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MICHAEL SATTLER AND THE SCHLEITHEIM ARTICLES

A Study in the Background to the First Anabaptist Confession of Faith*

INTRODUCTION

On 24 February 1527 the small town of Schleithem in the canton of Schaffhausen played host to a meeting of various Swiss and South-German Anabaptist representatives.¹ This meeting produced a set of seven written articles which became known as the 'Schleithem Confession'.² The importance of the Confession for any understanding of early Swiss Anabaptism is clear. Schleithem is the first systematic attempt to codify those beliefs which the early Anabaptists saw as distinguishing them from the magisterial reformation; notably that taking place in Zurich under Zwingli.³ More importantly perhaps, the Confession was an attempt to outline a common basis of faith around which the burgeoning Anabaptist movement could rally and by which those with different understandings might be excluded.⁴ The Confession was circulated quickly and many copies were made.⁵ Zwingli felt it necessary to publish a refutation in the same year and stated that: 'There is almost no one among you who does not have a copy of your so well founded commandments.'⁶ The Confession was seen to be important in its contemporary setting and can therefore be examined as one of the more influential documents for our understanding of the early Anabaptist movement in the Swiss and South-German context.

The name of Michael Sattler has been associated with the Confession ever since Sebastian Franck spoke of the 'Articles of Michael Sattler' in 1531. Tradition has subsequently held Sattler to be the driving force behind the Confession, even though others may have been involved in the process of their compilation.⁷ In the past the role of Sattler within the Swiss Anabaptist movement has been neglected, due partly to the lack of material which is pertinent to his life and work.⁸ The full-scale and detailed treatment by C. A. Snyder, *The Life and Thought of Michael Sattler* (1984), has ensured that the question of Sattler's contribution to the movement (Schleithem in particular) is once more on the agenda of Anabaptist scholarship.⁹

This article takes issue with Snyder's treatment of one area: the origins and basic source of the thought expressed in the Schleithem Confession. It will seek: (a) to apply the recent work done on Sattler and South-German/Swiss Anabaptism to the Schleithem Confession in order to locate the background to the thought it contains; and (b) to examine the contents of each article within the Confession in order to discover the distinctive emphases which indicate Michael Sattler's own contribution to the development of the Swiss stream of Anabaptism.¹⁰

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Perhaps the most impressive mark of Snyder's work on Sattler is to be found in the biographical section.¹¹ He has marshalled all sorts of evidence from different sources and provides a respectable and coherent reconstruction of how and why Sattler left the monastery of St Peter's and joined the growing Anabaptist movement. The comments below provide a brief outline of Sattler's career, focusing attention on the possible links between Sattler and the early Swiss Anabaptist movement.

a) Birth and Early Education

All are agreed that Sattler was born at Stauffen in the Breisgau. His exact date of

* This essay is a revised version of a dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in 1989. I am grateful to Dr W. M. S. West for his support and advice during its preparation.

birth is not known, though most scholars place it at around the year 1490. All records are silent concerning the intervening years until he entered the monastery of St Peter's. However, some have posited that Sattler had been educated in Hebrew and Greek which would indicate a humanist education.¹² If correct, this might have important consequences for our understanding of his thought. The lack of any convincing evidence in favour of such a conjecture means that '.... the question of the extent and quality of Sattler's education remains an open one.'¹³

b) Benedictine Monk

It is not known when Sattler entered the Benedictine monastery of St Peter's near Freiburg, but there is general agreement that he probably reached the position of Prior. Neither is it certain when or why Sattler left the monastery. Despite the lack of evidence, however, Snyder believes that we can reconstruct the atmosphere which must have prevailed at St Peter's at the time Sattler was there.¹⁴

Snyder believes that the background of Benedictine monasticism is the key to unlocking Sattler's thought.¹⁵ His basic contention is that the monastery of St Peter's was involved in the 'Bursfeld Reform', a monastic reform movement which involved a return to the Rule of St Benedict as the basis for monastic life and a reform of monastic practice. Under this reform movement, 'St Peter's of the Black Forest experienced an infusion of religious vitality'.¹⁶ One of the most important figures stemming from the Bursfeld movement, according to Snyder, was Abbot Johannes Trithemius, whose writings Sattler may have known.¹⁷ That Sattler's theology expressed in Schleithem, among other writings, is derived in part from reformed Benedictine monasticism is evidenced by the comparison which Snyder undertakes between Sattler's writings with the Rule of Benedict and the writings of Trithemius.¹⁸

Snyder has been taken to task over his understanding of Benedictine monasticism at the time of Sattler. Dennis Martin has injected 'a note of caution' into the issues concerning Benedictine reform and Sattler's background in the movement.¹⁹ Martin is not at all certain that St Peter's was involved in the Bursfeld reform.²⁰ Nor is he convinced that the writings of Trithemius represent 'the mainstream of the reformed Benedictine spiritual tradition'.²¹ These are crucial criticisms of Snyder's argument for:

Despite the tenuousness of the claim of St Peter's links to the Bursfeld reform, the rest of Snyder's book is based on the assumption that Sattler's monastic formation occurred in a center of monastic reform.²²

Perhaps there is a more important basis for Sattler's thought than that of monasticism, despite the contact which Snyder has brought to light.

c) The Peasant Revolt

That it was unlikely that Luther's teaching, or even that of Zwingli, had made significant inroads into St Peter's monastery has been conclusively shown by Snyder. Any notion that Sattler left St Peter's due to exposure to specifically Lutheran or Zwinglian doctrine is now discredited.²³ Snyder finds a more congenial explanation for Sattler's departure in the context of the 'peasants' war' of 1524-5. In May 1525 a Black Forest peasant troop invaded St Peter's monastery in protest at the taxes being imposed on them by Abbot Jodocus.²⁴ Such an event is for Snyder a 'prime occasion' for Sattler's departure based on his sympathy with the peasant cause. Once again Dennis Martin has warned against basing too much on Snyder's reconstruction which appears at best to be informed guess-work. The evidence does not permit of any firm conclusions either way on the question of when and why Sattler left St Peter's.²⁵

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It is generally agreed, however, that the reformation at the popular level was closely linked with the peasant protest. Dissatisfaction with the taxation imposed by the monasteries and radical anti-clericalism were features both of the peasant revolt and of the early reformation which at times provided religious justification for political protest. It is unwise to rule out the possibility that Sattler's first exposure to reformation teaching may have come through the peasant activity around St Peter's and that his writings may at times reflect some of the more 'revolutionary' concepts inherent in the peasant uprising. But the evidence does not allow full endorsement for Snyder's conclusion that Sattler left with the invading troops of 1525, though the overall point of contact between Sattler's situation in St Peter's and the peasant unrest seems to be sound.

d) Anabaptist Beginnings

The events in Zurich which led to the baptizing of George Blaurock in January 1525 are well documented.²⁶ The connection between Sattler and these Zurich radicals is usually based on three dates in the sources which Snyder examines in detail.²⁷

(i) *5 March 1525*²⁸ - A reference to a 'Brother Michael in the white coat' who was brought before the Zurich council and who 'swore to desist'. For Snyder, this cannot be Sattler because he was still resident at St Peter's until May 1525. Furthermore, the fact that a 'white coat' would have been worn by a Cistercian (Benedictines wore black) makes it highly unlikely that the person here questioned by the authorities about his Anabaptist connection is Michael Sattler.

(ii) *18 November 1525*²⁹ - Here the records refer to 'Michael Sattler of Stauffen in the Breisgau', who 'shall be dismissed under oath never to return and payment of costs'. As Snyder points out, all the quotation proves is that Sattler was in the company of Swiss Anabaptists on that date. It indicates nothing about his commitment to the Anabaptist cause, or whether he had yet been baptized.³⁰

(iii) *After 21 May 1526*³¹ - Hans K uenzi, a weaver from the town of Oberglatt, north of Zurich, was a supporter of the Anabaptist cause. In a letter written to the Zurich council he refers to a 'Michael who earlier had also been your prisoner'. Snyder rightly takes this Michael to be Sattler. The next phrase has been the subject of disagreement. In German it reads '*im ist aber nit also*'. Snyder translates it 'but for him the case is not as it is for me'. On this interpretation K uenzi is denying that the Michael who came to stay with him (Sattler) is an Anabaptist as K uenzi himself is. Heinhold Fast, however, has demonstrated that the phrase should be translated 'but it is not this way'. On this understanding K uenzi is denying that the person who came to him was Sattler who had previously been a prisoner in Zurich. The letter therefore says nothing about Sattler not already known.³²

These arguments over who is which Michael and where he was at what time are bewildering yet important. Within this debate two dates are significant. The first is 18 November 1525, where Sattler's name appears in the company of Swiss Anabaptists; the second is the date of the Schleithem synod, 24 February 1527. There is almost a year and a half between them during which it may be assumed that Sattler was given some exposure to the teachings of the Zurich radicals. Given Sattler's likely knowledge of the basis of reformation teaching via the peasants, it would only take a short time with the Swiss Anabaptists and the developing thought of people such as Grebel and Manz to ensure that Sattler was aware of their emphases at a relatively early stage. It would be difficult to insist on any long-term contact with Grebel and Manz: they stayed in prison long after Sattler took the oath and left the Zurich area. Grebel died soon after the escape from prison of 21 March 1526. Manz seems to have spent a lot of his time before his death in the Gr uningen area

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south of Zurich. Nevertheless, it is likely that Sattler's links with Zurich continued, possibly through some of the other Swiss Brethren who were expelled with him or soon afterwards. When he left Strasbourg in 1526/7 he was a fully committed Anabaptist, as his farewell letter to Bucer and Capito demonstrates.³³ Because Snyder does not allow for any real contact between the Zurich radicals and Sattler, he looks instead for an explanation of Sattler's religious development in his monastic background.

e) Anabaptist Career

Klaus Depperman has made a strong case for the existence of Sattler's Anabaptist convictions by the time of his arrival at Strasbourg.³⁴ The farewell letter to Bucer and Capito must not be seen as an attempt at reconciliation but as a sort of Anabaptist 'manifesto' which was to form the basis of the Schleithem Confession. While in Strasbourg Sattler may well have been in contact with Hans Denck and possibly Wilhelm Reublin. Such contacts do not materially affect the argument, since Sattler's thought was already well developed at this stage. Sattler left Strasbourg some time after January 1527 and the next major appearance was at Schleithem. Shortly afterwards he was arrested, tried, and eventually tortured and executed on 20 May 1527.³⁵

What then does the history of Michael Sattler tell us about the possible background to his thought as found in the Schleithem Confession? Three lines of enquiry have arisen:

1. *Sattler's monastic background.* This is the crucial element in Snyder's thesis but it is sometimes based on less than satisfactory evidence, though such a background must have had some influence.
2. *The peasant uprising and localised reformation.* Again the evidence concerning Sattler's links with the movement is scanty and therefore conclusions about this background cannot be made with any certainty.
3. *The early Zurich Anabaptists.* Sattler's link with Grebel and other Zurich radicals can be clearly sustained. Thus the early Swiss Anabaptist movement can be considered a vitally important source for Sattler's thought.

Because of his reluctance to apply this third argument to Schleithem, Snyder spends most of his time discussing the first two options. The contention of this study is that Sattler's time in Zurich did play a role in the development of his thought. Just how important a role will be seen when the Confession is examined in detail.

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Article 1 - Baptism

Snyder helpfully summarises this article by highlighting five elements. The Confession states that baptism entails: (a) repentance; (b) amendment of life; (c) belief in the forgiveness of sins; (d) death and resurrection with Christ; (e) a voluntary act.³⁷ These statements, based upon the 'writings and practice of the apostles', necessitate a rejection of infant baptism.

For Snyder, the background to Sattler's views on baptism is the initiation rite of profession within monasticism, whereby the novice monk would make his vows. Material is drawn from the Rule of St Benedict which helpfully parallels the statement of Schleithem regarding repentance, amendment of life, the life of discipleship and the voluntary undertaking of one's vows. Snyder also points to the tradition which sees the monastic profession as a second baptism.³⁸ He poses the question: 'Might the ecclesiological dimension of Sattler's teaching on baptism have important roots in the Benedictine tradition?'³⁹

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The clear answer to that question is: 'Yes, it might'. But Snyder's treatment begs several questions. First, *any* initiation rite usually entails a break with the past and certain instructions for the future. When set in a religious context this usually entails a commitment to an ethical or moral code which is binding on the initiate for the future. Snyder's comments about initiation could be applied to any form of monastic vow, circumcision or baptism. There is nothing particularly Benedictine about the exhortation to a set of moral guidelines following an act of initiation, just as there is nothing particularly Anabaptist about it either. Secondly there is much in the Schleithem statement that has no parallel in a Benedictine background: the reference to the death and resurrection of Christ and the baptismal candidate's participation in it, the exclusion of infant baptism, and rejection of the pope and appeal to Scripture – all these must be accounted for elsewhere.

The emphasis on participation in Christ's death and resurrection can partly be explained in terms of Sattler's biblicism and the assumption that he had read Romans 5-6. But in the early Swiss Anabaptist teaching on the subject of baptism are to be found statements which are more in line with the concerns of Schleithem. Felix Manz's 'Petition of Defence' to the Zurich authorities in 1524 is one example.⁴⁰ He states:

..... only those should be baptized who reform, take on a new life, lay aside sins, are buried with Christ, and rise with him in baptism in newness of life.⁴¹

Much of this document is taken up with proving that infant baptism is unscriptural, with a hint of anti-papal polemic.⁴² Conrad Grebel expresses similar concerns:

The Scripture describes baptism for us, that it signifies the washing away of sins, by faith and the blood of Christ (that the nature of the baptized and believing one is changing before and after), that it signifies one has died and shall [die] to sin and walks in newness of life and Spirit

The most prolific author on the subject of baptism among the radicals around 1525 was Hubmaier. Many of his statements were written in the context of dialogue with Zwingli and so it comes as no surprise to see Hubmaier's overwhelming concern for the interpretation of Scripture and the Fathers on the subject.⁴⁴ It is likely that Manz, Grebel and Hubmaier relied for their views on baptism, in part, on the work of Carlstadt, indeed it is probable that Manz's *Protestation* is a partial copy of one of Carlstadt's works.⁴⁵

Sattler's first article, it can be argued, simply represents the views of baptism which were current among the first Swiss Anabaptist leaders around the year 1525. There is no need to appeal directly to a Benedictine tradition, though the teaching that Sattler received in Zurich may have confirmed what he had learnt about the importance of initiation rites at St Peter's.

Article 2 - The Ban

The article which deals with the ban comes, significantly, between the articles dealing with the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. As such it links the two together – only those who have been baptized are to be publicly admonished before the congregation. That admonition must take place before the fellowship meal of bread and wine. Snyder is right to see here a concern for both the unity and the purity of the church.⁴⁶ Once again the appeal is made to Scripture, in this case Matthew 18, as the justification for such action, though the article nowhere explicitly commands the expulsion of the erring party from the congregation. It may well be that the expectation was that after the public admonition the guilty party would

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repent. Only if such repentance was lacking would the ban be necessary.

Snyder once again wishes to see the background for these statements in the Rule of St Benedict.⁴⁷ For both Schleithem and the Rule the ultimate measure used to reprimand a baptized believer/professing monk is expulsion from the community. But there the similarity ends. For the monks, expulsion is only one in a series of increasingly drastic measures by which those who are disobedient may be punished. Schleithem only recognises the ban. In the Rule of St Benedict the abbot and monastery seniors play a vital role in the disciplinary process. Though Schleithem gives the responsibility for the actual banning itself to the shepherd in Article 5, here the emphasis is on the role of the whole community in the process.

A survey of the Anabaptist literature of the early period indicates that the distinctive material of the Schleithem article has its basis in ideas that derive ultimately from the Zurich radicals. That the congregation was to play a role in excommunication was an Anabaptist position hammered out in controversy with Zwingli. Though Zwingli allowed for a congregational role, he also stressed the role of magistrate to bring about discipline.⁴⁸ For their part, the Zurich radicals insisted that the sole authority for disciplinary action lay with the congregation and, as time developed, with its shepherd. Consider the following statement from the interrogation of Jacob Hottinger, Hans Bichter and Hans Ockenfuss in March 1525:

If anyone transgresses against the promise and commandment which they give to those whom they baptize, him they exclude and put out from among them.⁴⁹

From the earliest period then the ban was used with those who had been baptized and who had broken the promises they made at their baptism. This fits in well with the sentiments of Schleithem. Slightly later Conrad Grebel writes:

Concerning the church he said that whoever is a coveter, ursurer, gambler, or the like should never be [included] among Christians but be excluded by the ban, as taught in Scripture.⁵⁰

The appeal to Scripture is not particularly significant here, but again the statement is evidence that the use of the ban was endorsed by Grebel in order to maintain the purity of the community. This receives confirmation in his letter to Müntzer where Grebel states that:

Anyone who will not reform or believe and strives against the Word and acts of God and persists therein, after Christ and his Word and rule have been preached to him and he has been admonished with the three witnesses before the church such a man shall not be put to death but regarded as a heathen and publican and left alone.⁵¹

In the earliest Anabaptist congregation in Zollikon, Jacob Hottinger was responsible for church discipline.⁵² Kessler's testimony to the same phenomenon also insists that the only means of discipline available to the Zollikon congregation was the ban,⁵³ reminding us of one of the emphases of Schleithem. The same teaching is also to be found in Hubmaier: the link between baptismal promises and the ban, the role of the church in excluding the person concerned, and lastly a connection between the ban and the Lord's Supper (albeit within the context of the restitution of the person excluded).⁵⁴

Sattler's teaching as seen in Schleithem can again be said to rely heavily on the views of the early Swiss Anabaptist movement. Some of Sattler's Benedictine background may be influential, but the distinctive emphases cannot be accounted for in that way. Sattler relies heavily on the thought of those who preceded him in their

commitment to the Anabaptist cause.

Article 3 - The Lord's Supper

Much of the controversy over the Lord's Supper within the Reformation period concerned the nature of the bread and wine - in what way were they the body and blood of Jesus Christ? The third article of Schleithem places itself clearly on one side of that discussion, but is essentially concerned with a different question: that of who may partake of the elements. The article therefore focuses on the subject of unity within the body of Christ. Such unity is achieved through the process of church discipline based on the vows made at baptism, the entry point into the body of Christ.⁵⁵

At no point does Snyder seek to compare the Benedictine understanding of the Eucharist with the thought expressed at Schleithem. The Rule has no specific article dealing with the subject. This is no doubt because Snyder accepts that the origins of this statement are to be found in the thought of the Zurich radicals which in turn relied on the teaching of Zwingli. Such a conclusion leaves Snyder open to criticism. If Sattler's view on the Lord's Supper is very different from that to which he would have been exposed in the monastery and more likely derives from the Zurich radicals, the question may be posed: 'If Sattler learnt his views of the Lord's Supper from Grebel *et.al.*, then why not the rest of his teaching?'

Zwingli's understanding of the Lord's Supper has been well documented.⁵⁶ He saw the Eucharist service as a commemoration of the passion. The elements were symbols and remained bread and wine throughout the service. This understanding was mediated via the links between Zwingli and the early radicals into the mainstream of Swiss Anabaptist thought. In his controversy with Luther and others, Zwingli was concerned with three issues: the nature of the elements, the role of Christ in the Eucharist, and the way in which the Supper was to be celebrated. Zwingli also at one point makes reference to the Supper as 'an inward and outward union of Christian people'.⁵⁷

The major difference between the Zwinglian understanding of the Supper and that of Schleithem is that the latter bases its position on that understanding of the church which lies behind the articles on baptism and the ban. Schleithem's insistence that those who partake of the feast have been 'called out of the world unto God' finds no parallel in Zwingli. His *corpus christianum* in Zurich meant that it was by virtue of citizenship of the city as well as membership of the church that an individual was to partake of the Supper. Indeed the two factors were inseparable. Separation from the world of darkness which is emphasised in Schleithem is not to be found in Zwingli.

Within the writings of Grebel and Hubmaier exists a correlation with Schleithem, especially over the issue of the unity of the body of Christ. Grebel expresses concern over this subject as early as December 1522 when he writes concerning his mother among others:

And the time begins to appear when many - would that it not include her also - eat the body of Christ unworthily and to condemnation if they have not in brotherly fashion forgiven the sins of others.⁵⁸

The letter to Müntzer expresses similar sentiments. In the articles dealing with the Lord's Supper, number 16 speaks of the bread being 'an incorporation with Christ and the brethren', number 19 refers to the unworthy partaker breaking the bond of love between the brothers. Article 17 is closest to Schleithem:

..... if faith and brotherly love are already present, it shall be eaten with joy,

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for when it is thus practiced in the church it ought to show us that we are and want to be truly one loaf and body and true brethren to one another.⁵⁹

Hubmaier also bears witness to the concern for unity among the early Swiss Brethren. He states that the Lord's Supper is:

..... a public token and testimony of love in which one brother pledges himself to another before the church the Supper is a sign of brotherly love to which we are obliged.⁶⁰

F. H. Littel points out that when questioned in court, Anabaptists testified that they had avoided communion due to their own unworthiness.⁶¹ Thus the major concern of the Schleithem article, that of the unity of the body, can be traced back to elements in Zwingli's teaching, communicated through the radical statements on the subject into Sattler's thought.

The odd thing about such conclusions is that Snyder at one point agrees with them:

It is clear that the first three Schleithem articles restate the basic doctrines of early Anabaptism. We have little difficulty in explaining Michael Sattler's attraction for the Anabaptism he found in the Zurich Unterland in the summer of 1525: in Anabaptism he found his true monastery.⁶²

This is a peculiar statement when set in the context of a book which seeks to play down the influence of the Zurich Anabaptists on Sattler's thought, but it may indeed be more accurate than the rest of Snyder's book suggests.

Snyder, however, makes his strongest contention against such an influence when dealing with the remaining articles. These he sees as bearing witness to the overriding sectarian framework which is Sattler's own unique contribution to Anabaptist thought. Such sectarianism, according to Snyder, cannot be located in the thought of the earliest Zurich radicals and so must be found in Sattler's Benedictine background.⁶³ Certainly the radical separation envisaged in Schleithem is a development upon earlier Anabaptist statements. It is a *development*, however, and not a totally new emphasis. Despite the links with Benedictine teaching, it can still be argued that Sattler was relying on and expanding teaching which he received at the hands of the Zurich Anabaptists.

Article 4 - Separation from the World

It is here that we find the most explicit statement of the separatist view of the church which undergirds the confession. The article is dualistic in both terminology and emphasis. Those who do not belong to the body of Christ are, quite simply, of the devil. Believers are to have no fellowship with the world. This separation ensures that the punishment of the world does not come upon those who believe. The final part of the article gives examples of those groups and actions which are an 'abomination' and so to be shunned. Such an emphasis is radically at variance with the teachings of both the Catholic Church and the Reformers, who believed in a church to which one belonged by virtue of one's birth and baptism. It was a church of the people, a *corpus christianum*. The only people to be excluded from membership of the Church were heretics and Jews.

In his article on 'The Monastic Origins of Swiss Anabaptist Sectarianism', Snyder outlines the two major doctrines which he believes led to Sattler's adoption of such a sectarian position. They are the emphasis of *imitatio Christi* and a Christ/Belial framework.⁶⁴ Such emphases must be located in his Benedictine background, for they are absent from the early Anabaptist teaching which at first followed the Zwinglian line and envisaged a territorial Church with Anabaptist emphases.

But Dennis Martin has pointed out quite clearly that the notion of *imitatio Christi*, which Snyder rightly locates within the *Devotio Moderna*, had other channels of expression besides the Benedictine one.⁶⁵ Snyder has rightly countered that the objection, though valid, does not help in any way because there is no evidence of a link between Sattler and, for example, the Hutterites who also emphasised the importance of discipleship.⁶⁶ There might have been an indirect influence of the *Devotio Moderna* through the writings of Erasmus. Both Grebel and Manz received first-class humanistic educations and familiarity with the teaching of Erasmus must have formed a part of that. It is at least possible that it is this stream which forms a part of the *Nachfolge Christi* theme in Sattler. With Snyder, it can be argued that Sattler's interpretation of the New Testament is also a possible basis for such teaching.

A scriptural background for the explicit dualism of the Confession may also be suggested. The Johannine literature, for example, revolves around dualistic metaphors of which light/darkness is only one. Martin has pointed out that Snyder's assessment of the monastic view of separation is also inadequate, for the monastics never suggested that salvation was unavailable outside of the monastery; yet Schleithem takes just that position: if you are not in the believing community then you are damned. Furthermore, the monastic view of community was centred on a sacramental ecclesiology and soteriology which Schleithem rejects. Thus the situation is not as straightforward as Snyder suggests and an alternative explanation may be essayed for Sattler's embracing a full-blown sectarian view of the Church.⁶⁷

The second point at issue lies in Snyder's contention that the first Zurich Anabaptists originally worked for a territorial church which embraced all the reforms which, in their view, Zwingli was not taking on board quickly enough. Snyder states categorically that the emphasis on believers' baptism, church discipline and the supper of believers did not automatically set the early Anabaptists apart from society. He concludes:

..... there was no inexorable logic driving early Anabaptists toward a radical sectarian position; the basic doctrines of early Anabaptists are also compatible with the establishment of territorial churches, given a receptive society and a nonsectarian interpretation of the Anabaptist distinctives.⁶⁸

Supporting evidence for such a conclusion is deduced from the fact that in the earliest days Swiss Brethren continued to hold civil office and some took up arms. The mass baptisms held by Grebel and the establishment of a city Anabaptist church at Waldshut by Hubmaier point to a similar conclusion. But the implication that because Grebel, Hubmaier, etc., did not have an explicitly sectarian view of the church, then Sattler must have learnt it from somewhere else (monasticism) does not follow. Snyder, for example, nowhere considers that Zwingli himself saw the emerging Anabaptist movement as sectarian in nature. In the *Elenchus* tract, Zwingli describes a proposal for a separate church brought to him by Grebel and Simon Stumpf probably in December 1523. The tract is polemical but probably a fairly accurate record of what took place.⁶⁹ Zwingli begins by referring to the Anabaptists as a 'sect', a designation which he uses regularly even in the earliest writings against them.⁷⁰ The most important evidence, however, comes from two occasions when Zwingli deals with Anabaptists and their views on baptism. The first statement is from a disputation in 1525. In the second public disputation of 20-22 March of that year, Zwingli responds to the justification of re-baptism by stating:

Note well that this is nothing other than monkery, sectarianism, a new legalism Naturally there are certain offences which have to be punished by the church and not by the Anabaptist sect.⁷¹

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Later in his treatise on baptism of 27 May 1525 Zwingli states that the activity of the Anabaptists was 'nothing but heresy, that is, sectarianism and partisanship'.⁷²

That the early Zurich radicals did not at first see their position on baptism as a sectarian decision is accepted. That Zwingli himself saw the sectarian consequences of re-baptism has been demonstrated. It may be argued that Sattler, like Zwingli, saw the consequences and implications of re-baptism more clearly than did the early radicals. The first adult baptism in Zollikon was the beginning of Anabaptism as a sectarian movement, the beginning of a trajectory which would eventually and inevitably move away from its origin in the Zwinglian reformation and from society as a whole. Sattler merely saw this before Grebel and Manz and gave the idea its earliest and clearest expression.⁷³ That notion was the cause of conflict between Sattler and the Strasbourg reformers, which was codified at Schleithem and which (partly due to Schleithem's influence) was to become an established Anabaptist distinctive. Sattler's Benedictine background may have informed his thinking but it was not the motivation behind it or the decisive element in it. The notion of separation which was implicit in the Zurich Anabaptist acceptance of re-baptism was made explicit at Schleithem.

Article 5 - Shepherds in the Church

This article deals with the oversight of the separated community and outlines both the role of the shepherd toward the community and the reciprocal role of the community with respect to its leaders. The notion of reciprocity is foremost in the consideration of church discipline. The shepherd can discipline members of the community and two or three of the community can discipline the shepherd. The article also reflects a situation of increasing persecution in the insistence that if a shepherd is 'led to the Lord by the cross' (a reference to martyrdom) then a replacement must be found immediately.⁷⁴

Snyder compares Sattler's shepherd with the person of the abbot within the Benedictine community.⁷⁵ He cogently outlines the similarities and differences between the two, and draws attention to the peasant protest concerning the appointment and support of the local pastor. His failure to consider the early Anabaptist teaching on the subject is probably due to the paucity of material, but what evidence there is suggests that Sattler's shepherd draws on the imagery and practice of the Swiss Brethren.

Zwingli often used shepherd imagery to describe leaders of congregations,⁷⁶ so the imagery and terminology of Schleithem should come as no surprise. Grebel's letter to Müntzer shows that he expected the congregation to play a major role in the financial support of the minister.⁷⁷ F. H. Littel has concluded about the early movement:

The Anabaptists redeemed lay religion, and did not view to[o] favourably any professional workers In the first years there were no paid clergy anywhere in the movement.⁷⁸

Congregational involvement at all levels, an important dimension of the Swiss Brethren movement, was reflected at Schleithem. The situation of persecution which the article reflects is illustrated by the execution of Felix Manx only weeks earlier on 5 January 1527. Immediate replacements in leadership roles were an urgent necessity.

Article 6 - The Sword

Sattler rejects the sword for two fundamental reasons. The first is that the sword can only function in the temporal sphere - the world. Separation from that sphere means that 'the sword is an ordering of God outside the perfection of Christ'. Secondly, the

sword must be rejected because of the example which Christ sets us. Sattler answers three potential questions. 'May a Christian wield a sword against what is wrong to defend what is right?' 'May a Christian judge in worldly disputes?' 'May a Christian be a magistrate?' The answer is negative in each case, based on examples from the gospels which must be followed by those who wish to be obedient to Christ.⁷⁹

Snyder relates this article closely to his study of Sattler's *Nachfolge Christi* and separation themes.⁸⁰ Such emphases can be traced back not only to Sattler's monastic background, but also to the earlier thinking of the Zurich radicals. There are two possible objections to seeing the same influence evident in this article. The first is simply that the earliest Anabaptists did not justify their stance of non-resistance on grounds of separation from the world. Snyder quotes Manz's statement that the Christian must not take up the sword because 'the Christian has no Scripture commanding it'.⁸¹ Stayer, however, has convincingly demonstrated that Grebel's rejection of the sword was based on an implicit decision to separate from the world:

The decision to separate the true Christians from the world had now led to the decision to separate them from the dirty work necessary to keep society functioning.⁸²

Grebel's letter to Müntzer provides support for such a conclusion:

..... the gospel and its adherents are not to be protected by the sword, nor [should] they [protect] themselves They use neither worldly sword nor war.⁸³

Grebel himself participated in Zwingli's short-lived experiment in Erasmian pacifism,⁸⁴ and this may help to account for Sattler's emphasis on following Christ's example here - a theme which may have been mediated to him from the pacifist stance of the *Devotio Moderna*, taken up by Erasmus, by Zwingli briefly and by the Zurich humanists.

The second possible and more important objection is that not all of the early Anabaptists followed Schleithem's rejection of the sword for Christians. The obvious and most important example is Hubmaier. His views, however, were essentially based on a different understanding of the church and are difficult to link historically with any background to Sattler's thought.⁸⁵ Despite the hesitation over separating from society and the sword before Schleithem, it was Sattler's and not Hubmaier's position which was accepted by the Swiss Brethren thereafter.⁸⁶

Once again we see that Sattler to a great extent relied for his understanding of these issues upon those who went before him in the Swiss movement. Schleithem provides a concrete statement on the subject of the sword which, though radical in expression, continues an emphasis which can be traced back to the Swiss Anabaptist movement. Thus Stayer's conclusion is to be endorsed:

There was nonresistant teaching in gestation among the Swiss Brethren before Schleithem and there were deviations from separatist nonresistance after Schleithem. Nevertheless, the Schleithem synod marks the formulation of an influential and distinctive teaching on the sword.

Nevertheless, Sattler's own contribution to this emerging understanding again arises in the form of an explicit sectarianism which:

..... while fully consistent with the previous development of the Swiss Brethren, seems to have been a personal contribution by Sattler.⁸⁷

Article 7 - The Oath

This article forbids the swearing of oaths on the basis of the teaching of Christ. As

such it stands as an explicit rejection of the teaching of the magisterial reformers who endorsed the swearing of oaths. Three possible objections are dealt with by Sattler: the fact that God swears by himself to Abraham, the apparent contradiction between Old and New Testament, and the fact that Peter and Paul swore. The answer to all these objections rests on Christ's command to let one's yes be yes and no be no, again demonstrating Sattler's radical interpretation of Scripture.

Snyder is right when he points out that the refusal of the oath is only really made an explicit teaching for the Swiss Brethren at Schleithem. Grebel makes no mention of it when writing to Müntzer and there is evidence that the Zollikon brethren at first swore the required oaths. Snyder prefers to locate the origin of Sattler's teaching on this in his contact with the Waldshut radicals, Teck and Gross, both of whom had been expelled by Hubmaier for refusing to bear arms.⁸⁸ The influence is less direct when one realises that when Sattler was in the presence of Teck he was also in the presence of both Grebel and Blaurock. It is the latter who provides us with the evidence that the matter of the oath was becoming an issue among the Swiss radicals. Zwingli testifies in the *Elenchus* that in January 1527 Blaurock initially refused to swear an oath despite being badly beaten, though he eventually gave in.⁸⁹ The refusal to swear the oath was obviously the action which Blaurock wished to take. Kessler also testifies that the early Anabaptists in St Gallen '..... did not swear, not even the obligatory civil oath to the government'.⁹⁰ Carlstadt was one of the first reformers to reject the oath based on the command of Christ.⁹¹ Even if neither Blaurock nor Sattler were aware of the writings of Carlstadt, Manz was: so it may have been the former's writings, as well as Teck, who formed the source of Sattler's teaching. But it was the position as outlined in Schleithem which was to become an important distinctive for many Anabaptists in the future.

This analysis of the individual articles of Schleithem has tried to maintain awareness of all the major possible sources for its teaching. The main objective, however, has been to pursue a line of enquiry thrown up by the earlier examination of Sattler's life: his link with the Zurich Anabaptists. That link can be seen in the thought and teaching of the Schleithem Confession which in many places depends on and develops the thought of some of the important figures in the Swiss Brethren movement.

CONCLUSIONS

1. This study in no way removes the undoubted importance of Snyder's work on Sattler, but his insistence that Sattler's links with Zurich were unimportant for our understanding of his thought is to be rejected. On the contrary, given the probability of a significant historical link between Sattler and the Zurich group, his writings - here limited to the Schleithem Confession - now need re-examination.

2. This present investigation has revealed that Schleithem in many cases reflects the teaching Sattler received from the Zurich radicals. Beyond that, Sattler's understanding of Scripture, and especially the New Testament, contributed to his espousal of some of the doctrines contained in the articles. Rather than relegating Sattler's link with Grebel, Manz and the others to the bottom of any list of influences upon his thought, this study shows that it must be re-instated at the top. The analysis also reveals those points at which Schleithem appears to be more radical than the Swiss Brethren. This, it is suggested, derives from the fact that Sattler saw more clearly and quickly the implications of re-baptism and the rejection of Zwingli's *corpus christianum* in Zurich.

3. There is a sense in which Sattler is less original than Snyder allows. He is not the 'actual founder of the Swiss Brethren movement'.⁹² Rather Sattler must be seen as the medium through which the sectarianism implicit in the early Swiss Brethren

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movement became explicit. There is also a sense in which Sattler is more original than Snyder allows since resort to monasticism as the tap-root for Sattler's sectarian position becomes redundant. That position arose because Sattler perceived the full implications of the step taken by the Zurich radicals more clearly than they themselves did. In short, Sattler was not unique, but neither was he merely a Benedictine monk wrapped in Anabaptist clothing.

4. What then of Schleithem? Was the meeting of 24 February 1527 the 'crystallisation point' of the Swiss Anabaptist movement? This study has demonstrated the essential continuity between Schleithem and the Swiss movement which preceded it. All movements eventually need to bring their distinctive elements into written form. Schleithem was the first attempt to distil the thought of many into a document which would form the basis of a new vision of a church separated from the world and living in unity. The trajectory which led to such a vision probably began in the teaching of such figures as Erasmus and Carlstadt and travelled via the simple biblicism and ecclesiastical reform which characterised Zwingli's work in Zurich. From there it moved by way of the peasant protest and the humanist scholars who were to break from the earlier reform and progress towards a new concept of the Church. Schleithem forms one stage along that trajectory which no doubt could be extended both backwards and forwards. It is there that the radical sectarianism implicit in Anabaptism was radically expressed for the first time. The task of tracing that trajectory through subsequent religious developments would, no doubt, prove to be an equally complex yet fascinating study.

NOTES

1. There are no eye-witness accounts of the meeting extant, nor any lists of those who were present. See C. A. Snyder, *The Life and Thought of Michael Sattler*, Scotdale, 1984 (hereafter *L&T*), pp.97-8.
2. A critical edition of the Confession can be found in J. H. Yoder, *The Legacy of Michael Sattler*, Scotdale, 1973 (Yoder), pp.34-43.
3. That this was one of the major purposes of the Confession is emphasised by Yoder, p.31, allowed for by *L&T*, p.100, and taken as the only purpose by F. Blanke, 'Anabaptism and the Reformation', in G. Hershberger (ed.), *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*, Scotdale, 1957, p.65.
4. Among those who conclude that Schleithem was essentially a polemical document aimed at other Anabaptists with antinomian or possibly spiritualistic tendencies are W. H. Meihuizen, 'Who were the False Brethren Mentioned in the Schleithem Articles?', *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (MQR) 41, 1967, p.209. E. A. Payne, 'Michael Sattler and the Schleithem Confession', *BQ* 14, p.342; G. H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, Philadelphia 1962, p.182, and *L&T*, p.100.
5. By the summer of 1527 Zwingli possessed four copies from different sources. See Yoder, p.32.
6. See Yoder, pp.32-3 for details. Excerpts from the *Elenchus* are in L. Harder (ed.), *The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism*, Scotdale, 1985 (Harder), see p.277 for details.
7. See Yoder, p.30: the tradition is 'so widespread as to be worthy of belief'. Snyder bases his case for Sattler's authorship of the articles on: (a) the witness of tradition; (b) the reports about Sattler's teaching by Bucer and Capito; (c) Comparison between Schleithem and other writings by Sattler. *L&T* pp.98-9.
8. See *L&T*, pp.23-9, for an examination of the difficulties in discovering biographical details for Sattler.
9. For a review of Snyder's book see W. Packhull, *MQR* 60, 1986, pp.108-111.
10. It is essentially that stream of Anabaptism which flowed out of Zurich into the Unterland with which this study is concerned, though we believe that Schleithem's influence can be felt beyond its immediate historical setting. There is still considerable debate concerning the origins of the Anabaptist movement. See J. M. Stayer, W. O. Packhull and K. Depperman, 'From Monogenesis to Polygenesis: The Historical Discussion of Anabaptist Origins', *MQR* 49, 1975, pp.83-121, where Sattler and Schleithem are placed firmly within the Swiss stream (pp.98-100).
11. Other biographical accounts of Sattler's career in English are: M. Haas, 'Michael Sattler: On the Way to Anabaptist Separation', in H. J. Goertz (ed.), *Profiles of the Radical Reformation*, Scotdale, 1978, pp.132-43; John Horsch, *Mennonites in Europe*, Scotdale, 1950, pp.70-9; G. Bossert, 'Michael Sattler', translated by H. Bender in *Mennonite Encyclopedia* IV, pp.427-34. These earlier works have now been superseded by Snyder who has demonstrated the extent to which many of their conclusions must now be viewed as invalid. See *L&T*, pp.23-9.
12. See Bossert, *op.cit.*, p.427; Haas, *op.cit.*, p.133. Sattler had a 'good theological education'.
13. *L&T*, p.24. See also Snyder, 'The Life of Michael Sattler Reconsidered', *MQR* 52, 1978, p.329.
14. *L&T*, pp.30-48.

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15. For a general overview of Benedictine monasticism see R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, Middlesex 1970, pp.217-30. For details of the monastic reform movements of this time, see K. R. Davis, *Anabaptism and Asceticism*, Scottdale, 1974, pp.54-63.
16. *L&T*, pp.44-5.
17. *ibid.*, p.48.
18. *ibid.*, p.109, for an outline of his method of comparison.
19. See the two essays by Martin, 'Monks, Mendicants and Anabaptists: Michael Sattler and the Benedictines', *MQR* 60, 1986, pp.139-64, and 'Catholic Spirituality and Anabaptist and Mennonite Discipleship', *MQR* 62, 1988, pp.5-25. Snyder has responded to the first article in 'Michael Sattler, Benedictine: Dennis Martin's Objections Reconsidered', *MQR* 61, 1987, pp.262-79. Martin does not wish to prolong the debate though he has written a further article, 'Of Smoking Guns, Hand Wringing, and Shoulder Shrugging: Sattler, Anabaptists and Benedictines', unpublished 1989.
20. Martin, 'Monks and Mendicants', pp.150-51.
21. *ibid.*, pp.152-3. See also the interesting article by Eoin de Bhaldraithe, 'Michael Sattler, Benedictine and Anabaptist', *Downside Review* (DR), pp.115-8, for a comparison between Sattler and Trithemius.
22. Martin, 'Monks and Mendicants', p.152. Snyder has subsequently shown more caution in his statements. Compare *L&T*, p.44: 'full scale monastic reform of St Peter's' and 'Michael Sattler, Benedictine', p.269: reform was a 'live issue'.
23. *L&T*, pp.49-54. See also his article, 'Revolution and the Swiss Brethren: the Case of Michael Sattler', *CH* 50, 1981, pp.276-87. Cf. Yoder, p.10; Haas, *op.cit.*, p.132; Bossert, *op.cit.*, p.427 states that it was through a study of the Pauline epistles that Sattler came to leave. There is no evidence to support such conjecture.
24. Snyder's reconstruction of this period can be found in *L&T* pp.55-66. The details of what happened need not concern us here.
25. See the Appendix to 'Monks and Mendicants', pp.162-4.
26. The literature is extensive. See for example G. H. Williams, *op.cit.*, pp.85-100, 118-21; F. Blanke, *Brothers in Christ*, Scottdale, 1961; W. R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, pp.8-17; W. M. S. West, 'Anabaptists and the Rise of the Baptist Movement', in A. Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism*, 1959, pp.237-48.
27. *L&T* pp.76-86.
28. L. von Muralt and W. Schmidt, *Zurich: Quellen zur Geschichte der Tauffer in der Schweiz*, Vol.I, Zurich, 1952 (Muralt & Schmidt), p.72.
29. *ibid.*, p.136, translated in Harder, p.442.
30. For the significance of Sattler swearing an oath at this point, see Snyder's conclusions, *L&T* p.80.
31. Muralt & Schmidt, pp.200-202.
32. Heinhold Fast, 'Michael Sattler's Baptism: Some Comments', *MQR* 60, 1986, pp.364-73. Snyder's reply can be found in *MQR* 62, 1988, pp.501-6.
- The situation is complicated by the existence of a Michael Wüst who may conceivably be the person mentioned in either the first or last reference.
33. For the text of this important letter to Bucer and Capito see Yoder, pp.21-6.
34. K. Depperman, 'Die Strassburger Reformatoren und die Krise des oberdeutschen Taufertums im Jahre 1527', *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* 25, 1973, pp.24-41. See discussion in *L&T* pp.91-6.
35. See *L&T* pp.91-107 for full details of this period in Sattler's life.
36. Snyder has a summary of the articles in *L&T* pp.114-23. See note 2 for details of Yoder's edition of the Confession.
37. *L&T* p.185.
38. *L&T* p.186.
39. *L&T* p.187.
40. Found in Muralt & Schmidt, pp.23-8. An English translation is in Harder, pp.311-5. See also K. R. Davis, *op.cit.*, pp.202-8. That Manz is the author of the *Protestation* has now been proved by Schmidt contra Bender and Blanke who claimed it for Grebel.
41. Harder, p.312.
42. *ibid.*, p.315.
43. Conrad Grebel, 'Letter to Thomas Müntzer', in Harder p.290.
44. For an analysis of Hubmaier's views on baptism see T. Bergsten, *Balthasar Hubmaier - Anabaptist Theologian and Martyr*, Judson Press, 1978, pp.274-97.
45. See C. A. Pater, *Karlstadt as the Father of the Baptist Movements: The Emergence of Lay Protestantism*, Toronto, 1984, pp.163-7.
46. *L&T* p.116.
47. *ibid.*, p.188. See 'The Rule of St Benedict', translated by Owen Chadwick in *Western Asceticism*, Library of Christian Classics, Vol.XII, pp.310-12, Articles 23-29.
48. See W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, Oxford, 1986, pp.269-74.
49. Muralt & Schmidt, p.65. Translation in Klaassen, *Anabaptism in Outline*, Scottdale, 1981, p.213.. It would be convenient if we could say that the Michael mentioned later on in those proceedings, Muralt & Schmidt p.73, was Sattler, but that possibility is ruled out.
50. Muralt & Schmidt, p.124. Translation in Harder, p.439. Sattler was with the Zurich radicals at the time Grebel held such views. See Muralt & Schmidt p.136.
51. Harder, p.290.
52. Muralt & Schmidt, p.66. See also F. Blanke, *Brothers in Christ*, pp.53-4.
53. See Harder, p.345.
54. See the examples of Hubmaier's view given in Klaassen, *op.cit.*, pp.213-5.
55. For Snyder's brief analysis of this article see *L&T* pp.118-7.
56. W. P. Stephens, *op.cit.*, pp.218-59. G. W. Locher, *Zwingli's Thought: New Perspectives*, pp.303-40. G. R. Potter, *Zwingli*, pp.287-342.
57. Stephens, *op.cit.*, p.225.
58. Letter to Vadian, 29 December 1522, translation

- Harder p.195.
59. Harder, p.287. Note the appeal to Paul's phrase in I Corinthians 10.17, also found in Schleithem.
60. Klaassen, op.cit., p.194.
61. F. H. Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church*, Boston, 1952, p.193 n.98.
62. *L&T* p.195.
63. See his conclusion on p.197 of *L&T* where 'an emphasis on the pure and separated community of saints' is seen as one of the 'monastic elements' introduced into Swiss Anabaptism by Sattler. See also his 'The Monastic Origins of Swiss Anabaptist Sectarianism', *MQR* 57, 1983, pp.5-26.
64. See the conclusion on p.25 of the article.
65. Martin, op.cit., pp.154-8.
66. Snyder, 'Michael Sattler, Benedictine', pp.275-6.
67. Martin, op.cit., pp.159-62.
68. Snyder, 'Monastic Origins', p.8; see also *L&T* pp.70-6.
69. See Harder, pp.276-9 for details.
70. It is true that the *Elenchus* was written in July 1527, after Schleithem. However in a letter to Vadian in 1525 Zwingli had already recognised that the issue had gone beyond that of baptism: 'You will find the reason why they must be so vigorously attacked. It is a sedition, a faction, a sect, not baptism.' Harder, p.375. On the question of the use of Zwingli's testimony as evidence see James M. Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword*, Lawrence, Kansas, 1972, pp.98-9.
71. Harder, p.355.
72. *ibid.*, p.363.
73. It is doubtful whether Hubmaier ever took steps to endorse such a view. The conclusion of James Stayer sums up the difference cogently: 'The conception of *corpus christianum* had already been implicitly rejected by Grebel in the letter to Muntzer and in the separatist implications of the Zurich re-baptisms. Hubmaier, on the other hand, saw adult baptism as a fundamental step in the purification and reformation of the *corpus christianum*.' Stayer, op.cit., p.105. It is very difficult to establish any personal links between Sattler and Hubmaier.
74. See *L&T* pp.118-9 for a brief outline of the article. Snyder fails to mention that the shepherd appears to have been chosen from within the congregation also.
75. *L&T* pp.189-91.
76. He preached a sermon called 'The Shepherd' and used the imagery elsewhere, see Harder pp.408-9 as an example. See also Grebel's derogatory comments about Zwingli as a shepherd, e.g. Harder p.276.
77. Harder, p.289.
78. Littell, op.cit., pp.91-2.
79. See *L&T* pp.119-21 and Stayer, op.cit., pp.11736. We are indebted to Stayer's analysis of this article which we believe helps to confirm our overall conclusion about the origin of Schleithem.
80. *L&T* pp.152-61.
81. *ibid.*, p.158.
82. Stayer, op.cit., p.103.
83. Harder, p.290.
84. Stayer, op.cit., pp.95-8.
85. See n.73.
86. Stayer, op.cit., pp.125-30.
87. *ibid.*, p.130.
88. *L&T* pp.144-5.
89. Harder, p.474.
90. Harder, p.382.
91. See Pater, op.cit., pp.101-4.
92. Snyder, 'Revolution', p.278.

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Spurgeon and the London Underground

Baptist preachers are not often quoted by historians of technology, but some words of Spurgeon are displayed in the London Transport Museum's special exhibition for the centenary of the 'tube'. For some years steam-hauled trains had run in tunnels only just beneath the surface with frequent smoke vents. Electric traction made the deep tube practical: the first line, the City and South London Railway from Stockwell to the Bank, opened at the end of 1890. An electricity generating station was built at Stockwell, close to Spurgeon's orphanage. In a letter to his former student, Charles Joseph, he lamented the nuisance caused: 'Alas the Electric Railway is doing us terrible damage by three engines fixed, 400 horsepower each, just against wall of girls' houses. They intend putting 3 more, and already they cause the houses to vibrate like ships at sea. I fear the law will give us no real remedy. I pray about it, and God can do more than the courts.' [10.2.1891: Spurgeon's College archives]. All early generating stations used reciprocating steam engines, and the vibration often gave rise to complaints of nuisance, only relieved when the steam turbine was introduced a few years later. How the problem was solved at Stockwell is not recorded, but neither the generating station nor the orphanage are there today.

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