcellerie au Parlement de Paris (1565-1640)" [Sorcery trials in the Parlement of Paris (1565-1640)] by Alfred Soman, in *Annales—Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* (vol. 32, no. 4, 1977), Librairie Armand Colin, 103 Boulevard Saint-Michel, 75240 Paris, France.

Witchcraft trials were common in France during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. During the 17th century, however, the highest court in the land, the Parlement of Paris, began to reduce the sentences meted out to men and women convicted of sorcery.

According to most modern scholars, the Parlement's harsh attitude began to change only in 1624 when, after long association with Sorbonne theologians and Parisian freethinkers, the judges decreed that henceforth all sentences by lower courts entailing torture or execution be automatically subject to appeal. Some Western historians have argued that this more lenient judicial attitude reflected a "mental revolution" brought on by the dawn of scientific rationalism.

Not so, says Soman, a historian at the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique in Paris, who has examined newly available archives relating to 750 trials held between 1565 and 1640. In fact, he writes, the Parlement had treated sorcery with surprising clemency since the mid-1500s. Growing sophistication in jurisprudence, together with social changes—a lull in France's Catholic-Huguenot religious warfare, for example—affected the Parlement's treatment of sorcery more deeply than did changing intellectual theories. Finally, the men of the Parlement, "long before doubting the reality of sorcery itself," were concerned with the strict application of accepted legal methods—such as rules of evidence—in sorcery cases.

*Suicide and  
the Schools*

"Behind the Discipline Problem: Youth Suicide as a Measure of Alienation" by Edward A. Wynne, in *Phi Delta Kappan* (Jan. 1978), P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, Ind. 47401.

Many Americans now believe that lack of "discipline" is the public schools' biggest problem. Wynne, a professor of education at the University of Illinois, contends that the disorderliness of American adolescents masks a much deeper and more subtle malaise. For two decades, bellwether indices of social disorganization—youth drug and alcohol abuse, homicides, teen-age pregnancy—have been steadily