

**Revivals And Church History :: Sattler, Michael (d. 1527) (from Gameo)**

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1958 Article

Sattler's Pre-Anabaptist Life

Michael Sattler, an outstanding Anabaptist leader and martyr of South Germany, was born at Staufen in the Breisgau near Freiburg, Germany, about 1490. The Hutterite chronicle relates that he was a learned man. All of his writings show that this was a fact. He was familiar with the original languages of the Bible; for in his trial he offered to prove his teaching from these languages. But where he was educated was not yet known in the 1950s. His name is not on the matriculation lists of the University of Freiburg; nevertheless it is possible that as a monk in the nearby Benedictine monastery of St. Peter he attended lectures at Freiburg. Nor is it known when he entered the monastery. In the monastery he reached the office of prior, second only to the abbot, as is reported in the Berner Chronik (V, 185 ff.) of Valerius Anshelm, whose wife was a native of Staufen. This also agrees with the mocking question why he did not remain a lord in the monastery, put to Sattler by the soldiers just before his death in Rottenburg in 1527, to which Sattler replied, "According to the flesh I would be a lord; but it is better so."

The Reformation caused great excitement in the Breisgau area; Freiburg seethed. In Kenzingen Jakob Otter preached the evangelical doctrine, in Neuenburg Otto Brunfels, in Schlatt the venerable dean Peter Spengler. Sattler began to study the Pauline epistles in the monastery, and soon discovered that the way to righteousness before God was not the one required by the old church and the monastic life. The earnest, morally upright monk was horrified by the unspiritual life of the priests and monks. He knew the dangers of celibacy as required by the Catholic Church. He therefore left the monastery and married a Beguine, whom Anshelm called "a talented, clever little woman." But now he could no longer stay at home, since Ferdinand I of Austria, the ruler of the Breisgau, under the influence of Cardinal Campegio, had ordered the extirpation of heresy. He went to Zürich in 1525, and there, probably under the influence of Reublin, he joined the Anabaptists. With Muntprat of Konstanz and Konrad Winkler of Wassberg, near Uster, he zealously preached in forests, and among others won Jakob Zander, of Bülach, called Schmid, for the Anabaptist cause. It is improbable that he attended the first Zürich disputation with the Anabaptists, 17 January 1525, or the second, 20 March 1525; but it is certain that he was present at the third on 6 November 1525, for the authorities were now aware of him and expelled him on 18 November. Sattler appears in the Zürich court records twice, on 25 March and 18 November, 1525, both times as a prisoner, both times required to swear the Urfehde and to be expelled from the canton. Both times he was before the court in company with other Anabaptist leaders including Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and Georg Blaurock (TA Zürich). He returned to his home town, but could not stay under the bloody regimen of Ensisheim (the seat of the Austrian government of the Breisgau in Alsace). He turned to Strasbourg, where Capito received him in his home.

The Theology of Sattler and Denck Compared

At Strasbourg Sattler met Hans Denck; but very soon the great difference in their views became apparent. Sattler adhered to the principles of the Zurich Brethren, whereas Denck was more independent. Sattler clung to the letter of the Scripture, whereas Denck rated the inner Word, the revelation of God in the human spirit, above the written Word. Both questioned the Lutheran doctrine of justification and also held works to be important to man's salvation, but they differed on Christ's work of redemption. Sattler agreed with Protestant teaching: "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). Denck rejected the concept of total depravity, for every man, he said, bears in him a spark of God's Spirit, and is related to God. Christ is our example and shows the way to become one with God. The confession of Christ's death or reconciliation he disregarded. Though he did not expressly deny that Christ's suffering is reckoned to the believer, he put it into the background. On the other hand, he stressed that Christ by fulfilling the law has opened the path which no man could find alone. In other words, Denck's emphasis was on Christ as an example rather than as a sacrifice.

Sattler wanted to build a church of Christ, pure, God-fearing, and genuine, cleansed by the blood of Christ to be holy and blameless before God and men. His brethren were God's obedient children, who had separated from the world. Denck's writings contain practically nothing about the church and the world. Nowhere, except in the debated conclusion of his booklet Von der wahren Liebe, does he discuss the relation of the church to the world and its attitude toward government, to military service, or other requirements.

Sattler and Denck also differed on the value of baptism. Sattler believed that through baptism the believer was admitted into the church of the saints. Denck did not place much value on the sacraments, which were for him nothing more than external symbols. Denck's entire concept of church and baptism is derived from the great influence of Mysticism, as represented by Tauler, Deutsche Theologie, and the Imitation of Christ.

Sattler, like the Reformers, taught that Christ came to save all who believe on Him, but that he who does not believe will be condemned. Denck taught that Christ died for all, and that God has destined all men for salvation. In Denck is seen the bold flight of the spirit which wants to penetrate into the deepest questions of faith. Sattler clung to humble simplicity and withdrew from highflying spirits and theologians (Schriftgelehrte).

#### Sattler's Discussion with Bucer and Capito in Strasbourg

After Denck, Ludwig Haetzer was staying in Capito's home; but the serious, quiet, and upright Sattler was repelled by the restless and impure man. His association with Capito and Bucer was so much the more sincere. He presented to them a summary of Anabaptist teaching after consultation with the Anabaptists of Strasbourg, which shows a mystical-quietistic piety, but at the same time a deep inwardness and holy earnestness. The points of discussion between them were baptism, communion, power or sword, oath, and the ban. Sattler drew up his articles of faith as follows:

Christ has come to save all who believe in Him.

He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.

Faith in Christ reconciles us with the Father and gives access to Him.

Baptism seals all the believers into the body of Christ, who is now their Head.

Christ is the head of His body, that is, of the believing church.

As the Head, so shall the body be.

The predestined and called believers shall be conformed to the image of Christ.

Christ despises the world; His children shall do the same. He has no kingdom in this world; the world is against His kingdom.

The believers have been chosen out of the world; therefore the world hates them.

The devil is the prince of all the world; through him all the children of darkness reign.

Christ is the prince of all spirits; through Him live all that walk in the light.

The devil seeks to destroy, Christ to save.

The flesh is at enmity with the spirit, the spirit with the flesh.

The spiritual are Christ's; the carnal belong to death and the wrath of God.

Christians are quite at rest and confident in their Father in heaven, without any external worldly armor.

Christ's citizenship is in heaven, not on the earth.

Christians are the family of God and citizens of the saints, not of the world.

But they are the true Christians who do the teachings of Christ with works.

Flesh and blood, display, worldly honor, and also the world cannot comprehend the teachings of Christ. In short, Christ and Belial have nothing in common.

Capito and Bucer discussed these points with Sattler in "brotherly discipline and peace," but did not reach an agreement. Sattler realized the untenability of his situation. On the one hand, he must have feared that the learned theologians would influence him to change his mind, which would for him denote a denial and blasphemy of God. On the other hand, he feared that if he persisted in his views he would fall into the hands of the authorities.

#### The Schleithem Conference

It is probably right to assume that in the last months of 1526 (not in 1527) Sattler went into the Hohenberg territory in Württemberg in response to an invitation by Reublin. There he wrote a letter of farewell to Capito and Bucer, defending his departure. Reublin and Sattler divided the Hohenberg region between them, Reublin taking the work south of Rottenburg, and Sattler in the north, with his headquarters in Horb. Sattler was very successful and won a large following for the Anabaptist movement in and around Horb. His influence is indicated by the fact that he presided at the conference at Schleithem on 24 February 1527, which adopted a confession of faith drawn up in seven points and sent to the brotherhood in the form of an epistle (see Bräderlich Vereinigung). Though these articles did not attain the status of a full confession of faith, they offered a firm foundation for the High German and Swiss Anabaptists, and at the same time rejected the libertinism of a man like Haetzer. The goal set by Sattler for the Brethren was the creation of a holy church, which was forbidden all association with persons of other faiths, all participation in the religious services of Catholic or Protestants, all association in civilian life including trade, all acceptance of public office, all use of weapons and legal compulsion, and all swearing. At the same time Sattler created a proper organization. Each congregation was to choose and dismiss its "shepherd." The "shepherd" had the leadership of the congregation in his hand in the broadest sense, especially the conducting of worship services, communion, reading, admonishing, teaching, reproving, banning, and audible prayer. Ver

y carefully Sattler provided for the preservation of the office of preaching during persecution, so that the congregations should never lack a firm hand, even though their preacher should be banished or killed. The seven articles of the Schleitheim Confession testify to Sattler's holy zeal and his unfeigned warmth and devotion.

#### **Sattler's Arrest and Trial**

When Sattler returned from Schleitheim, the Anabaptists had already been discovered at Rottenburg, without Sattler's having any premonition of it. Then at the end of February he with his wife and Reublin's wife, Matthias Hiller, and Veit Veringer of Rottenburg, and a number of men and women of Horb were arrested. The government had made a valuable catch. For on Sattler were found not only the seven articles, but also some important written notations on the plans and activities of the Swiss Brethren. The authorities did not trust the feeling in Horb, and the prison was not strong enough or large enough for the great number of prisoners; they feared a revolt. Therefore the prisoners were led by Count Joachim von Zollern and the foremost officials, with fourteen horses, to the more secluded town of Binsdorf. Here Sattler wrote a letter of consolation to the congregation at Horb. He admonished them to be steadfast and bade them farewell. For he was constantly threatened, now with the rope, now with fire, and now with the sword. But these did not terrify him; with his wife and brethren he had committed himself entirely to the will of the Lord, but he knew that martyrdom awaited him.

The Innsbruck (Austria) authorities, under whose jurisdiction this territory fell, had decided to hold court in Rottenburg, and on 18 March the towns of Ueberlingen, Radolfzell, Stockach, and Villingen received orders to send two judges each to Rottenburg. The University of Tübingen was also required to send two doctors of the imperial law, since it was feared that laymen might pass an unsuitable verdict, and also because they wanted to be protected against public opinion, which might have accused the government of dealing too lightly with so serious a matter as a religious trial in committing it solely to the laity. The trial was set for 12 April; but all sorts of hindrances interfered. Horb refused to deliver the prisoners to the court. The government was acquainted with the mood of Horb and had therefore taken the four Anabaptist leaders to Binsdorf.

The strictly Catholic University of Tübingen also flatly refused to send two lawyers, for they knew that the outcome would be a death sentence, which would disqualify them for the priesthood; some had already taken the first steps toward entering the priesthood, and others were planning to do so soon, and they could not be consecrated if they took part in a criminal court. The university also raised the objection that it had a burden of work accruing from the courts in its own principality, whereas Rottenburg belonged to another rule. And finally they noted that the Rottenburg parish belonged to the University of Freiburg, which should therefore be interested in an ecclesiastical trial in Rottenburg. Did the government feel that the real motive behind the university's refusal was horror of the capital punishment its representatives were to approve?

With amazement the authorities noted the large number of appeals for mercy for the prisoners, an indication of the mood of the people. For Count Joachim, a man of indolent calm, and his officials the entire case, which was creating so much work, was most inconvenient. How easily they could have been relieved of the work of holding court by simply calling in the imperial provost Aichele to hang the Anabaptists quietly on the nearest tree, as the Swabian League did! The Count actually made this proposal to the government. The government replied contemptuously that the honor of the house of Austria did not permit execution without trial and sentence. Even Ferdinand, who in his hasty manner declared "the third baptism," i.e., drowning, the best antidote to Anabaptism, and who had expressed the wish that Sattler be drowned without delay by Aichele, but felt that for the others there was no need to hurry, was persuaded to postpone the court session to 17 May. Ehingen was added to the towns mentioned above which were to send representatives to Rottenburg. Freiburg also sent two men, though they were not members of the university. The Innsbruck authorities appealed to Stuttgart to use its influence on the University of Tübingen to send two jurists; they were not to be doctors of spiritual law, but of temporal law, who were laymen. Once more the university protested that it had no jurists but those who were now priests or about to take orders, and claimed papal and imperial law. Indeed, on 6 May the university sent two of its members to Stuttgart to present their refusal to send delegates. Stuttgart rejected the appeal, for it wanted to please Innsbruck. A clever evasion was agreed upon, probably suggested by Stuttgart. Two doctors actually went to Rottenburg; they were better paid than was usual for the first court session; they were, however, not doctors of law, but of the arts. They were Georg Farner of Kirchheim and Balthasar Stumpff of Waiblingen.

Now Innsbruck also considered it necessary to call two men from Ensisheim because of their wealth of experience in religious trials. But there was no other government with so bad a reputation as Ensisheim. Their lack of earnestness and strength was matched by an ambitious attitude, full of sycophancy toward their superiors and bloodthirstiness toward their inferiors. The men sent by Ensisheim had no lack of experience in or of inclination for "Blutgericht." They were the city secretary Eberhard Hofmann and Jodokus Gundersheim, the city secretary of Neuenburg.

Michael Sattler and his wife, Veit Veringer, and Matthias Hiller, who had thus far spent eleven weeks and three days in jail, were taken to Rottenburg by the mayor of Binsdorf, Peter Putz with twenty-four horsemen. Since Count Joachim feared a revolt in the town fifty-six additional foot soldiers were drawn from the villages of the lower district and sent to Rottenburg.

On Wednesday, 15 May 1527, the judges called to the trial were already assembled, so that the court could open. According to the Villingen chronicle the court consisted of twenty-four judges. The chairman was the "Landeshauptmann" Count Joachim of Zollern. The attorney for the defense was the mayor of Rottenburg, Jakob Halbmayr, whom Sattler made responsible for the outcome of the trial; but he appeared only at the beginning and the end of the trial. During the trial, feeling inadequate to the position, he had Hofmann speak for him. The assumption is probably correct that this eloquent legal expert was the conspicuous character in the affair and that he was responsible for the cruel sentence, which aroused great excitement.

There are four accounts of the course of the trial; the simplest and most credible has the title, *Ayn neues wunderbarlich es geschicht von Michael Sattler zu Rottenburg am Neckar sampt andern 9 mannen seiner lere und glauben halben verbrannt und 10 wyaber ertrenkt, 1527* (copy in the Wolfenbüttel library, photostatic copy in Mennonite Historical Library (Goshen, Indiana, USA)). This account is based on the narration of Klaus von Graveneck, a Swabian who had presumably been forced to come to Rottenburg with arms to protect the court. He was a Protestant. In the Peasants' War he had in person gathered a company of peasants and was therefore arrested, and not released until 5 May 1526. His sisters Kunigunde and Margarete had been nuns in the Künigsfelden convent, but had married Zürich clergymen. The account was probably written by a brother-in-law of Klaus von Graveneck and printed in Zürich. The second account appeared as an appendix to the *Brüderlich Vereinigung* and was headed, *Folgen die Artikel und Handhabung, so Michael Sattler zu Rottenburg am Neckar mit seinem Blut bezeuget hat* (Walther Kähler, *Flugschriften* II, no. 3). This appeared in a Dutch translation with some of Sattler's writings as early as 1560 (reprint 1565). The third account is *Eines Wiedertäufers Nachricht an die Brüder und Schwestern des Schweizerlandes von Hinrichtung einiger ihrer Secte zu Rothenburg am Neckar und der dabei vorgefallenen Wunderzeichen*, printed in Fässlin (II, 374-88), written by Reublin and sent to the Brethren in Zollikon, Gräningen, Basel, and Appenzell. A fourth account is found in the chronicles of the Hutterian Brethren, published by Josef Beck (pp. 26 ff.). A fifth account, written by Johannes Schlegel of Ravensburg, first preacher at Zürichberg, then assistant in Döbendorf, then three years in Bernese territory, about 1525 assistant in Hünegg, 1528 pastor in Otelfingen, 1530 in Elgg, d. 1552, has not yet been found. Christian Friedrich Sattler gives brief but independent data certainly based upon material in the state archives.

The trial opened on Friday, 17 May and continued on Saturday. On the bench of the accused sat Michael Sattler, his wife, Matthias Hiller, Veit Veringer of Rottenburg, and seven other men and eight other women. According to the Villingen chronicle there were fourteen defendants. First they were given their choice of attorney. Sattler, speaking for the group, declined the offer, since it was not a legal matter. The way of law was forbidden them by God's Word; he was willing to be shown the contrary from the Word of God. Sattler spoke in a courteous, modest, but definite manner. Very wisely he called the judges the servants of God, thereby on the one hand recognizing their authority, though of course only to the extent that it did not concern religious matters, and on the other hand he appealed to their conscience by calling attention to their responsibility. Sattler briefly questioned the competence of the court. But no attention was paid to this objection, for they had been appointed by the Austrian government, and were therefore competent.

#### The Charges Against Sattler

Count Joachim now had the charge read. It comprised nine articles, seven of which pertained to all the defendants, and two to Sattler alone. The charge is not unskillfully written, but it reveals that there was no understanding for the Anabaptist case, and that the authors did not even have the pertinent facts about the Anabaptists. An analysis of its contents follows.

The first article accused the Anabaptists of trespassing against the imperial mandates. Anabaptism was therefore to this court not only a religious crime, but also a civil crime. It meant not only the overthrow of the Roman Church, but of the entire Christian Church, an unchristian attack against the faith, which placed the Anabaptists on the same level as the Turks; and in addition it was a secret revolt. The mandates had been posted in all the churches and town halls. This being the case, the court was of course competent. The emperor was the protector of the church—this was the premise and conclusion of medieval history—and the church was none but the Roman Catholic Church. This church, its doctrine, its organization, and its law were alone valid on Austrian soil. What had been going on for ten years to prove the untenability of this medieval view did not exist for Austria; and where it showed itself it was to be extinguished like a dangerous fire.

The first article concerned the law of the church acknowledged by the empire; the others were concerned with the splendors of this church in its means of grace and miracles, first of all with its sacraments. The second article accounts the Anabaptist denial of the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation, indeed of the presence of Christ in the emblems, as a crime; the third, their rejection of infant baptism; the fourth, their rejection of the extreme unction. The seventh article, which is incorrectly placed, belongs here. It reproaches the Anabaptists with an unheard-of practice in the communion; they broke bread and wine together into a dish and took them together. It is not known where this charge originated. The Schleithem Confession presupposes the Biblical manner of breaking bread. It must be assumed that a false rumor played a part here, connected with the term "breaking" the bread, which was foreign to the judges. From the Roman Catholic point of view breaking the bread was in itself unthinkable, since the bread was the body of Christ. The fifth article accused the Anabaptists of despising the "Mother of God" and the saints. The sixth dealt with their refusal to swear an oath to the government. These were the charges made against all the Anabaptists.

The last two articles applied to Sattler alone. The eighth charged him with the crime of abandoning the monastic order and marrying; his appointment as an Anabaptist preacher was evaded. In the ninth article a statement of Sattler's, perhaps taken from one of his writings, was cleverly put at the conclusion, which made him an especially dangerous man in the eyes of any Austrian. He was accused of having taught that if the Turks came into the country, no resistance should be offered; indeed, if war could be morally justified, he would rather fight against the Christians than against the Turks. This charge could not fail to make the deepest impression on the court. The Turks for years had been considered the worst foe of the empire and the Christian faith. Vast sums of money had been sacrificed by the faithful and paid as a Turkish war tax to make war on this arch foe of Christendom. The Turks had caused Ferdinand inexpressible distress; at great pains he had aroused the German estates and raised an army to fight the Turks. And now the Turk was to be considered less dangerous than he and the representatives of the old faith. To be sure, Sattler was not charged, as other Anabaptists had been, with having made an alliance with the Turks, but the charge that was made was sufficient to make him an arch-traitor to the empire.

A glance over the nine articles shows that the center of gravity rests in the first article, and that besides it only the sixth and ninth were important. Accusations concerning the erroneous views on the sacraments and disregard for the saints were actually the concern of the ecclesiastical court at Konstanz and not of the secular court at Rottenburg. How was the secular court to consider a man a criminal on the basis of a question of the communion or baptism or for marrying, when no other crime could be proved against him? Was Sattler not right in claiming that the court was not competent?

But the accusation was based on the law of the empire. The faith of the Catholic Church was the only legitimate one in the empire. This had been confirmed by all the imperial mandates since the Diet of Worms in 1521; and these mandates were alone valid in Rottenburg. The view of the law was still that of the Middle Ages. Opposed to it stood a new world in the person of Sattler and the Anabaptists. They sponsored the principle of faith and freedom of conscience and adherence to the Word of God, but this concerned only a minority and was not the law of the empire. To the representatives of the medieval world it must have appeared as arbitrariness, or even sedition. But the course of the trial was even for that time a horrifying one. Responsibility for this state of affairs must be placed on the indolence and bungling of the presiding judge and the venom of the secretary of Ensisheim.

#### Sattler's Defense

Sattler now consulted the other defendants as to the manner of the defense. Then he began, unafraid, skillfully, but modestly, to discuss each article in its turn. At first he tried to refute the charge that the Anabaptists were disobedient to the imperial mandates; for these required that the Lutheran doctrine and error should not be followed, but alone the Gospel and the Word of Christ. This the Anabaptists had done. But the mandates threatened not only Lutheran doctrine, but all deviation from the Gospel as Rome understood it; to the Catholics, the Anabaptists were merely a Lutheran sect.

On the second article Sattler admitted at once that the Anabaptists rejected the teaching of the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the communion and attempted to prove his point as Luther and Zwingli had done: Christ had gone to heaven and was seated at God's right hand. If He is in heaven, He is not in the bread and cannot be eaten. Also on the third article Sattler admitted the charge. He did not try to conceal that the Anabaptists repudiated infant baptism. The command to baptize has faith precede baptism. Baptism is merely the symbol of the covenant with Christ. On the extreme unction Sattler made a distinction between oil as a creation of God, which is good, and the pope's oil. The pope had never created anything good. The oil mentioned by Mark and James was not the pope's oil. Here Sattler had a good point, but he assumed too much on the part of the judges.

The charge that the Anabaptists despised Mary and the saints Sattler could deny with a good conscience; but he had to admit that they believed that Mary was not yet elevated, but, like all men, awaiting the judgment; they did not accept her

as a mediator and intercessor. But in the eyes of the court, such an attitude was contempt. As saints Sattler would acknowledge only those who live and believe. Dead believers he called the "blessed ones."

The charge that they refused to render an oath Sattler justified with Matthew 5:34, 37. Sattler hardly found it necessary to refute the charge that the Anabaptists ate bread mingled with wine as the Lord's Supper; at least none of the accounts of the trial recorded it.

After Sattler had answered the charges against the Anabaptists in general he turned to the accusations made specifically against him. He justified his departure from the monastery with the knowledge derived from the study of the Pauline epistles, that the monastic position was an unchristian, deceptive, and dangerous one; and from his own experience of the life and conduct of the monks and priests, their show, deception, usury, and their great fornication in seducing this man's wife, that one's daughter, and the third man's maid. Paul had prophesied this in 1 Timothy 4:3.

Concerning the last point Sattler admitted that he had taught that if the Turk should come, no armed resistance should be made, for it is written, Thou shalt not kill. We should not resist any of our persecutors with the sword, but with prayer clinging to God, that He may resist and defend. Sattler even admitted having said that if war were right, he would rather march against supposed Christians who persecute, capture, and kill the God-fearing. The Turk knows nothing about the Christian faith; he is a Turk according to the flesh. But you want to be considered Christians, boast of being Christ's, and still persecute His pious witnesses. You are Turks according to the spirit. To this strong admonition to the conscience of the court, Sattler added in conclusion that it was their calling to punish the wicked and protect the good. He could bear witness that the Anabaptists had done nothing contrary to God and the Gospel. Likewise the closest examination would substantiate that he and his brethren had never opposed the government by any act or word, neither in revolt or sedition nor in any other way. He demanded that experts be called and the Bible used in the original languages; a debate should be arranged. The Anabaptists were ready to be taught from the Bible. If they were proved to be in error, they would gladly bear the punishment. "But if we are not shown to be in error, I hope to God that you will accept teaching and be converted." The idea that the judges might be taught and converted by Sattler seemed so peculiar to them that they put their heads together and burst out laughing. The secretary of Ensisheim snapped at Sattler, "Yes, you rascal of a monk, should we dispute with you? Yes, the hangman shall and will dispute with you." The chairman found not a word to say in defense of the accused. Sattler did not allow himself to be disturbed and replied, "What God wills, will happen." His calm earnestness irritated the city secretary, so that he cried, "Indeed, it would be good if you had never been born, you arch-heretic; you have seduced pious people. If they would only acknowledge their error and commit themselves to mercy!" Sattler replied, "Mercy is with God." One of the other defendants said, "It is wrong to deviate from the truth." Now the wrath of the secretary reached its limit. He cried, "Yes, you desperate rascal, you arch-heretic, I say, if there were no hangman here, I would hang you myself and be doing God a good service thereby." Reublin reports that he had partly unsheathed his sword and said, "If you do not desist, I will execute you myself with this sword." Reublin probably confused a later scene with this one.

#### The Sentence and the Execution

The secretary may have felt that his poisonous attitude was making an unfavorable impression on the court, and began to speak in Latin with Sattler; this Klaus could not record, for he did not understand it. He remembered only Sattler's last word, "Judica." Now the city secretary became aware that he was playing a role that was not his. He therefore turned to Count Joachim with the words, "He will not cease this chatter today anyway. Therefore you may proceed with the sentence; I call for the decision of the court." Now Joachim asked Sattler whether he wished to ask for the verdict. Sattler replied, "You servants of God, I am not sent to judge the Word of God; we are sent to testify; but we are not for that reason removed from being judged, and we are ready to suffer and to await what God is planning to do with us. We will continue in our faith in Christ as long as we have breath until we are shown from the Scripture to be wrong."

Again the city secretary replied instead of the chairman, repeating the threat, "The hangman will instruct you and will debate with you, you arch-heretic!" Sattler replied, "I will appeal to the Scriptures." At this point the discussion was broken off. The judges withdrew to consult on the verdict. Their discussion evidently did not proceed as smoothly as the city secretary had imagined, for it lasted one and one-half hours.

The Anabaptists were then committed to the soldiers. Sattler saw himself subjected to scenes similar to those his Lord and Master had experienced. One cried to him, "When I see you get away, I will believe in you." Another seized his sword from the table, drew it, and said, "See, with this we will dispute with you." Klaus von Gravenneck was horrified by all these words of contempt which were not at all fitting to the gravity of the situation; he felt that in such a situation one would have pitied the worst murderer, and here he saw innocent people tormented with no defense. Sattler's silence toward all personal insults annoyed the soldiers. One of the prisoners said, "Pearls should not be cast before the swine." Once more

Sattler began to speak when someone asked him why he had not remained a lord in a monastery. It seemed incomprehensible to the man that anyone would for the sake of his faith sacrifice the haughty rank of a priest and the comfortable life of a prior in a monastery. Then Sattler answered, "According to the flesh I would have been a lord, but it is better so," and then showed from the Scriptures that his exchange was a fortunate one.

The period of painful waiting came to an end. The judges reappeared; the verdict was read. It read, "... Michael Sattler ... shall be committed to the executioner. The latter shall take him to the square and there first cut out his tongue, then forge him fast to a wagon and there with glowing iron tongs twice tear pieces from his body, then on the way to the site of the execution five times more as above and then burn his body to powder as an arch-heretic."

Klaus von Gravenneck adds, "All this I saw myself. May God grant us also to testify of Him so bravely and patiently." Reublin says that the trial lasted two days, that the verdict was read on Saturday, 18 May, and that when the sentence was read, Sattler's wife comforted him with great joy in the sight of the entire crowd.

Before the prisoners were led away, Sattler had another conversation in a private chamber with the mayor of Rottenburg, whom Sattler had made responsible for the final verdict, although it is to be assumed that the city secretary of Ensisheim bore most of the guilt for the sentence. Sattler said to the mayor, "You know that you with your fellow judges have sentenced me contrary to law; therefore take care and repent. If you do not, you will with them be condemned to eternal fire in God's judgment."

Three more days were granted Sattler. Reublin is probably correct when he says, "What fear, conflict, and struggle flesh and spirit must have undergone, cannot be imagined." Sattler had agreed with his group to give a sign as evidence of his constancy and cheer. There is a difference of opinion concerning the day of Sattler's death. The Anabaptist chronicles and the *Ausbund* give 21 May as the day of his martyrdom. Klaus von Gravenneck gives 20 May. Reublin says, "Sattler lay in prison from Saturday to Monday and was executed on that day." It is most likely that the Anabaptist chroniclers became confused in their counting by the termination of the imprisonment "until the third day," and thought Sattler was executed on Monday, 20 May. This is also the opinion of Hulshof (p. 65) and Baum, Capito und Butzer (p. 373).

First Sattler was taken to the market place and a piece cut from his tongue, but not enough to prevent speech. Then pieces were torn from his body twice with glowing tongs. Then he was forged to a cart, and between the city gate and the place of execution the tongs were applied five times again. The number of times the tongs were used is variously given. The sentence ordered two and five applications, Reublin speaks of six, Capito in his letter to the Council of Horb of two and five. The place of execution is a quarter hour's walk from the town close to the highway to Tübingen. The tortures of the unfortunate victim under the tongs, a monstrous heightening of the execution, must have been unspeakable, but nothing could shake Sattler. On the market place and the site of the execution he prayed for his persecutors and Klaus von Gravenneck. When he was bound to the ladder with ropes to be pushed into the fire, he admonished the people to be converted, to repent and fear God, and to intercede for his judges. Then he turned to the judges. He especially remembered the mayor and the admonition given him in private. The mayor replied defiantly and angrily that Sattler should concern himself now only with God. Then Sattler prayed, "Almighty, eternal God, Thou art the way and the truth; because I have not been shown to be in error, I will with Thy help on this day testify to the truth and seal it with my blood."

Reublin says that a sack of powder had been tied around Sattler's neck to hasten his death. He was now thrown into the fire on the ladder; then his voice could be heard bright and clear with prayer and praise. Soon the ropes on his hands were burned through. He could now raise the two forefingers of his hands, thereby giving the promised signal to his group, and prayed, "Father, I commend my spirit into Thy hands."

Reublin could not avoid adorning Sattler's death with miracles. He reports that Sattler's right hand and his heart did not burn. The executioner cut the heart to pieces, the blood spurting high toward heaven. In the night after Sattler's death the sun and moon were seen for three hours above the site of execution with golden letters in them. The glow had been so bright that everyone thought it was midday. The authorities forbade anyone's speaking of it under oath, in order to suppress the matter. The death of Sattler, steadfast to the end as a martyr to his faith, does not need adornment from Reublin's imagination.

Three other Anabaptists were executed, among them Matthias Hiller. The furrier's apprentice of St. Gall, the wife of Stoffel Schuhmacher, and Salome Katler (in) of Rottenburg had recanted publicly. These like all other recanting Anabaptists were lighted out of Rottenburg with burning torches, and expelled forever from Austrian territory. Veit Veringer, who had first recanted and then returned to the Anabaptists, lay in prison at Schönmberg for over thirteen weeks and was then executed. Valerius Anshelm relates that the countess of Hechingen, i.e., the wife of Joachim von Zollern, tried to persuade

Sattler's wife to desist from her faith and stay at her court. But she declared that she would be true to her Lord and to her Christian husband, and was drowned in the Neckar on the eighth day after her husband's death. She would have preferred to die in the fire with him. According to some reports she was drowned on Wednesday, 22 May.

#### The Reaction of the Public

Sattler's character lies clearly before us. He was not a highly educated divine nor an intellectual; but his entire life was noble and pure, true and unadulterated. The impression made by his death sentence in Rottenburg was profound. Klaus von Gravenneck's horror is clearly felt in his report. It is as if the hand of Heinrich Hug, the chronicler of Villingen, trembled when he concluded his narrative about the Anabaptists in Rottenburg with the words, "It was a miserable affair, they died for their conviction" (Publikation des Literarischen Vereins 164, p. 459). Especially great was the impression on Strasbourg, where Sattler was personally known. Word had scarcely been received there that four others had been executed in addition to Sattler, and that still others lay in prison, when Capito seized his pen and on 31 May wrote to the council of Horb, "This Michael is known to us here in Strasbourg and he was somewhat in error, which we showed him through the Scriptures; but since he saw a lack in our preachers and other preachers of the true doctrine, especially in the outward life of the congregation, he perhaps paid less attention to our admonition. But at the same time he showed such great zeal for the honor of God and the church of Christ, which he would have pure and blameless and without reproach to those who are outside. We never censured this but praised it highly, but his method and the articles of his faith we always kindly rejected, and that after mature reflection before God. Now we did not agree with him herein. He wanted to make pious Christians through a fixed creed and outward compulsion, which we considered the beginning of a new monkery. But we desired to correct the life of the believers through consideration of God's good deeds, which He has shown us in body and soul, that it might be a fruit of love and gratitude, for this is the way and the order of salvation" (Baum, 373). Bucer speaks with equal respect in his *Getreue Warnung* (July 1527): "We do not doubt that Michael Sattler, who was burned at Rottenburg, was a dear friend of God, although he was a leader of the Anabaptists, but much more skilled and honorable than some."

Reublin's booklet seriously embarrassed the Austrian government, which would have liked to issue a counter report, but feared that nothing fruitful would result, and rightly so. But one consequence of the enormous excitement caused by Sattler's execution can be observed. In Württemberg the authorities now had the Anabaptists indoctrinated by clergymen, at this time by the Tübingen professor Käuffelin, to persuade them to recant.

The Anabaptists ascribed to Sattler the hymn, "Als Christus mit seiner wahren Lehr," which is in the *Ausbund* of 1583. Keller (ADB XXX, 412) considers Sattler the author of the leaflet, *Wie die Gschrift verstendiglich soll unterschieden und erklaert* (n.p., n.d.). Michael Sattler was as deserving of a monument at the site of his execution as John Huss in Konstanz.

On 16 August 1957 the Sixth Mennonite World Conference dedicated a memorial plaque to Michael Sattler in the Lutheran parish church in Rottenburg, at which time a special memorial service was held. -- GBos, HSB

<http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/S280.html#Life>

#### **Re: Sattler, Michael (d. 1527) (from Gameo), on: 2012/5/13 18:19**

Indeed this precious saint died a noble death. Yet against the backdrop of Luther and Calvin he is not known. I ask how many in Sermon Index have heard of Michael Sattler or the Anabatist? Yet their contribution to church history is largely forgotten.

I understand Sermon Index has a 4 part series on the history of the Anabatists. I would like to listen to it. I believe it is an audio file. Can someone please tell me where to find it?

Bearnaster.



**Re: Sattler, Michael (d. 1527) (from Gameo) - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2012/5/13 18:22**

not sure what you refering to, but this series is very good [https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic\\_id=26775&forum=35&34](https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id=26775&forum=35&34)

**Re: - posted by proudpapa, on: 2012/5/13 18:29**

I would recommend a series by Denny Kenaston

**Re: Sattler, Michael (d. 1527) (from Gameo) - posted by proudpapa, on: 2012/5/24 23:41**

As I have been studying the lives and works of the early anabaptist and the reformers, I have been shocked at the lack of compassion and Grace that the early reformers had toward anyone that slightly disagreed with them, one such instance is what John Calvin wrote in regards about the martyrdom of Michael Sattler in his Treatise Against the Anabaptist and Against the Libertines

**Re: Proudpapa, on: 2012/5/25 7:07**

Very sad. But true. Have you read The Anabaptist Story by William Estep? Also Leonard Verduin had written two books regarding the Anabaptist. One is The Reformers and their Steadfast Children. And the other is Anatomy of a Hybrid. All three books give a sympathetic treatment of the Anabaptist and their contributions to the kingdom.

Bearmaster.

**Re: Have you read The Anabaptist Story by William Estep? Also Leonard Verduin had written two books - posted by proudpapa, on: 2012/5/25 7:07**

I have not read these books. Thank you for the recommendation.