

**The Saliger Controversy  
of the late 1560's  
and its relation and impact on  
The Formula of Concord**

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John Saliger was pastor of 4 churches in the 1560's. He began in Worden, which is in the present day Netherlands, then to Antwerp in 1566, then to Lubeck, Germany, then to Rostock, Germany where he was dismissed in October of 1569. He returned to Worden where he had begun his ministry. In his first years Saliger sided with Flacius in the controversy regarding original sin. However the controversy that brings about our discussion today involves various aspects of the Lord's Supper, its institution, doctrine, and practice. As is often the case with men involved in theological controversy, Saliger is accused of being stubborn, recalcitrant, and argumentative.

It was in Lubeck that controversy regarding the Holy Supper erupted. Saliger accused certain pastors of Lubeck of mixing consecrated and unconsecrated wine in the Lord's Supper, especially if that which was consecrated was running a little short. Discussion ensued about the necessity of consecrating new elements brought to the altar, and then to when, and for how long the presence of Christ's body and blood were present. The accusation was also made that some had mixed that which remained after the service with unconsecrated wine.

Saliger was dismissed from his call in Lubeck after only 6 months. He then became pastor in the neighboring city of Rostock, where, though he had promised not to revive the controversy, he soon was preaching and teaching about it, and the practice of the pastors in Lubeck. His tenure in Rostock was also short.<sup>1</sup>

Most people, most Christians, most Lutherans, and perhaps even most who would describe themselves as Confessional Lutherans have never heard of Pr. John Saliger. The controversy surrounding his preaching, and accusations toward other pastors in the cities where he was pastor were not new to the Lutheran Church. In fact Luther and Melancthon had dealt with these same issues over 20 years previously when a man named Wolferinus (*see the appendix at the end of this paper*) was promoting the very things that Saliger was preaching against. Luther's criticism of Wolferinus are in fact the back drop to the resolution of this matter as is shown in the Formula of Concord and below in this paper.

If the Saliger controversy had not arisen, that is if Saliger had never made his accusations toward the other pastors in the various cities to which he was called, likely the Formula of Concord would have never dealt with the subject, and today's Confessional Church would be left bereft of the proper foundation and hedge against false doctrine that it has today. The result would be that the church of Christ would again slip into its former errors.

And what are these errors? To be specific the error is a divided sacrament. In this case we are not speaking of dividing the sacrament, as in only offering the Body of Christ in and under the consecrated wafer to the congregants, as the Romanists do, but rather we are thinking of a second practice of the Roman Church which was consecrating the host for a purpose other than eating or drinking it within

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<sup>1</sup> Gaylin Schmeling, *The Saliger Controversy*, (This brief history of the Saliger Controversy is a summary of Gaylin Schmeling's summary in his paper 'The Saliger Controversy' found at the Bethany Lutheran Seminary Website, Mankato, MN.

the service of the church. This practice we have seen in Rome where they put the host into a ciborium, a tabernacle, or otherwise parade it through the streets in Corpus Christi festivals. The practice of not consuming all of which was consecrated came to the attention of Luther. He dealt with the aforementioned Pr. Simon Wolferinus who was mixing consecrated wine and wafers with the unconsecrated. There are a number of semantic matters of terms in the Saliger controversy, perhaps because of differences in the way Luther and Melancthon used terms, and perhaps also in a difference that began to separate the two men in their actual doctrine of the Holy Supper, especially in their understanding of the Words of Institution and presence of the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Formula of Concord only presents a part of the resolution of the Saliger Controversy. The actual resolution is recorded in a document called the Abschied, however much of its contents are not mentioned or quoted in the Formula of Concord. We will compare the two documents immediately below. This is of relevance however, because it becomes obvious that Saliger has the proper doctrine, but often uses terms that do not represent this doctrine well. This makes it difficult for those whom he accuses and those who seek to resolve the matter to properly define the issues, and to issue a proper statement of resolution. On the other hand sometimes arbitrators have prejudice. It appears that David Chytraeus has sympathies with Saliger's opposition, but can not find any specific condemnation of Saliger except in his use of terms.

The Formula of Concord does not condemn Saliger, or any other party, or even specifically the usage of terms that are condemned in the Abschied. It does define certain terms however. I believe this is because these usages can be found in some of the other Lutheran Confessions, particularly with Luther and Melancthon. The Abschied also has specific rebukes toward the various parties, particularly Saliger for using terms in a way that cause confusion and division. The "Der Abschied der Mecklenburgischen Herzöge also known as the Wismar Recess was issued in the name of Dukes Johann Albrecht I and Ulrich of Mecklenburg. Chytraeus was the main author of the Abschied. It is here set with the Formula of Concord in the opposing column for comparison.

1. The Dukes ... order ... all preachers and deputies (legenten) in ... the churches and University at Rostock not to stir up and incite unnecessary, vehement, and confused debates and arguments. Included among these is the question, "how and when and in what manner the bread in the Lord's Supper is the body of Christ?" The three disputed points concern (1) the presence of Christ's body and blood, (2) the consecration, and (3) the rule that nothing is a Sacrament outside the intended use. These main points are to be taught thus. (Enumeration was added by the writer of this paper.)

2. In the Holy Supper where the same is observed according to the order, institution and command of Jesus Christ, it is by virtue of the institution of Christ not only simple bread and wine but also the true essential natural body of Jesus Christ which He gave into death for us and His true, essential, natural blood poured out for our sins. These are present with the blessed, visible, and unchanged bread and wine. The body is not just figurative, representative or absent, nor is it there only in its power, effect, and benefit, but the body and blood are truly present given to us by Christ himself through the hand of His servant. They are received not only spiritually with faith, but also physically (leiblich) with the mouth. The body and blood are distributed to and received not only by the believing but also by the unbelieving (bösen Christen).

3. The blessing, as some call it, or recitation of Christ's Words of Institution by itself, if the entire action of the Lord's Supper as Christ ordained it is not observed, if, for instance, the blessed bread is not distributed, received, and eaten but is locked up, offered up, or carried about, does not make a Sacrament. But the command of Christ, "do this," which comprehends the whole action of this Sacrament (namely, that in a Christian assembly we take bread and wine, consecrate it, distribute it,

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*(Tappert)*

But the command of Christ, "Do this," which comprehends the whole action or administration of this sacrament (namely, that in a Christian assembly we take bread and wine, consecrate it, distribute it,

receive it, eat and drink it, and therewith proclaim the Lord's death), must be kept integrally and inviolately, just as St. Paul sets the whole action of the breaking of bread, or of the distribution and reception, before our eyes in 1 Cor. 10:16.

4. To maintain this true Christian doctrine concerning the Holy Supper and to obviate and eliminate many kinds of idolatrous and papistic perversions of this testament, the following useful rule and norm has been derived from the Words of Institution: Nothing has the character of a Sacrament outside of the use instituted by Christ, or outside of the divinely instituted action.

This rule dare not in any way be rejected, but it can and should be profitably urged and retained in the church of God.

In this context "use" or "action" does not mean the oral eating alone, but the whole action of the Supper with all of the parts that belong to it, included in Christ's institution.

5. "Although now in this complete inseparable action of the Holy Supper which indeed is properly named the Sacrament of the Holy Supper, Christ is truly and essentially present, and distributes and delivers His true body and blood with the bread and wine, since the true presence of Christ's body and blood is not to be denied before the reception, but in this church confessed with customary and useful statements; nevertheless the following strange statements which are not customary in our church and which are doubtful, obscure, and offensive should not be used in the schools and churches of this land. These statements are no where found in God's Word or the writings of Dr. Luther but are very commonly used among the Papists to confirm their magical blessing and the permanent inclusion of Christ's body under the form of the bread before and after the reception (Niessung). The following are such statements: A) That there is a Sacrament also before the use, sacramentum esse ante usum; B) again when the blessing is spoken the bread is no longer an element; again, C) that in St. Paul's words, 'The bread which we break is a participation in the body of Christ,' the word participation is to be understood as the joining

or unifying of the bread and body before the reception and not as referring to the eating by receive it, eat and drink it, and therewith proclaim the Lord's death), must be kept integrally and inviolately, just as St. Paul sets the whole action of the breaking of bread, or of the distribution and reception, before our eyes in 1 Cor. 10:16.

85 To maintain this true Christian doctrine concerning the Holy Supper and to obviate and eliminate many kinds of idolatrous misuse and perversion of this testament, the following useful rule and norm has been derived from the words of institution: Nothing has the character of a sacrament apart from the use instituted by Christ, or apart from the divinely instituted action (that is, if one does not observe Christ's institution as he ordained it, it is no sacrament).

This rule dare not in any way be rejected, but it can and should be profitably urged and retained in the church of God.

86 In this context "use" or "action" does not primarily mean faith, or the oral eating alone, but the entire external and visible action of the Supper as ordained by Christ: the consecration or words of institution, the distribution and reception, or the oral eating of the blessed bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ.

87 Apart from this use it is not to be deemed a sacrament, as when in the papistic Mass the bread is not distributed but is offered up, or locked up, or carried about, or exposed for adoration, just as the baptismal water is no sacrament or Baptism if it should be used to consecrate bells, or to cure leprosy, or is otherwise exposed for adoration. It was against such **papistic abuses** that this rule was first formulated

[The Formula of Concord refers to the Nihil Rule in Paragraph 83 just before the section here cited and again, in the Formula as cited here, explained in the Wolferinus Letters written by Luther. The Wolferinus letters are included as an appendix to this paper.]

the communicants; again, D) that after the spoken blessing the bread and wine are a complete Sacrament also before the distribution (Austheilung) (which might not take place until several days or months later), E) and the opposite statement (which is held by no one in our church on the basis of the action) that the body and blood of Christ are not present in the Supper before the blessed bread and wine are touched with the lips or enclosed in the mouth; F) again, the body of Christ is not in the bread but in the eating etc. ‘For we prescribe no moment or time to God,’ **says Luther**, ‘but are satisfied thus, that we simply believe that what God says certainly happens that it happens or should occur’” (Schöne, pp. 67–69).<sup>2</sup>

and explained by Dr. Luther.<sup>3</sup>

a) [This is where the footnote to the Wolferinus Letters written by Luther is placed in the Formula of Concord. Tappert wrongly ascribes the footnote to a section of the Smalcald Articles.]

b) [We also note that here the Formula changes the Luther quote to the Wolferinus Letters, and away from the subject of moment.]

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2 Gaylin Schmeling, President, Evangelical Lutheran Seminary, Mankato, MN. The Saliger Controversy, (This paper is found on a website of the ELS, attributed to Schmeling. The Schone quote is within that paper. I apologize for not having access to books such as this, and thus having to rely on secondary sources.

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Tappert, T. G. (Ed.). (1959). *The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. (p. 584). Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press. The Formula of Concord, Article 7, Par. 84-87.

I have here set the Abschied in the left hand column and the Formula of Concord in the right hand for the purpose of comparison. For the purpose of comparison I have quoted the Formula only from paragraph 84&ff. The discussion of the controversy in the Solid Declaration of the Formula actually begins with paragraph 73, where the Formula states the following:

There has also arisen a misunderstanding and dissension among some teachers of the Augsburg Confession concerning the consecration and the common rule that there is no sacrament apart from the instituted use.<sup>4</sup> (Par 73, Article 7 of the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord [Tappert].)

The issue has two parts, the consecration and the common rule, which we also and most frequently call the Nihil Rule.

For our purpose in this paper we will address specifically the language and the terminology used in the documents. First we notice in paragraph 85 of the Formula the author changes the wording from ‘various idolatrous and papistic perversions’ to ‘idolatrous misuse and perversion’. The reason for this appears to be that the practice that Saliger was referring to was not something of which the Roman Church was guilty. This abuse had to do with mixing consecrated and unconsecrated host. The false doctrine at the root is the same as Rome, namely a false understanding of what the ‘This do’ means, but the actual abuse is not a papistic abuse. Many who discuss this section today make the false charge that the concern here is chiefly the Roman abuse of the Corpus Christi Festival, because this is cited. This is an abusive practice, but such false practice is just an example of what happens when the Sacrament is not kept whole and undivided. In other words, when the words of institution, i.e. when the consecration is separated, or divided from its reception.

The argument and discussion at the time of the controversy reveals an inconsistent use of terms, particularly these three: sacrament, use, and action. This inconsistent use is on all sides, both with Saliger, those he accuses, and those who attempt to resolve the matter. Previous to this the Lutheran Confessions quoted and praised Augustine who said regarding Baptism, “The Word is added to the element and it becomes a sacrament”<sup>5</sup>, And so both Luther and Melanchthon cite and praise Augustine in this statement, not only in regard to Baptism, but also when speaking of the Holy Supper as our confessions confirm, “The Word must make the element a sacrament; otherwise it remains a mere element.”<sup>6</sup> In the Supper then, the Body and Blood of Christ become present in the host as Christ speaks through the administrator of the Sacrament. It is also true that the institution of Christ makes this a promise of forgiveness in that very Body and Blood of Christ, such that when it is eaten and drunk as instituted, the forgiveness of sin is proclaimed, granted, and bestowed. However when the word acts on the element, (the bread and wine), Luther, Melanchthon, and our Lutheran Confessions have called this a Sacrament (the mystery of the Sacramental Union where the Body and Blood of Christ are: in, with, and under the bread and wine). Melanchthon thus expresses the opinion that:

“whatever is left over of the bread and wine after communion, that is not eaten by those whose intention it is to use the Lord’s Supper, is not a Sacrament.”<sup>7</sup> (E.F. Peters page 142) (At what time Melanchthon began to hold this opinion is in some doubt.)

In this passage however, Melanchthon is clearly using the term Sacrament to refer to the mystical union of the Body and Blood of Christ to the bread and wine. We might more properly refer to this as the Sacramental Union.

The action of the word of Christ that brings about the Sacramental Union is not however the complete Sacrament. The Sacramental action continues through the distribution, the eating, and

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4 Tappert, T. G. (Ed.). (1959). *The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. (pp. 582–583). Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press.

5 Tappert, T. G. (Ed.). (1959). *The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. (p. 310). Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press.

6 Tappert, T. G. (Ed.). (1959). *The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. (p. 448). Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press.

7 E.F. Peters; *The Origin and meaning of the Axiom: Nothing has the Character of a Sacrament Outside the use*; Doctoral Dissertation; Concordia Lutheran Seminary; St. Louis MO; 1973; pp. 142

drinking for the forgiveness of sins. Lutherans have in the past, and do now speak and praise God in their hymns referring to the Body and Blood of Christ as a Sacrament. It is a mystery of Christ's Body and Blood in the elements of the bread and wine. In times of controversy it is best that terms be specially defined, used, and understood. This is what the Formula of Concord does in Article 7 Paragraphs 77-87. A loose use of terms can bring about controversy.

In the Abschied a specific abuse is cited in part 5a) "That there is a Sacrament also before the use, sacramentum esse ante usum; B) again when the blessing is spoken the bread is no longer an element; again, C) that in St. Paul's words, 'The bread which we break is a participation in the body of Christ,' the word participation is to be understood as the joining or unifying of the bread and body before the reception and not as referring to the eating by the communicants." If one tries to understand what Saliger is saying at all, it would be this: "The mystery (sacramenta) of the union of the Body and Blood of Christ is present before anyone eats or drinks." Saliger uses the term 'use', Latin 'uses' to refer to the eating and drinking. This appears to be what Melancthon is saying in the above quote as well. We would all agree with Saliger on this point, if understood in this way. In fact as we see below Chytraeus also agrees with this thought, however not that use of terms. A problem does then exist in the use of terms. E.F. Peters in his doctoral dissertation on the Nihil Rule reveals that Melancthon and Luther begin to use terms related to the Holy Supper differently. This difference is finally portrayed as a difference in doctrine, practice, and understanding of the words of institution.

The Abschied does agree with Saliger on essence, for it condemns the following abuse:

"E) and the opposite statement (which is held by no one in our church on the basis of the action) that the body and blood of Christ are not present in the Supper before the blessed bread and wine are touched with the lips or enclosed in the mouth; F) again, the body of Christ is not in the bread but in the eating etc." *(see the abschied quoted above)*

Although the Abschied, written by Chytraeus, and adopted by the Dukes, says that no one holds this position, it is a principal contention of Saliger that there are those who do. At the very heart of the dispute is the abuse of mixing consecrated host with unconsecrated, both during and after the service, including putting wine back in the bottle, or wafers back in the box with unconsecrated. During the service unconsecrated wine was sometimes added to the consecrated when the host was running short. This brought up the question as to if the Body and Blood of Christ was still in the remnants that remained not eaten or drunk after the service. Saliger called the consecrated host 'a Sacrament', as Luther and others often did, not meaning the eating and drinking for forgiveness of sins, but the mystery of the Sacramental Union of Christ's Body and Blood in the bread and wine. It is important to notice what the Abschied says,

"Nevertheless the following strange statements which are not customary in our church and which are doubtful, obscure, and offensive should not be used in the schools and churches of this land. These statements are no where found in God's Word or the writings of Dr. Luther but are very commonly used among the Papists to confirm their magical blessing and the permanent inclusion of Christ's body under the form of the bread before and after the reception (Niessung)" *(see the abschied quoted above)*

The Formula of Concord does not repeat this statement. This appears to be because this use of the word 'Sacrament' by Saliger **can** be found in the writings of Luther and others. We are particularly concerned here with the words of the Abschied which say, 'permanent inclusion of Christ's body under the form of the bread before and after the reception'. We must question part of Chytraeus conclusion at the end of the Abschied 5 parts e & f which say,

"E) and the opposite statement (which is held by no one in our church on the basis of the action) that the body and blood of Christ are not present in the Supper before the blessed bread and wine are touched with the lips or enclosed in the mouth; F) again, the body of Christ is not in the bread but in the eating, etc." *(see the abschied quoted above)*

We question this because there obviously was a concern not only ‘after’, but ‘before’ the reception. This question arises not only because of a poor use of terms, but also because of a poor, or false understanding of the Words of Institution. We find that Wigand in his initial attempt to resolve this matter writes,

- “1. Christ said that the bread and wine were His body and blood before the elements touched the mouths of the Apostles.
2. St. Paul says the same thing in 1 Cor. 10:16 when he speaks about the cup “which we bless,” and so forth.
3. According to the ordinance which Christ instituted, it is necessary that what is to be eaten and drunk be there present before this eating and drinking can be done.”<sup>8</sup>

This also reveals that Wigand was attempting to make it clear that Saliger is right in insisting that Christ is present in His body and blood ‘before’ the eating and drinking. Wigand also does not say that no one holds this opinion and does not criticize Saliger for wanting to make this very clear, but rather states this as his first three points in his attempt to resolve the controversy. Even Gaylin Schmeling of the Evangelical Lutheran Seminary states of this,

“In his Gutachen, Wigand emphasizes that Christ’s body and blood are present before the eating but he rejects the confusing terminology that there is a Sacrament before the use.”<sup>9</sup> (Shone page 53)

It is apparent that Wigand is more sympathetic to Saliger than Chytraeus. At least he understands Saliger’s use of terms better. He also understands that when Saliger uses the term ‘use’ (uses) he is referring to the eating and drinking. It is confusing to use the term ‘uses’ to mean simply the action of eating and drinking in the Sacrament, but Saliger is not condemned in his doctrine on this point, but only on the use of His terms. The Abschied implies Saliger is making a false accusation while Wigand seeks to affirm that this doctrine needs to be upheld.

It is very important that we hold to Saliger’s point regarding the presence of Christ’s Body and Blood ‘before the eating’ as Wigand pointed out in the above three statements. Paragraphs 73 through 83 in the Formula do discuss this very point in their assertion that it is the Words of consecration that do bring about the presence of Christ in the Supper. We can not deny this aspect because to deny this is to deny the truthfulness of Christ’s words, the creative power of Christ’s words, and that the ministrant of the Sacrament is actually standing at the table in the place of Christ, as His ambassador, and representative, such that when the ministrant speaks the words of institution it is actually Christ speaking His word through the pastor’s mouth, and thus bringing to pass that which Christ Himself has willed in His last will and testament. Chrysostom is quoted and explained as follows in this section of Article 7 as follows:

Chrysostom says in his *Sermon on the Passion*: “Christ himself prepares this table and blesses it. No human being, but only Christ himself who was crucified for us, can make of the bread and wine set before us the body and blood of Christ. The words are spoken by the mouth of the priest, but by God’s power and grace through the words that he speaks, ‘This is my body,’ the elements set before us in the Supper are blessed. Just as the words, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,’ were spoken only once but are ever efficacious in nature and make things grow and multiply, so this word was indeed spoken only once, but it is efficacious until this day, and until his return it brings about that his true body and blood are present in the church’s Supper.”<sup>10</sup>

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8 E.F. Peters; *The Origin and meaning of the Axiom: Nothing has the Character of a Sacrament Outside the use*; Doctoral Dissertation; Concordia Lutheran Seminary; St. Louis MO; 1973; pp. 351–352 (John Wigand, former Superintendent in Wismar and at the time professor in Jena. [see footnote 8 below page])

9 Gaylin Schmeling, President, Evangelical Lutheran Seminary, Mankato, MN. *The Saliger Controversy*, (This paper is found on a website of the ELS, attributed to Schmeling. The Schone quote is within that paper. I apologize for not having access to books such as this, and thus having to rely on secondary sources.

10 Tappert, T. G. (Ed.). (1959). *The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. (p. 583). Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press.

The Formula prepares us to understand the importance of consecrating the elements. As indicated the pastor stands in the place of Christ Himself, and speaks the words of Christ, such that Christ speaks through Him and thus Christ's word is effective here as it is spoken just as it was in the original supper. This must be understood to rebuke, and rebut those who would add unconsecrated wine to that which is consecrated without consecrating, or in any manner to indicate that that which is consecrated is not the very Body and Blood of Christ.

The Formula then goes on in paragraphs 79-82; the section just prior to what is quoted in the Abschied above:

"<sup>79</sup>In the administration of Communion the words of institution are to be spoken or sung distinctly and clearly before the congregation and are under no circumstances to be omitted. <sup>80</sup>Thereby we render obedience to the command of Christ, 'This do.' <sup>81</sup>Thereby the faith of the hearers in the essence and benefits of this sacrament (the presence of the body and blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, and all the benefits which Christ has won for us by his death and the shedding of his blood and which he gives to us in his testament) is awakened, strengthened, and confirmed through his Word. <sup>82</sup>And thereby the elements of bread and wine are hallowed or blessed in this holy use, so that therewith the body and blood of Christ are distributed to us to eat and to drink, as Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless," which happens precisely through the repetition and recitation of the words of institution."<sup>11</sup> Par 79-82, Article 7 of the FC.

It becomes very clear then why in paragraph 84 of the Formula of Concord Article 7 (*paragraph 83 between is the Nihil Rule*) takes the following statement from the Abschied although broadening it such that it becomes clear the words 'whole action' mean 'the whole administration of' the Sacrament.

"But the command of Christ, "Do this," which comprehends the whole action or administration of this sacrament (namely, that in a Christian assembly we take bread and wine, consecrate it, distribute it, receive it, eat and drink it, and therewith proclaim the Lord's death), must be kept integrally and inviolately, just as St. Paul sets the whole action of the breaking of bread, or of the distribution and reception, before our eyes in 1 Cor. 10:16."<sup>12</sup>

The Formula defines terms in a very specific way when it quotes the Abschied's, "The command, "Do this" which comprehends the whole action or administration of the Sacrament." It even spells out what this whole action is, so that no one can misunderstand what is to be meant in this discussion. It specifically says what this whole action is:

"... we take bread and wine, consecrate it, distribute it, receive it, eat and drink it, ..., (*that*) this must be kept integrally and inviolately, just as St. Paul sets the whole action of the breaking of bread, or of the distribution and reception before our eyes in 1 Cor. 10:16."<sup>13</sup>

In the following paragraph of the Formula the 'Nihil Rule' is cited. "Nothing has the character of a Sacrament apart from the use instituted by Christ, or apart from the divinely instituted action." The term Sacrament in the Nihil rule then must be seen in light of the context of the definition of the institution and command cited in the previous paragraph. That is 'Sacrament' does not mean here the Sacramental Union, but the whole complete action of consecrating, distributing, and eating/drinking. In paragraph 86 then the Formula expands the Abschied. It does not simply repeat the Abschied, "with all the parts that belong to it, included in Christ's institution," but the Formula says,

"the entire external and visible action of the Supper as ordained by Christ: the consecration or words of institution, and reception, or the oral eating of the blessed bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ."<sup>14</sup>

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11 Tappert, T. G. (Ed.). (1959). *The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. (p. 584). Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press. (Solid Declaration, Declaration, par 77-82.)

12 Ibid 11 (Solid Declaration, Declaration, par 84)

13 Ibid 11 (Solid Declaration, Declaration, par 84)

14 Ibid 11 (Solid Declaration, Declaration, par 86)

In this section of our Lutheran Confessions then the term ‘Sacrament’ is used to refer only to the complete and entire administration of the Holy Supper. The writers want to make it very clear that in the use of the Nihil Rule the term ‘Sacrament’ is not to be thought of as the Sacramental Union, i.e. the Body and Blood of Christ in, with, and under the blessed bread and wine, but rather the whole administration. There are many who attempt to deny the presence of Christ’s Body and Blood before the reception by saying, “There is no Sacrament before the reception.” When they say this however they are thinking of the term ‘Sacrament’ wrongly. Sacrament here does not mean the Sacramental Union, rather it means the whole action, “Consecration, distribution, eating and drinking for the forgiveness of sins.” Christ is present in His eating and drinking before the distribution and eating as a result of the Verba (i.e. the Words of Institution) as shown above. We take note that though the Abschied quotes Luther in reference to ‘moment of Christ’s presence’ in the last part of section 5, the Formula not only does not quote this, but cites the Wolferinus letters where Luther discusses the breadth of the time of the ‘action’. Luther indicates the Body and Blood of Christ are present for a breadth of time, beginning with the speaking of the ‘Verba’. It becomes obvious after reading E.F. Peters section on Melanchthon’s use of the Nihil Rule that he, both before and after Luther’s death, had begun to narrow the time of the ‘action’ of the word upon the elements to the very time of the ‘use’ which he thought of as the eating and drinking. This definition puts Christ’s action of the word on the elements only in the moment of the eating/drinking, and not for a breadth of time as Luther defines it.

We come then to the second matter discussed in the above quote from the Abschied. The Abschied condemns, “permanent inclusion of Christ’s body under the form of the bread before and after the reception.” There is a reason why the Formula does not discuss the ‘after’. There is to be no ‘after’. This is the point of this section of FC Article 7 of the Formula. If one remembers what the controversy is about, i.e. dividing the Sacrament such that some of what is consecrated is used for a purpose other than eating and drinking, then it is easy to see why the Formula does not mention an ‘after’. It speaks clearly saying it is not to be divided in this manner by saying:

“But the command of Christ, “Do this,” which comprehends the whole action or administration of this sacrament (namely, that in a Christian assembly we take bread and wine, consecrate it, distribute it, receive it, eat and drink it, and therewith proclaim the Lord’s death), must be kept integrally and inviolately, just as St. Paul sets the whole action of the breaking of bread, or of the distribution and reception, before our eyes in 1 Cor. 10:16.”<sup>15</sup>

The Formula of Concord cites the Wolferinus Letters at this point for a specific reason. The Wolferinus Letters give Luther’s clear understanding of several of the terms that are in contention in the Saliger controversy. He particularly defines the term ‘action’:

“Therefore, we shall define the time of the sacramental action in this way: that it starts with the beginning of the Our Father [Oratio *Domici*—mistranslated in the German *Pater Noster* and here “Our Father”: it should read “Word of the Lord,” i.e. the Verba or Words of Institution”—ETT] and lasts until all have communicated, have emptied the chalice, have consumed the Hosts, until the people have been dismissed and [the Priest] has left the altar. In this way we shall be safe and free from the scruples and scandals of such endless questions.” (See Appendix at the end of this paper)

Luther says the term ‘action’ refers chiefly to the time the Word is acting upon the element. But according to Luther there is to be nothing left, i.e. “until all have communicated, have emptied the chalice, have consumed the Hosts, until the people have been dismissed and the [the Priest] has left the altar.” Some will say that Luther is only making this a ‘best practice’! However this is not what Luther is saying. He says, “We shall define the time of the Sacramental action in this way.” This then is exactly how the Formula does define it. The Formula, we must remind ourselves, is the final Confession of the Lutheran Church of the reformation period in regard to what is to be preached and

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15 Ibid 11 (Solid Declaration, Declaration, par 84)

taught in the Lutheran Church. Luther kept all of the command of Christ as one thing. This was from the Verba until the chalice is emptied and the Hosts have been consumed. The writers of the Formula of Concord, cite Luther to give prove that Luther also understood the words of institution in this way.

Luther also cites the Nihil Rule in the Wolferinus Letters. It must be obvious then to every reader that this is how the Nihil Rule is to be interpreted by Lutherans. The Nihil Rule gives breadth to the ‘action’ of the Word upon the elements such that His Body and Blood are present for a period of time that all may commune, and that the entire host may be consumed. Luther has no word regarding the stopping of the ‘action’ of the word, other than to say that it is to be consumed according to the institution and command of Christ. The fact that the Abschied mentions the ‘before’ and ‘after’, when the Formula does not reveals much. The Formula over and over and over reiterates the point that it is one thing. That is a whole complete, and that it is to be kept that way inviolate, etc.

Luther and Melanchthon see the ‘action’ of the sacrament in the same time frame as the ‘use’. It does become obvious however that Melanchthon begins to use the term ‘use’ to refer to the eating/drinking, or at least to restrict the time of the presence of Christ’s Body and Blood to that very narrow time specific to the individual’s eating and drinking. Luther does think about the Sacramental Union in the sense of Augustine: “When the word comes to the element we have a Sacrament.” The chief action is the word acting on the elements. This then, for Luther is the exact same time as the ‘use’, i.e. the time when the host may be eaten and drunk as Christ’s Body and Blood for the forgiveness of sins. The Formula then says,

“‘use’ or ‘action’ does not primarily mean faith, or the oral eating alone, but the entire external and visible action of the Supper as ordained by Christ: the consecration or words of institution, the distribution and reception, or the oral eating of the blessed bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ.”<sup>16</sup>

It is easy to see then that the question concerning what remains is caught up in the discussion of “the word acting upon the elements”. How long is the “The word acting upon the elements”? The point of the Abschied above, and then also the Lutheran Confessions is, if one follows the ‘This do’ of the Words of institution the question resolves itself as Luther indicated in the Wolferinus Letters. He says, “In this way we shall be safe and free from the scruples and scandals of such endless questions, i.e. if we simply follow the words of Christ, “Do This.”

The above statement from the Formula clearly shows that the statement of Luther, “In this way we shall be safe and free from the scruples and scandals of such endless questions,” is not simply to be thought of as a ‘best practice’, but rather the actual doctrine derived from the words of institution, as indicated by the words, ‘ordained by Christ’. Luther does not want to get into the discussion about how long any reliquia endures, because he does not believe that if the words of institution are properly followed there should be any reliquia enduring. To Luther this is an open question only because Christ does not speak about that which is not even to be present. The Formula of Concord does not go then as far as the Abshied in saying,

“These statements are no where found in God’s Word or the writings of Dr. Luther but are very commonly used among the Papists to confirm their magical blessing and the permanent inclusion of Christ’s body under the form of the bread before and after the reception (Niessung).” *(see the abschied quoted above)*

Luther does not think it necessary to get into endless questions about something that never should happen in the first place. If the Words of Institution are followed, there is nothing left over, and thus nothing to carry around in a festival, up and down the streets, and nothing to be poured back into bottles, put in a ciborium, tabernacle, or box. This is not then, just best practice, but the doctrine that springs from the Words of Institution. This is what the Formula of Concord speaks to when it says,

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16 Ibid 11 (Solid Declaration, Declaration, par 86)

“84) But the command of Christ, “Do this,” which comprehends the whole action or administration of this sacrament (namely, that in a Christian assembly we take bread and wine, consecrate it, distribute it, receive it, eat and drink it, and therewith proclaim the Lord’s death), must be kept integrally and inviolately, just as St. Paul sets the whole action of the breaking of bread, or of the distribution and reception, before our eyes in 1 Cor. 10:16.”<sup>17</sup>

The term ‘action’ then properly refers to the time of the Word acting upon the elements, such that the Body and Blood of Christ are present for the (use) purpose of eating and drinking for the remission of sins. Luther indicates that this occurs for a particular length of time. Luther is concerned that some will interpret Melanchthon’s ‘action of the sacrament’ too narrowly. Luther writes,

“Indeed Dr. Philip wrote rightly that there is no Sacrament outside of the sacramental action; but you are defining the sacramental action much too hastily and abruptly. If you do it in this way, you will appear to have absolutely no Sacrament. For if such a quick breaking off of the action really exists, it will follow that after the speaking of the Words [of Institution], which is the most powerful and principal action in the Sacrament, no one would receive the Body and Blood of Christ, because the action would have ceased. Certainly, Dr. Philip does not want that. And such a definition of the action would bring about infinite scruples of conscience and endless questions, such as are disputed among the papists, as, for example, whether the Body and Blood of Christ are present at the first, middle, or last syllables. Therefore, one must look not only upon this movement of instant or present action, but also on the time, not in terms of mathematical but of physical breadth, that is, one must give this action a certain period of time, and a period of appropriate breadth of time, as they say, “in breadth.” (See Appendix at the end of this paper)

It appears likely that by this time Melanchthon and Luther had clear differences on the institution of the Holy Supper. Luther may in fact be instructing Melanchthon in his letter to Wolferinus, preferring not to confront him directly, but rather indirectly in this way. In E.F. Peters Doctoral dissertation on the Nihil Rule, it is clear that Melanchthon departed from Luther on the time, or duration of the ‘action’. From the time of the Marburg Colloquy with Zwingly, Melanchthon began to use the Nihil rule to narrow the time of the ‘action of the sacrament to the eating and drinking’. Melanchthon’s teaching on this matter greatly influenced the entire Lutheran Church, such that even Saliger refers to ‘use’ as the eating. We see the condemnation of certain usage of terms:

“a) That there is a Sacrament also before the use, sacramentum esse ante usum.” (*see the abschied quoted above*)

The term ‘use’ here, for Saliger, means ‘before the eating and drinking’. Clearly Saliger believes that the Body and Blood of Christ are present before the eating and drinking. The Abschied states that there is no one who believes that the Body and Blood “are not present before the eating/drinking”. However Saliger apparently believes that there are those who believe Christ’s body and blood are not present before the reception. Saliger would not always use the words, “Body and Blood of Christ” to refer to the consecrated host, but rather he would use the term, ‘the Sacrament’, meaning that host which after the consecration is the Body and Blood of Christ. If we understand how Saliger used terms, likely from his schooling under Melanchthon, we can understand why he is concerned that some are saying “There is no Sacrament before the ‘use’, i.e. the eating and drinking. The terms ‘action’ and ‘use’ are use poorly in this entire controversy. The terms ‘use’ and ‘action’ properly should only be thought of as terms describing a breadth of time. It might be helpful to think of ‘action’ as the action of God through His Word, and ‘use’ as the time of the congregants eating and drinking for the forgiveness of sin. So, though one may be thought of as God’s action of the word and the other the congregant’s participation in that action, both are exactly the same breadth of time. The time of the action of the word is the same time that the people may share in the body and blood of Christ by eating and drinking. and thus receive the forgiveness of sins through this “declaration of His death until He comes.” The Words ‘action’ and ‘use’ in this connection can be usually be used interchangeably as above in the Formula, for they refer to the exact same breadth of time, but they do have some difference in meaning.

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17 Ibid 11 (Solid Declaration, Declaration, par 84)

The time of the 'use' and the time of the 'action' should be thought of however as one and the same. This is how the Formula uses these terms.

Those who seek to discuss that which remains after the celebration do so because they do not will to keep the Sacrament as whole, complete, and inviolate. They think of that which is blessed and eaten/drunk, as something different than that which is blessed but not eaten or drunk. Then the discussion begins, "Were those elements ever the Body and Blood of Christ?" "Are they still the Body and Blood of Christ?" Etc. Etc. They have in their mind, and likely in their practice divided the Sacrament contrary to the Words of Christ in His institution, and contrary to the interpretation of those words in the Formula of Concord.

The issue before the church then, in terms of the practice, is first to understand the doctrine. The Words, "Do This." indicate one thing, such that what is blessed is to be distributed and eaten/drunk. This then means that it is incumbent upon the administer the Sacrament according to the "This do." He is to keep it as one whole, complete, inviolate thing. He is not to divide it between before and after the service, etc. This means that just as he makes sure that he has bread and wine available, he must also be careful not to set up the Holy Supper such that there is some remaining after the service. If He is thinking about the doctrine of Christ, then he must think about how to teach and practice it. He is not to set up the supper in such a way that it is divided, or violated by mixing common with what is holy.

In Lubeck, after the controversy we see then the result. They began to make sure that all of the host was consumed. This was also the practice in Wittenberg at the time of Luther. This then is both the doctrine and practice put into place at the time of the Formula of Concord.

Appendix:

Letters to Simon Wolferinus:

Luther's Letter to Wolferinus, July 4, 1543

WA Br, X, 340-341

Grace and peace in the Lord. Among all the miseries of my old age, now this is added, Simon, that you and Doctor Frederick [Rauber], pastor of St. Peter's in my native city, have caused me grief. And it is not as if you could allege it is only a rumor, while you are not there. I have seen your disputations and letter in which you justify yourself so harshly with very great scandal, as if this man were the most corrupt of the papists, even though you are both pastors in the same city and of the same people. Even if it is granted that he has offended you in a public sermon, which he denies, and I am not going to judge, why did you not deal with him either by law or by charity? But you, inflamed with rage, have justified yourself and you have set yourself up as a judge with the most terrible words, which would more befit some Bacchus than a minister against his fellow minister. For this man is not a heretic or an enemy of doctrine, whom you are treating so hostilely. Or is there no wise among us or among you to whom you could bring your anger before you went into such a rage?

But to the point! There is no doubt that it is not we who got it from you, but you who got it from us, that Sacraments are actions, and not persisting manufactures. But what is this peculiar rashness of yours that you would rather not abstain from this evil appearance which you know is a scandal, namely, that you mix the remains of [consecrated] wine and bread with [unconsecrated] bread and wine? [neme quod reliquum vini vel panis misces priori pani et vino?] By which example do you do that? Indeed do you not see what dangerous questions you are raising, if you contend so much in this opinion of yours, that when the action ceases, the Sacrament [also] ceases? Perhaps you want to be considered a Zwinglian, and am I to believe that you are afflicted with the insanity of Zwingli, when you are so proudly and contemptuously irritating, with this peculiar and magnificent wisdom of yours? Was there no other way for you to avoid giving the suspicion to the weak and to the enemy that you are despiser of the Sacrament, than to cause offense with this evil appearance that what is left of the Sacrament is to be mixed, poured in with [unconsecrated] wine? [quam ut mala specie offenderes

reliquum Sacramenti miscendo et confundedo cum vino priori?]) Why do you not imitate the other churches? I write this with such sorrow so that you may know that you have offended me and have made my spirit very sad. You yourself say that it is nonsense, and are you aggravated about nonsense? Such nonsense is exceedingly serious. But perhaps you do not care who is offended, as long as you come out as a victor over nonsense. But the Lord whom you oppose will oppose you in turn.

Therefore, I urge you, who know or ought to know how one must conduct himself in the church, that you be reconciled to Doctor Frederick, and that you both be sensible with one heart, and with one mind say the same thing. For you can do what we do here, namely, to eat and drink the remains of the sacrament with the communicants, so that it is not necessary to raise these scandalous and dangerous questions about when the action of the Sacrament ends, questions in which you will choke unless you come to your senses. For with this argument you are abolishing the whole Sacrament, and you do not have anything with which to answer those who are making false accusations, who say that in the action of the Sacrament there is more cessation than action. Then we would come to the monstrosities of [Plato's] Cratylus, so that we would be forced to have a Sacrament only in the action, and not in what happens in between, and finally time and moment will be the causes of the Sacrament, and many other absurdities will follow. Therefore, see to it that you conform to the other churches, and do not start a war against them, lest you be overcome with disgrace. Indeed I shall oppose with all my strength this scandalous and offensive peculiarity and rashness of yours, nor will I allow my last hour to be weighed down with your scandals. Farewell in the Lord, and in the Lord I say, stop this passion of yours for vengeance and pride, especially over against your brother who is not a heretic nor is he opposed to our doctrine.

Wolferinus Letter No. 2

Martin Luther to Simon Wolferinus, July 20, 1543

WA Br X, 348,349

Grace and peace. Indeed, why should I not have been disturbed and saddened, my dear Simon Wolferinus, when I saw you two, living together in one town and the ministers of one church, agreeing completely in doctrine, but carrying on between yourselves with such a bitter spirit, because of a matter which you have neither examined closely enough, and which is not that important, if it were examined more closely. Look at these propositions of yours, and see whether or not such a terrible outcry is in keeping with charity and brotherly love. I see that Satan is tempting you, by making a beam out of a splinter, or rather a fire out of a spark. You could have solved this by a meeting between the two of you, since it is not a matter of being against the madness of the papists, but against a colleague of yours in the ministry and in religion.

Indeed Dr. Philip wrote rightly that there is no Sacrament outside of the sacramental action; but you are defining the sacramental action much too hastily and abruptly. If you do it in this way, you will appear to have absolutely no Sacrament. For if such a quick breaking off of the action really exists, it will follow that after the speaking of the Words [of Institution], which is the most powerful and principal action in the Sacrament, no one would receive the Body and Blood of Christ, because the action would have ceased. Certainly, Dr. Philip does not want that. And such a definition of the action would bring about infinite scruples of conscience and endless questions, such as are disputed among the papists, as, for example, whether the Body and Blood of Christ are present at the first, middle, or last syllables. Therefore, one must look not only upon this movement of instant or present action, but also on the time, not in terms of mathematical but of physical breadth, that is, one must give this action a certain period of time, and a period of appropriate breadth of time, as they say, "in breadth."

Therefore, we shall define the time or the sacramental action in this way: that it starts with the beginning of the Our Father [*Oratio Domici*—mistranslated in the German *Pater Noster* and here "Our Father": it should read "Word of the Lord," i.e. the *Verba* or Words of Institution"—ETT] and lasts until all have communicated, have emptied the chalice, have consumed the Hosts, until the people have been dismissed and [the Priest] has left the altar. In this way we shall be safe and free from the scruples and scandals of such endless questions. Dr. Philip defines the sacramental action in relation to what is outside it, that is, against reservation of and processions with the Sacrament; he does not split it up within [the action] itself, nor does he define it in a way that it contradicts itself. Therefore see to it that if anything is left over of the Sacrament, either some communicants or the priest himself and his assistant receive it, so that it is not only a curate or someone else who drinks what is left over in the chalice, but that he gives it to the others who were also participants in the Body [of

Christ], so that you do not appear to divide the Sacrament by a bad example or to treat the Sacramental action irreverently. This is my opinion, and I know that it is also Philip's opinion too.

Note: [ETT is Erling T Teigen, who is on the faculty of Bethany Lutheran College of Mankato, Mn., USA.]