

# The Town Chronicle of Johannes Hass: History Writing and Divine Intervention in the Early Sixteenth Century\*

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On 26 June 1519 Johannes Hass, the town scribe of Görlitz, was inspecting the erection of a wall between two pillars of the Church of Saint Nicholas. Foremen were shouting instructions to stonemasons who were balancing precariously on unstable scaffolding and council members were observing the progress on the building site, while all around the ordinary activities of town life continued.<sup>1</sup> When it came to putting in the new window, Hass himself clambered onto the scaffolding to oversee the task. Worried that the scaffolding was overburdened with equipment and stones, he climbed down onto the newly built wall. But no sooner had he reached the top of the wall than the scaffolding collapsed behind him. He continued his descent ‘with great fear’ and reached the ground uninjured. As he later wrote in his annals, God stopped him from looking backward and made him go down immediately instead.<sup>2</sup> Had Hass stayed a moment longer on the wall, he would have shared the fate of two stonemasons who had not felt the divine warning (*gotliche vorwarung*), and who fell to their deaths. Hass’s decision to descend without delay had saved his life.

Hass’s council annals (*Rathsannalen*), written between 1509 and 1542, chart one man’s engagement with religious change as he struggled to comprehend his town’s history.<sup>3</sup> Hass was a civic scribe and a Catholic who lived in a town which was becoming increasingly Lutheran. The account of his miraculous survival, which he wrote in 1520, before the Reformation gained hold in the town, stands in marked contrast to how he describes other disasters in the final volume of his annals.<sup>4</sup> Here, the town scribe writes

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<sup>1</sup>For aspects of early modern urban life in Görlitz, see Lars Behrisch, *Städtische Obrigkeit und Soziale Kontrolle: Görlitz 1450–1600* (Epfendorf, 2005); Katja Lindenau, *Brauen und Herrschen: die Görlitzer Braubürger als städtische Eliten in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit* (Leipzig, 2007); and Christian Speer, *Frömmigkeit und Politik: Städtische Eliten in Görlitz zwischen 1300 und 1550* (Berlin, 2011).

<sup>2</sup>Johannes Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Theodor Neumann (Görlitz, 1852), pp. 574–6.

<sup>3</sup>Due to the mixed nature of Hass’s account, I use the terms ‘chronicle’ and ‘annals’ interchangeably to describe his *Rathsannalen*.

<sup>4</sup>There are no detailed modern accounts of the Reformation in Upper Lusatia. Earlier works therefore remain essential: Samuel Großer, *Lausitzische Merkwürdigkeiten darinnen von beyden Marggraffthümern*, 2 vols. (Leipzig and Bautzen, 1714), vol. 2, pp. 14–95; Johann Benedict Carpozov, *Neueröffneter Ehren-Tempel merckwürdiger Antiquitäten des Marggraffthums Ober-Lausitz* (Leipzig and Bautzen, 1719), pp. 239–351; Karl Gottlob Dietmann, *Die gesamte der ungeänderten Augsb. Confession zugethane Priesterschaft in dem Marggraffthum Oberlausitz* (Lauban and Leipzig, 1777); and Johann Gottlieb Müller, *Versuch einer Oberlausitzischen Reformationsgeschichte* (Görlitz, 1801).

that fires and floods were not visitations of divine wrath and had no direct connection to Görlitz. Thunderstorms, floods and fires, he points out, occurred throughout the region, not just in Görlitz. By this point in the narrative, God's protective hand has disappeared from Hass's account to be replaced by 'divine fate'.<sup>5</sup> No longer an active player, God has become a passive observer. As Hass now states, 'God ... does not want to ... protect us, if we do not want to ourselves', a view that accorded agency and responsibility to human rather than divine actors.<sup>6</sup> Hass returned to the built environment, albeit metaphorically, to expand on this point: 'If someone sets his own house on fire, God is hardly going to put it out.'<sup>7</sup> How can we explain this change from a God who actively and consciously saved Hass's life to one who does not intervene in human affairs, who neither extinguishes the fire in a burning house nor punishes the supporters of the Reformation?

Descriptions of divine and satanic interventions are common in early modern writings, where they are often juxtaposed as two sides of the same coin. The gradual emergence of the Devil and decreasing references to divine intervention in Hass's account, however, show that initially God had been much more powerful and influential in Hass's world. After the Reformation had been introduced and God did not answer, Hass wrote less frequently of God's active engagement in the world and by the end of his narrative, Hass excluded God almost entirely. This gradual change combined with the explicit mention of Luther's writings, as well as implicit use of some minor elements of Luther's theology, suggests that Hass was no longer operating within a traditional Catholic mental framework. The subtle changes visible in the town chronicle, a genre of writing which often contains little explicitly religious information, demonstrate that a close analysis of such seemingly non-religious documents can reveal much about perceptions of the divine.<sup>8</sup> The sources suggest that the gradual inclusion of Lutheran elements was largely unconscious. In the early Reformation decades, confessional boundaries were fluid. Johannes Hass is a fascinating case study because his re-interpretation of Catholicism shows how even those Catholics who were explicitly critical of the Wittenberg Reformation were influenced by it, and adopted some of its elements into their religiosity.

## I: Johannes Hass and His World

Johannes Hass lived in a region that was both part of the Holy Roman Empire and a side land (*Nebenland*) of the Bohemian crown.<sup>9</sup> The religious idiosyncrasies of Upper

<sup>5</sup> Johannes Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. E. E. Struve (Görlitz, 1870), p. 334.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 333–4.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334.

<sup>8</sup> For the value of chronicles as sources for religious conflicts, see Susanne Rau, *Geschichte und Konfession: städtische Geschichtsschreibung und Erinnerungskultur im Zeitalter von Reformation und Konfessionalisierung in Bremen, Breslau, Hamburg und Köln* (Hamburg and Munich, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> The most detailed studies of Upper Lusatia are edited volumes: Joachim Bahlcke (ed.), *Geschichte der Oberlausitz: Herrschaft, Gesellschaft und Kultur vom Mittelalter bis zum Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts* (2nd edn, Leipzig, 2004; 1st edn, 2001); Joachim Bahlcke and Volker Dudeck (eds), *Welt—Macht—Geist: das Haus Habsburg und die Oberlausitz 1526–1635* (Görlitz, 2002); Joachim Bahlcke (ed.), *Die Oberlausitz im frühneuzeitlichen Mitteleuropa: Beziehungen, Strukturen, Prozesse* (Leipzig, 2007); and Heinz-Dieter Heimann, Klaus Neitmann, Uwe Tresp (eds), *Die Nieder- und Oberlausitz—Konturen einer Integrationslandschaft*, vol. 2: *Frühe Neuzeit* (Berlin, 2014). See also Joachim Bahlcke, *Regionalismus und Staatsintegration im Widerstreit: die Länder der böhmischen Krone im ersten*

Lusatia (*Oberlausitz*), the region that contains Görlitz, are echoed in Hass's piety. Born into an artisan family in Greiz in the *Vogtland* region of Thuringia around 1476, Hass went to school in Görlitz 'as a young boy aged 15 or 16', as he relates in one of the few autobiographical passages in his work.<sup>10</sup> From 1493 to 1505 he attended the University of Leipzig.<sup>11</sup> After some years as a teacher at schools in Zittau in Upper Lusatia and Zwickau in nearby Saxony, he moved back to Görlitz and became the lower town scribe (*Subnotarius*) in 1509, town scribe (*Protonarius*) in 1514, and town judge in 1519 (*Scabinus*). He capped this career by becoming mayor of Görlitz (*magister civum regens*) no fewer than three times (in 1535/36, 1539/40 and 1543/44), and died in 1544.<sup>12</sup> Rapid as this advancement was, it was not unusual in Görlitz, which had a remarkably open elite: up to 50 per cent of council members had only recently moved to the town.<sup>13</sup> It was not uncommon for towns of the early modern era to appoint outsiders to urban offices in order to avoid inner-urban disputes.<sup>14</sup>

Hass's annals are of exceptional value because they reveal, within a single source, how one man's religious outlook changed during the introduction of new religious teachings. Where the first two volumes of the *Ratsannalen*, composed contemporaneously with events between 1509 and 1520, were written primarily for future council members, the intended audience for the third volume was ambiguous, for any council in the years to come would be largely Lutheran, not Catholic.<sup>15</sup> Hass wrote the third volume in two phases. He reported on the years 1521 to 1534 retrospectively in 1534 and then, between 1535 and 1542, resumed writing contemporaneously.<sup>16</sup> Hass justifies picking up his pen again in the foreword to the third volume (a feature which the first two volumes lack). He did not want the many calamities which had befallen the town in previous years to be forgotten. He was referring to the attempted infringement of urban liberties by the rural nobility, the continuing problem of forged coins and an attempted rebellion of cloth makers in 1527, which in Hass's mind was closely linked to the greatest rupture of them all: the introduction of the Reformation.<sup>17</sup> Hass wanted to provide 'experience and solace' (*erfahrung und trost*) for his 'successors' (*meine nachkomelinge*) who might take 'delight' from the 'eternal memory' he had created. The preface states that the third volume was to serve as a reminder that, regardless of all the calamities, the town had survived thanks to 'God, the most merciful'.<sup>18</sup> The annals survive in the

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*Jahrhundert der Habsburgerherrschaft, 1526–1619* (Munich, 1994). Various Czech studies focus on the relationship between Bohemia and Upper Lusatia; for an overview of recent scholarship, see Jan Zdíchynec and Petr Hrachovec, 'Bericht zur tschechischen Forschung über die Ober- (und Nieder-)Lausitz zwischen 2000 und 2007', *Neues Lausitzisches Magazin*, n.s. 11 (2008), pp. 121–37.

<sup>10</sup> Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 240. See also Karl Czok, 'Chronistik und innerstädtischen Bewegungen im 16. Jahrhundert: zu den Görlitzer Ratsannalen des Johannes Hass', in Peter Johanek (ed.), *Städtische Geschichtsschreibung im Spätmittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit* (Cologne, 2000), pp. 291–300.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Hille, *Providentia Dei, Reich und Kirche. Weltbild und Stimmungsprofil altgläubiger Chronisten 1517–1618* (Göttingen, 2010), pp. 70–71.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Lindenau, *Brauen und Herrschen*, pp. 92–3.

<sup>14</sup> Hille, *Providentia*, p. 70. For the strong attachment Hass felt to Görlitz, see p. 228.

<sup>15</sup> For a comparison of the intended audiences of Frankfurt chronicles, see Stephanie Dzeja, *Die Geschichte der eigenen Stadt: städtische Chronistik in Frankfurt am Main vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/Main, 2003), pp. 50–2. For an overview of largely later chronicles, see Rau, *Geschichte und Konfession*, esp. pp. 425–9.

<sup>16</sup> Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1–21.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

University of Wrocław's manuscript collection.<sup>19</sup> Like many sources from Görlitz they were deposited there during the Second World War. The first two volumes are in folio and the final volume is in the larger royal folio format.<sup>20</sup> Hass's handwriting, which can also be seen in letter books in Görlitz, is neat and steady throughout the three volumes. In the nineteenth century the Upper Lusatian Scholarly Society (*Oberlausitzische Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*) compiled an edition of the three volumes. Minor differences, particularly the underlining of words, aside the edition corresponds exactly with the original.

What made Upper Lusatia distinctive is that, although it was a recognizable region, it belonged to different lordships and therefore never had a territorial overlord who was solely responsible for the enforcement of political and religious change. Subject to the king of Bohemia, it was ruled until 1635 by whichever dynasty occupied the Bohemian throne. From 1526 to 1635 it was therefore administered by the Habsburgs.<sup>21</sup> Although Lusatia was never very high on the imperial agenda of the Habsburg dynasty, royal protection ensured that even if a town council was firmly Lutheran, it could still not move decisively against Catholic institutions. The result was that no fewer than thirteen Catholic churches and three convents survived in the otherwise Lutheran region.<sup>22</sup> Görlitz was technically never a bi-confessional town because it never officially informed the king of Bohemia of the introduction of the Reformation, although he knew about the success of the Reformation in his domains. But in order to avoid royal punishment, until the mid 1540s the towns of Upper Lusatia exiled Lutheran preachers when they married, and during royal visits they showed their allegiance by celebrating Catholic mass.<sup>23</sup>

Görlitz exercised particular authority within a coalition of six towns which had been formed in 1346 and existed until the division of Upper Lusatia after the Congress of Vienna in 1815. This Lusatian League (*Sechsstädtebund*) was created as a defence against robber knights and the rural nobility who threatened the security and trade of the towns in the region.<sup>24</sup> Later, it became an instrument of urban self-determination and served as a strong counterweight to local nobles, surrounding villages and convents in the countryside. Within the Lusatian League, Görlitz was the wealthiest and most

<sup>19</sup>Bibliotheka Uniwersytecka Wrocław, Wrocław, Poland, 6313 Mil II / 178-180, Johannes Hass, *Libri Annalium Gorlicensis*.

<sup>20</sup>The latter half of the second volume consists of blank pages, suggesting that when Hass started writing again in 1534 he did not want to continue in the previous volume.

<sup>21</sup>Daniel Fickenscher, 'Die Oberlausitzer Stände und ihre politischen Beziehungen zu Böhmen während der Habsburg Herrschaft (1526–1618)', in Lars-Arne Dannenberg, Matthias Herrmann and Arnold Klaffenböck (eds), *Böhmen—Oberlausitz—Tschechien: Aspekte einer Nachbarschaft* (Görlitz and Zittau, 2006), pp. 81–108.

<sup>22</sup>For the convents, see Jan Zdichynec, *Les abbayes féminines de la Haute-Lusace aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles: les religieuses entre pouvoir temporel et spirituel au temps des réformes* (Paris, 2014).

<sup>23</sup>For a broader discussion of peaceful co-existence, see Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner (eds), *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation* (Cambridge, 2002); Benjamin Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge and London, 2009); and Andreas Pietsch and Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger (eds), *Konfessionelle Ambiguität: Uneindeutigkeit und Verstellung als religiöse Praxis in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen, 2013).

<sup>24</sup>Inge and Lothar Küken, *Der Oberlausitzer Sechsstädtebund* (Görlitz, 2009), p. 20; and Norbert Kersken, 'Die Oberlausitz von der Gründung des Sechsstädtebundes bis zum Übergang an das Kurfürstentum Sachsen (1346–1635)', in Bahlcke (ed.), *Geschichte der Oberlausitz*, pp. 99–142.

populous city, with as many as 10,000 inhabitants around 1500.<sup>25</sup> Although the town councils wielded considerable power over urban affairs, the introduction of Lutheran elements there was shaped by cross-confessional exchange. The pattern was very different to that in South German cities, where, having gained a foothold among the common people, the Reformation was subsequently imposed by the urban elites strictly. As Upper Lusatia was a Bohemian domain during this period, its religious history was closer to that of the Kingdom of Bohemia, where religious co-existence was more common.<sup>26</sup>

In Görlitz, the first evangelical stirrings occurred in 1521, when the priest Franz Rotbart, appointed in 1520, started to preach in the manner of Martin Luther.<sup>27</sup> Rotbart was still Catholic in his beliefs when a copy of Luther's excommunication bull was nailed to the main church, the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, on 23 February 1521.<sup>28</sup> On the back of the bull, Hass is specifically mentioned as *protonotarius* and supporter of the displaying of the bull.<sup>29</sup> Later in the year, however, plague broke out in Görlitz and almost all council members left town. With their departure, the town became increasingly open to religious change. After 1521, the inhabitants of Görlitz were increasingly less likely to endow side altars or chaplains.<sup>30</sup> Endowments were not abandoned completely. In line with the new beliefs, they were not made for churches or priests but were bestowed directly on almshouses or directed 'to the poor'.<sup>31</sup> In 1523, Rotbart left Görlitz because of the councilors' opposition to his preaching. Due to fears of disorder and continual requests by guild elders for Rotbart's reinstatement, however, the preacher returned to his position in 1525. The council remarked in a letter to Leipzig from 1540 that Rotbart was 'nothing special' and had only been called back to 'pacify the common man'.<sup>32</sup> But from 1525 onwards the Reformation steadily took hold of Görlitz, regardless of Rotbart's renewed exile when he married in 1530. Some

<sup>25</sup>Speer, *Frömmigkeit und Politik*, p. 16.

<sup>26</sup>Zdeněk V. David, *Realism, Tolerance, and Liberalism in the Czech National Awakening: Legacies of the Bohemian Reformation* (Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, 2010).

<sup>27</sup>For overviews of the Reformation in Görlitz, see Christian Speer, 'Die Reformation in der Oberlausitz: ein Überblick', in Christian Speer and Thomas Napp (eds), *Musik und Konfessionskulturen in der Oberlausitz der Frühen Neuzeit* (Görlitz and Zittau, 2013), pp. 7–13, and Karlheinz Blaschke, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Oberlausitz* (Görlitz and Zittau, 2000), pp. 66–87. For the surrounding nobility, see Lars-Arne Dannenberg, 'Reformation auf dem Land: der Oberlausitzer Adel und die lutherische Lehre', in Heinz-Dieter Heimann, Klaus Neitmann, Uwe Tresp (eds), *Die Nieder- und Oberlausitz—Konturen einer Integrationslandschaft*, vol. 2: *Frühe Neuzeit* (Berlin, 2014), pp. 55–91.

<sup>28</sup>Alfred Zobel, 'Untersuchungen über die Anfänge der Reformation in Görlitz und der Preußischen Oberlausitz. 1. Theil', *Neues Lausitzisches Magazin: Zeitschrift der Oberlausitzischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, 101 (1925), p. 142.

<sup>29</sup>Ratsarchiv/Stadtarchiv Görlitz, Görlitz, Lose Urkunden, Päpstliche Bulla gegen Martin Luther mit dem Mandat des Bischofs Johannes von Meisen, 23 Feb. 1521.

<sup>30</sup>Speer, *Frömmigkeit und Politik*, esp. pp. 290–7. For another change after the Reformation, that of pilgrimages, see Kai Wenzel, 'Die Bautzener Taucherkirche und das Görlitzer Heilige Grab: räumliche Reorganisation zweier Orte spätmittelalterlicher Frömmigkeit im konfessionellen Zeitalter', in Evelin Wetter (ed.), *Formierung des konfessionellen Raumes in Osmittleuropa* (Stuttgart, 2008), pp. 167–93.

<sup>31</sup>For a discussion of the longer-term implications of changing donation practices in the region, see Bridget Heal, '"Zum Andenken und zur Ehre Gottes": Kunst und Frömmigkeit im frühneuzeitlichen Luthertum', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 104 (2013), pp. 140–70.

<sup>32</sup>Ratsarchiv/Stadtarchiv Görlitz, Görlitz, Missiven 1539–1543, folio 24.

Catholic rituals were abandoned and a new liturgy was introduced. The first recorded communion in both kinds and baptism in the German vernacular took place in 1525.<sup>33</sup>

But Upper Lusatia was characterized by religious co-existence and not by the uniform imposition of religious change by the ruling elites. Undoubtedly there were conflicts caused by confessional divisions, and Johannes Hass recorded many of these minor disputes. Usually, however, co-existence functioned without major problems. In other Upper Lusatian towns, the Reformation was introduced in a similarly slow and peaceful manner. In Bautzen, the ‘capital’ of the Lusatian League, the main town church became the oldest and one of the biggest *Simultankirchen* (churches shared by at least two confessions) in the empire.<sup>34</sup> Upper Lusatians were prone to combining belief systems and were willing to use what David Luebke has called ‘liturgies of accommodation’, where Lutherans received baptism from a Catholic priest, for example.<sup>35</sup> Although Catholics complained about godparents’ pretending to be Catholic, they nonetheless performed the rite. The fluidity of religious boundaries in Upper Lusatian towns throughout the sixteenth century supports the thesis that in the early modern era religious conflict was ‘neither inevitable nor universal’.<sup>36</sup>

Since Upper Lusatia was a Bohemian domain, Lutherans could never outlaw Catholicism completely. Instead they had to negotiate with their Catholic counterparts, whilst Catholics also had to learn to live with an increasing Lutheran majority. Similarly, the urban elites had to negotiate with guild members and artisans. In a carefully balanced structure of power, religious and political actors remained in constant negotiation over the introduction of the Reformation. Hass was able to operate within this context with confidence because of the king of Bohemia’s explicit rejection of the Wittenberg Reformation, but the reality in Görlitz was an increasingly non-Catholic council and citizenship.

## II: The Council in Charge: Civic Confidence and God’s Helping Hand

Before the Reformation, Johannes Hass’s world was a relatively stable one where he could explain those events which went beyond the realm of urban jurisdiction by simply referring to more distant powers. In his first two volumes, Hass invoked ‘God, the Almighty’ in formulaic expressions and as protector of the town’s fortunes.<sup>37</sup> The first

<sup>33</sup> Alfred Zobel, ‘Untersuchungen über die Anfänge der Reformation in Görlitz und der Preußischen Oberlausitz. 2. Theil’, *Neues Lausitzisches Magazin: Zeitschrift der Oberlausitzischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, 102 (1926), p. 133. See also Speer, *Frömmigkeit und Politik*, p. 368, for a discussion of the unlikely possibility that the first communion in both kinds took place in 1526.

<sup>34</sup> See Friedrich Hermann Baumgärtel, *Die kirchlichen Zustände Bautzens im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Bautzen, 1889); Richard Vötig, *Die simultankirchlichen Beziehungen zwischen Katholiken und Protestanten zu St. Peter in Bautzen* (Leipzig, 1911); and Hermann Kinne, *Das (exemte) Bistum Meissen*, vol. 1: *Das Kollegiatstift St. Petri zu Bautzen von der Gründung bis 1569* (Berlin, 2014).

<sup>35</sup> David M. Luebke, *Hometown Religion: Regimes of Coexistence in Early Modern Westphalia* (Charlottesville, 2016), esp. pp. 49–74. See also David M. Luebke, ‘Passageriten und Identität: Taufe und Eheschließung in westfälischen Kleinstädten (1550–1650)’, in Jan Brademann and Kristina Thies (eds), *Liturgisches Handeln als Soziale Praxis: kirchliche Rituale in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Münster, 2014), pp. 237–52.

<sup>36</sup> Kaplan, *Divided by Faith*, p. 98. For an analysis of other regions, see Howard Louthan, Gary Cohen and Franz Szabo (eds), *Diversity and Dissent: Negotiating Religious Difference in Central Europe, 1500–1800* (New York, 2011).

<sup>37</sup> Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Neumann, p. 114.

of the areas beyond Hass's grasp was history itself, which required God's involvement as an explanation for past events. In one of his earliest accounts of divine intervention, written around 1513, Hass explains that throughout Görlitz's long history, God never wanted the town to be destroyed by fire.<sup>38</sup> Here, Hass is placing the responsibility for the success and prosperity of the urban community firmly in God's hands. Yet he also notes that if the town were to burn down, trees located on nearby meadows, given to the town by imperial decree, could be used to rebuild it. It was through the combination of two distant yet powerful forces, emperor and God, that Görlitz not only had survived fire-free, but also could be rebuilt.<sup>39</sup> The past was a realm in which God had been generous towards the inhabitants of Görlitz, and Hass wanted to commemorate how mercifully God had treated his town.<sup>40</sup> The power of God extended further than this world: God ruled supreme over life and death. The most frequent mention of God is in formulae in which a certain person 'fell asleep in the Lord' (*In Gote entschlafen*) or was saved from death by divine mercy: Hass's own miraculous survival is the most detailed of such accounts. In the original manuscript someone, probably Hass himself, has drawn a pointing hand in the margins of this passage, illustrating its importance.<sup>41</sup> The episode is to be found at the very end of the second volume and can help us explain Hass's staunch Catholicism and also shed light on his perception of the divine.<sup>42</sup>

The injuries and deaths are revealing in the highly symbolic retelling of God's protection of Hass. The least-careful actors, the two stonemasons, lose their lives, as Hass describes in graphic terms: 'They died immediately, with their intestines oozing out.'<sup>43</sup> Two foremen, who warned the stonemasons but were not overly proactive, were severely injured. One of them 'grabbed a plank, with which he spared his life whilst falling, however, many teeth fell out of his neck'.<sup>44</sup> Hass later returns to the teeth, stating that 'the foreman was led into the church and, because of the pain, the front teeth, one after the other, were torn out of the mouth and thrown into the church', as if in a kind of religious offering.<sup>45</sup> The council members, to Hass's mind the most honourable and God-fearing individuals on the building site, survived unharmed. Although Hass does not explicitly cite a biblical reference, his own survival is reminiscent of that of Lot, who was saved by a divine impulse not to look behind him (Genesis 19:15-17).

Hass also referred to the capstone needed for the completion of the window; a capstone is also mentioned twice in the book of Zachariah (4:7, 4:10). The stonemasons who thought they knew better than the foremen and put too much weight on the scaffolding were guilty of arrogance, like Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who attempted to

<sup>38</sup> On the fear of fire, see Robert W. Scribner, 'The "Mordbrenner" Fear in Sixteenth Century Germany: Political Paranoia or the Revenge of the Outcast?', in Richard J. Evans (ed.), *The German Underworld: Deviants and Outcasts in German History* (London, 1988), pp. 29–56.

<sup>39</sup> Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Neumann, p. 246.

<sup>40</sup> See Hille, *Providentia*, pp. 399–429, for chroniclers and their relationship to the empire.

<sup>41</sup> Bibliotheka Uniwersytecka Wrocław UL., 6313 Mil II / 179, Johannes Hass, *Libri Annalium Gorlicensis*, pp. 118b–119b.

<sup>42</sup> Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Neumann, pp. 574–6.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* The word 'neck' (*Hals*) in early modern German could also include the mouth.

<sup>45</sup> For a discussion of the importance of teeth in nearby Silesia in the early modern period, see Robert Jütte, *Ein Wunder wie der Goldene Zahn: eine unerhörte Begebenheit aus dem Jahre 1593 macht Geschichte(n)* (Ostfildern, 2004).



challenge Moses and so died (Numbers 16). The collapse of the scaffolding and wall is reminiscent of the crumbling walls of Jericho (Hebrews 11:30). A final indication of the religious nature of the account is Hass's measurement of time in terms of a prayer: 'One would not have been able to speak an *Ave Maria* so quickly did the scaffolding collapse.'<sup>46</sup> Just as he mentions 'divine intervention' at the outset, so he makes his gratitude explicit again at the very end of this episode: 'and the two men [he and the other council member] without harm to their lives were saved certainly by divine mercy and the intervention of Saint Nicholas'.<sup>47</sup> This occasion is one of the few times that Hass credits a saint with intercession alongside God. It is with this kind of pre-Reformation God in mind, a God who can be supplicated when human powers fail, that we have to assess the changing understanding of divine intervention in the years after the Reformation.<sup>48</sup>

In 1534, when Hass began writing his annals again, he perceived an increase in divine intervention, the kind he expected from a Catholic God who punished any rebellious Lutherans. Although allusions to God are sparse throughout, the third volume shows a more than 50 per cent increase. References to the saints cease entirely. Although such references were already rare in volumes one and two, when Hass did mention saints he portrayed them as powerful. Saint Anne, for example, gave an heir to a rich merchant. A closer analysis of the volumes by years shows that references to God peak in the period 1521 to 1534 before they drop in the passages dealing with 1534 to 1542. This division is significant because in 1534 Hass started writing his annals again retrospectively, covering the years 1521 to 1534, and then continued to write contemporaneously until 1542. Hass perceived strong divine intervention between 1521 and 1534. This assessment, however, also made Hass hopeful of a clear divine intervention, or at least a sign, in favour of the Catholics. As this sign never came, his references to God and divine intervention declined.

The increase in references to God in volume three is partly explained by Hass's account, written retrospectively in 1534, of a fire which had prevented a planned cloth makers' rebellion in 1525. The cloth makers and some Lutheran clergy had been criticizing the council for many weeks, and Hass relates how they had already fixed a date for their rebellion. The fire, however, destroyed large parts of the town and the cloth makers had to 'take care of their own business' for two years, causing them to be relatively obedient towards the council.<sup>49</sup> Hass writes that of 180 houses destroyed, seventy belonged to the rebellious cloth makers. He explains the fire entirely through divine intervention: 'Believe me that the whole town was in great danger of complete destruction [through the fire] that night, the almighty, merciful God ... threw in a heavy and saddening remedy, to prevent the cloth makers' plan.'<sup>50</sup> Although the fire had damaged Hass's house and the town as a whole, it had also enabled the council to stay in control, which to Hass's mind showed clear disapproval of the rebellious cloth makers and their newly found evangelism. Shortly after the fire, Hass also wondered whether a great thunderstorm which had set five people on fire had been sent by God.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Neumann, p. 576.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> For the Reformation perceived as rupture, see Hille, *Providentia*, pp. 252–4.

<sup>49</sup> Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 24.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.



It took the cloth makers two years to recover, and in 1527 it seemed likely once more that a rebellion would occur.<sup>52</sup> When discontented artisans and guild members gathered, Hass wrote, the council members comforted each other and hoped that God would intervene in their favour.<sup>53</sup> The rebels objected to the bad economic conditions and their limited political agency and demanded the pure preaching of the Gospel. It is no coincidence that these demands were very similar to those formulated by 'peasants' throughout Germany in the latter half of the 1520s. Due to the town's proximity to Bohemia, the communal nature of Taborite theology may also have had an impact.<sup>54</sup> Hass, the main source for the attempted rebellion, also mentions twice within the space of ten pages that the rebels called each other 'brother', a terminology employed by radical reformers and signatories of the 1525 Twelve Articles, who spoke of 'brotherly love' in the fourth of their articles.<sup>55</sup> But Hass does not connect the cloth makers' conspiracy to broader developments of the German Peasants' War and only briefly references Thomas Müntzer.<sup>56</sup> Instead, he chooses local reference points to put the rising into context and comments that the cloth makers of Görlitz had always been rebellious and unfaithful. Lutheran and Catholic councillors alike hoped that God would once more intervene to save the town from what Hass perceived to be certain ruin.

Hass identified precisely such a divine intervention when he recorded the events of 1527 in 1534. The day before the revolt, one of the conspirators told Hass's servant about the plans, and the council was able to intervene. According to Hass, the council did not act earlier against the cloth makers because

God, who had mercy on the town from the beginning, has given means and ways [but] the council did not punish [the cloth makers] because the whole congregation ... would have shouted it happened to surpress the Gospel.<sup>57</sup>

In this instance, Hass directly juxtaposes his Catholic God with the evangelical notion of preaching the pure Gospel. But doubts creep into Hass's account. At the outset of the narrative on the cloth makers, Hass writes that 'God, however, is curious in his holy workings' because from the early 1520s onwards, cloth makers wanted to 'assail, kill and throw [the council] from the town hall'.<sup>58</sup>

Hass saw God as clearly on the side of the urban elites at this stage, illustrating the intersection of class and religiosity. Although Hass came from a humble background, in Görlitz he belonged to the ruling elite. As for the 1525 Peasants' War, the reasons for the cloth makers' rebellion were socio-economic, political and religious. Long-held grudges regarding a lack of political representation and economic problems certainly played an important role in the rising. In Hass's mind, therefore, the Reformation was closely

<sup>52</sup>Peter Wenzel, 'Der Aufstandsversuch der Görlitzer Tuchmacher 1527', *Görlitzer Magazin*, 13 (1999), pp. 16–25, and Peter Wenzel, 'Der Aufstandsversuch der Görlitzer Tuchmacher 1527 (Teil 2)', *Görlitzer Magazin*, 17 (2003), pp. 43–51.

<sup>53</sup>Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 34.

<sup>54</sup>Hass also specifically mentions the 'Taborite heretics' in his third volume; see *ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 40–1, 51, and Christoph Engelhard and Peter Blickle (eds), *Traktate aus dem Bauernkrieg von 1525* (Memmingen, 2000), pp. 20–3.

<sup>56</sup>Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 12.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 30–1.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 18. The reference to throwing people from the town hall has an interesting parallel in the defenestration particularly popular in nearby Bohemia.

connected to uprisings and challenges to the urban order. According to the annals, all councillors, whether Lutheran or Catholic, formed a united front against the rebellious artisans. In the early Reformation years, when confessional boundaries remained particularly flexible, class allegiances could trump religious connections, especially if individuals feared losing their power.

Although Hass's account is coloured by Lutheran teachings, as soon as the new doctrine threatened to upset the balance of power within the town, he opposed it vehemently. Franz Rotbart's requests are an example of what Hass perceived to be the combination of demands for religious and political reform.<sup>59</sup> Rotbart claimed that if a person was acting in accord with the Gospel and thought it necessary to disobey council orders, that person should not be punished.<sup>60</sup> For Hass this was civic disorder. It meant violence, 'creating widows and orphans'.<sup>61</sup> Hence, the display of divine intervention when the cloth makers' rebellion was discovered in the nick of time was a clear sign that not only his religion but also the council's policies met with divine favour. Hass justifies the harsh measures taken by the town council in a manner which is almost unique in the whole annals—he addresses the reader directly: 'Now be reminded, dear reader, if you are ... a pious, loyal person in what worry and hardship the council and especially the elders [found themselves]'.<sup>62</sup> For Hass, any pious individual would understand the measures the town council took. However, he evidently felt the need to justify the council's actions—something he had never done in the first two volumes. Yet by 1534 he needed a definitive sign of divine favour. Doubts about religious doctrine and practices were spreading in Görlitz, and God was not intervening. As the years wore on, this wish for a clear sign grew stronger and Hass looked to any event that might indicate divine intervention.

Hass's understanding of Luther and the urban community provided him with an explanation of why God was willing to save the town council, which in 1525 and 1527 would have contained non-Catholics. He compared the Lutherans to the Eastern Orthodox Church, or, as he called it, 'the occidental churches of Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch'.<sup>63</sup> He (rightly) thought that Luther was not going to recant his views, and he believed that the German nation would be divided, just as the eastern and western churches were. Hass falls into the category of authors who sought to assure themselves of their faith by referring to previous divisions and heresies which the Catholic Church had survived.<sup>64</sup> He did not go as far as to describe the Lutherans in the town as heretics and never criticized those councillors who had changed their faith.<sup>65</sup> His most vocal criticism was levelled at Luther himself. He portrayed the Wittenberg reformer as a cunning, and ultimately smart, tempter of stupid priests and

<sup>59</sup>For a comparison of medieval religion in Upper Lusatia, see Enno Bünz, "'Neun Teufel, die den Pfarrer quälen': zum Alltag in den mittelalterlichen Pfarreien der Oberlausitz", in Lars-Arne Dannenberg and Dietrich Scholze (eds), *Stätten und Stationen religiösen Wirkens: Studien zur Kirchengeschichte der zweisprachigen Oberlausitz* (Bautzen, 2009), pp. 19–54.

<sup>60</sup>Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 16.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 296.

<sup>64</sup>Hille, *Providentia*, p. 285, and Rau, *Geschichte und Konfession*, pp. 522–3.

<sup>65</sup>For discussion of the labelling of heretics in a largely Lutheran context, see Alexander Kästner and Gerd Schwerhoff (eds), *Göttlicher Zorn und menschliches Maß: religiöse Abweichung in frühneuzeitlichen Stadtgemeinschaften* (Constance, 2013).

simple-minded artisans. For example, he remarks about Rotbart that '[he] was a good simple man and at that time not learned, the former was the reason he became pastor, the latter was the reason he adhered to the Lutherans' faith, to please the people because previously no one wanted to listen to his sermons'.<sup>66</sup>

In this way, it was possible for Hass to maintain the urban fabric which to his mind was built on the continuing power of the town council, even if it contained Lutherans. We have no reliable records for the precise religious positions of the councillors (if, indeed, they knew themselves), but it is highly likely that by the 1530s, the council was confessionally mixed.<sup>67</sup> God punished the Lutheran cloth makers but never any non-Catholic councillors. In contrast, Lutheran chronicles of the later sixteenth century from the region portray God's wrath as punishment for Lutheran rulers.<sup>68</sup> The confusing situation, where class and religion collided, led Hass to question his ideas about urban and conciliar unity, which gradually began to disintegrate. Even before the Reformation, Hass had wanted to avoid the impression that the council was not unified. But disagreement soon spread amongst the councillors, and as early as the second page of the third volume, Hass reports 'danger amongst the councillors'.<sup>69</sup>

Hass was concerned to support the concentration of power in the hands of the councillors, even if this meant that his Catholic God did not punish Lutheran council members. Later in the annals Hass even openly commended some of the more practical Lutheran changes. After a long passage criticizing the moral shortcomings of the Lutherans, Hass continues that 'the school is in a better order to teach the boys now'.<sup>70</sup> These conscious changes in Hass's position might have been intended to keep his annals relevant for future Lutheran councillors. He also put the town's well-being above religious conflicts when he participated in Lutheran embassies of the Lusatian League to the king of Bohemia. It is possible that the Görlitz town council hoped to retain the king's favour by sending a genuinely Catholic councillor to Prague, rather than Lutherans who had to pretend to be Catholic.<sup>71</sup> At the same time, the Lutheran councillors were also willing to tolerate the Catholic Hass, as is shown by his re-election as mayor as late as 1543. His appointment was a remarkable decision, as the salvation of the whole town was at stake.<sup>72</sup>

Hass's description of the attempted rebellion of 1527 contains another novel feature: a more Christocentric theology.<sup>73</sup> Writing about the punishment of the cloth makers and other guild members, Hass remarks that 'the eternally merciful God this time has, through his begotten son Jesus Christ, our saviour, and the mercy and foresight of the Holy Spirit not put this [the usurpation of the council] upon our town'.<sup>74</sup> While

<sup>66</sup>Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 5.

<sup>67</sup>Speer, *Frömmigkeit und Politik*, pp. 372–97.

<sup>68</sup>Petr Hrachovec, 'Böhmische Themen in der Zittauer Stadtchronistik des frühen 17. Jahrhunderts', in Lars-Arne Dannenberg and Mario Müller (eds), *Studien zur neuzeitlichen Geschichtsschreibung in den böhmischen Kronländern Schlesien, Oberlausitz und Niederlausitz* (Görlitz, 2013), pp. 251–318.

<sup>69</sup>Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 2.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>71</sup>See Speer, *Frömmigkeit und Politik*, pp. 376–81.

<sup>72</sup>For notions of the *Corpus Christianum* see Kaplan, *Divided by Faith*, pp. 48–72.

<sup>73</sup>See Marc Lienhard, *Martin Luthers christologisches Zeugnis: Entwicklung und Grundzüge seiner Christologie* (Göttingen, 1980).

<sup>74</sup>Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 91.

he draws attention to the Trinity and its importance in protecting Görlitz, there is no mention of saints. The greater emphasis on Christ suggests that Hass has adopted minor elements of Luther's theology. Hass specifically mentions that Luther taught that humankind should not recognize anyone but Christ as Lord. It is likely that Hass highlighted Christ's importance accordingly. Luther's influence on some parts of Hass's thinking is explicitly documented when he acknowledges that he has seen a copy of Luther's text 'On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church'.<sup>75</sup> He specifically mentions that Luther wrote about the 'worthlessness' of saintly intercession.<sup>76</sup> But in the first two volumes there are two cases in which saintly intercession actively benefits inhabitants of Görlitz. The first is the birth of an heir for Johann Frentzel, who had previously provided the funds to build a chapel; according to Hass, Saint Anne intervened to give a son to the previously childless Frentzel and his wife. The second is when Hass's life is saved in the episode I quoted at the outset, through the intercession of the 'Holy Nicolaus patron[us]'.<sup>77</sup> Starting with the third volume, around 1534, when most major elements of Lutheranism had been established in the town, such accounts of saintly intercession cease entirely.

Between the first two volumes and the retrospectively written parts of the third volume, we can see a distinctive shift in Hass's language and reasoning. Because the rebellious cloth makers were punished by God's hand, Hass hoped that other Lutherans would be too. Yet he never wished the fate of the Lutheran artisans on the Lutheran councillors. The council annals suggest that at this point Hass valued his position as councillor above his religious identity. It was confusing for Hass to see the Lutherans prosper in the whole of Upper Lusatia, regardless of royal, clerical and his own admonitions against them. Whilst in the earlier parts of his annals Hass had restricted himself to recording factually what God had done, now he began to employ more tentative and hopeful formulations such as 'May God increase the honour and commonweal of the town.' Hass was hoping and praying for divine intervention, but his prayers remained unanswered.<sup>78</sup>

### III: When God is Absent, the Devil Appears

As Johannes Hass did not receive an unambiguous sign from God, he had to look further afield. It is likely that by this stage Hass did not know what exactly divine intervention in Görlitz might look like. By the 1530s, he no longer expected God to visit full-scale divine retribution on the Lutherans, not least because they included many of his fellow councillors. He could no longer fit a pre-Reformation God into his worldview and relied on distant events to keep his Catholic faith intact. In time he had to remove God completely from his account. By the end of the council annals, God does not even feature in formulaic expressions. Hass struggled to make sense of the world around him and came to express his own beliefs differently. He was cut off from traditional religious points of reference by the increasing isolation of Catholics in Görlitz, and as a result one can see further traces of Luther's theology in his religiosity.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 9

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>77</sup>Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Neumann, p. 576.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 131.

In other regions of the empire, chroniclers, both Catholic and Lutheran, did see the divine interventions for which Hass had hoped. When the Catholic council of Hanover fled the city, other Hanoverians interpreted their departure as a sign of divine disapproval of the old religion, and not as the result of the increasingly untenable political situation of the Catholic minority.<sup>79</sup> But the tendency to become disheartened at the lack of such a divine sign shown by Hass was also evident amongst some Lutherans. As Scott Dixon has suggested, the Lutheran Johannes Letzner never finished his monumental *Chronicle of Braunschweig-Lüneburg-Göttingen* because he was discouraged by the slow progress of Lutheranism.<sup>80</sup> The Catholic chronicler Antoni Kreuzer from Nuremberg struggled similarly to explain the good quality of the wine in 1540, for he had expected divine punishment for the community at large. He did not believe that God would leave Nuremberg unpunished and thought divine retribution would occur at an unspecified, later point.<sup>81</sup> It seems likely that Hass had to adjust his interpretation of God in the same manner. As the Lutherans received only limited divine punishment, Hass had to turn God into a less involved, more watchful deity. The influence of God in day-to-day human affairs decreased steadily. Hass's reading was not unique: on both sides of the confessional divide, the image of God began to shift as those who expected God to show approval of one confession and punish the other were disappointed.

God became increasingly removed from Görlitz and from Hass himself. Later in 1534, after he had reported on events such as the cloth makers' conspiracy, Hass writes about the 'chimera and heresy' of Huldrych Zwingli's theology, which, according to Hass had grown out of Luther's teaching.<sup>82</sup> He then describes how the 'old regions' stayed with the Catholic religion, 'called popery by Lutherans and Zwinglians'.<sup>83</sup> He chronicles the Second War of Kappel (1531), describing it in terms of divine intervention. Due to the refusal of the Inner Swiss towns to conform to the new religion,

Zwingli stormed into war, and with all his fellows, sixteen or seventeen preachers, against the old town, and the other towns and fought them. God, however, gave the small group of the old town strength and mercy [so] that they killed, with great damage, Zwingli and his fellows' bigger army [and] chased them away. Zwingli and all his ... preachers, therefore, were beaten to death in battle so that the fighting hand of God [*streitende hant gotis*] was seen with the old town mightily and visibly. The old town therefore stays with its old religion, not fearing the Zwinglians until this day.<sup>84</sup>

Here God once again features as a powerful actor who saves the righteous, and God is qualified as 'fighting'. God, therefore, might still intervene powerfully and decisively in human affairs, but the intervention occurs far away, in Zurich (*Zcurg*). God gives power

<sup>79</sup> Karljosef Kreter, *Städtische Geschichtskultur und Historiographie: das Bild der Stadt Hannover im Spiegel ihrer Geschichtsdarstellung von den Anfängen bis zum Verlust der städtischen Autonomie* (Hanover, 1996), pp. 95–6.

<sup>80</sup> C. Scott Dixon, 'The Sense of the Past in Reformation Germany: Part 1', *German History*, 30, 1 (2012), pp. 1–21, and C. Scott Dixon, 'The Sense of the Past in Reformation Germany: Part 2', *German History*, 30, 2 (2012), pp. 1–23.

<sup>81</sup> Hille, *Providentia*, p. 331.

<sup>82</sup> Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 294. For a comparison with Zittau chroniclers, some of whom also engage with Zwinglianism and Calvinism, see Hrachovec, 'Böhmische Themen', pp. 308–18, and Petr Hrachovec, 'Die Religion und die Konfession in der Zittauer Historiographie des 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhunderts', in Jan Zdichynec and Lenka Bobkova (eds), *Terra—ducatus—marchionatus—regio: die Bildung und Entwicklung der Regionen im Rahmen der Krone des Königreichs Böhmen* (Prague, 2013), pp. 171–88.

<sup>83</sup> Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 294.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 294–5.

to the powerless and to those who would normally not stand a chance against their mightier opponents, but only because they retained their Catholic faith. The idea that God punished Zwingli was also shared by non-Catholics: Luther, for one, saw Zwingli's defeat and death as a divine judgment on a preacher who had taken up arms and had preached false doctrine.<sup>85</sup> Interestingly, however, for Hass these events provided one of the last instances where he perceived a clear divine intervention. As time passed, he waited to see this kind of decisive intervention for the Catholic minority of Görlitz, who found themselves trying to fend off the Lutheran advance, just as the inner Swiss cantons had had to fend off Zwinglian advances.

Equally striking in Hass's account of the Battle of Kappel is his distortion of numbers, for the Catholic forces had outnumbered the Zwinglian troops significantly. Here, Hass magnifies the effect of divine intervention. Judging by his detailed and usually correct knowledge of events as diverse as the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster and the Ottoman Wars, it is very likely that he deliberately misrepresented events so as to strengthen the power of his Catholic God. Oswald Myconius, the first biographer of Zwingli and a close friend of the Swiss reformer, writes about the preparations for war and 'how small the number of all [the followers of Zwingli was] ... against such a well-equipped enemy'.<sup>86</sup> The absence of any of the miraculous elements surrounding Zwingli's death, such as the intact survival of his heart after his body had been burned, is also striking in an account as detailed as Hass's.<sup>87</sup> The mention of Zwingli's taking preachers with him into battle further shows a clear sign of divine disapproval of Zwinglian clergy and thus of the confession as a whole.

Hass slowly changed his outlook, giving up his hope for powerful divine intervention in Görlitz and becoming more uncertain. Gradually God began to disappear from his account and in God's stead came the Devil. Hass never suggested that the Devil was more powerful than God, a heretical position. It is more likely that Hass thought the Devil could only act by divine permission. Although Hass mentions God more frequently in the third volume, which is roughly as long as the first two volumes combined, a closer analysis is telling. Out of the forty-seven references to God contained in the third volume, twenty-one occur in the first quarter, corresponding with Hass's perception of divine intervention against the cloth makers in the portion of the third volume that he wrote retrospectively in 1534. In the second and third quarters, the references drop to eleven and twelve respectively, whilst the final quarter contains merely three, with the final fifty pages containing not a single mention of God. Hass removed God from his narrative. By contrast, the Devil becomes an increasingly important figure, to the point that, by the end of the annals, the Devil is a more active agent than God. Although the Devil never intervened as potently as did God in the first two volumes and is mainly recorded by Hass in formulaic expressions, by the end of the third volume, God has disappeared even from such figures of speech.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Reformation* (Frankfurt/Main, 2009), pp. 152–61, and Thomas Kaufmann, 'Luther und Zwingli', in Albrecht Beutel (ed.), *Luther Handbuch* (2nd edn., Tübingen, 2010; 1st edn. 2005), pp. 159–61.

<sup>86</sup> Oswald Myconius, *Vom Leben und Sterben Huldrych Zwinglis*, ed. Ernst Gerhard Rüschi (St. Gallen, 1979), p. 71.

<sup>87</sup> Myconius, *Vom Leben und Sterben*, pp. 70–3.

The first time Hass uses the adjective ‘devilish’ (*teufflich*) is when referring to Luther’s ability to lead priests astray by tempting them with ‘carnal or devilish freedom’.<sup>88</sup> This reference to the Devil is surprising if we consider that in the whole 576 pages of the first two volumes neither the Devil nor any variations (*teufflich*, *teufflich*, *diabolisch*, *Satan*, etc.) are mentioned. Starting from the beginning of the third volume, Hass uses the Devil as an active counterpart to God. His understanding of the Devil as deceiving tempter of stupid artisans and priests is very close to that of Luther, who also believed the Devil to be scheming.<sup>89</sup> Hass was aware of Luther’s emphasis on the Devil’s cunning, describing how Luther accused Catholic canons of being persuaded to mischief by the Devil (*diabolo*).<sup>90</sup> The absence of the Devil, except for in a passage which details an anecdote from Görlitz council annals of the late fifteenth century, underscores that a change in the author’s outlook is the most likely cause for the rise of references to the Devil.<sup>91</sup>

A retrospective report on town privileges through the centuries, which is a unique part of the third volume of Hass’s council annals, also features the Devil.<sup>92</sup> When nobles tried to infringe upon urban privileges in the late 1530s, Hass and fellow council members drew up a list of privileges and jurisdictions the council had won throughout the centuries to prove their continuity and legitimacy to anyone who questioned their rights. In this account, Hass relates how a wool market was run badly by the cloth makers who, because they were ‘rebellious, wanton and foolish ... wanted to hack off people’s hands’ if anyone disobeyed. The Devil, he comments, ‘became their abbot and patron’.<sup>93</sup> The Devil had now entered into a realm previously reserved for God. Whilst before, God was made responsible for saving the city from fires and had protected it throughout history, now the Devil is used as an explanation for a past event. As a co-conspirator of the cruel cloth makers, the Devil is also a very real, almost humanlike presence, unlike God who always retained an air of other-worldliness. Luther similarly emphasized the Devil’s active presence.<sup>94</sup> Hass also refers to the Devil more frequently in formulaic expressions. In one instance, when the council was borrowing money from another town, it affirmed its creditworthiness by insisting ‘the council of Görlitz swears that what they say is true, for otherwise the Devil shall take them’, replacing an oath to God with an oath to the Devil.<sup>95</sup> By contrast, the first two volumes use formulae such as ‘[someone] swore on God and honour’ or ‘God and emperor’.<sup>96</sup> Now, it is the Devil who might take the council members if they are lying.

<sup>88</sup>Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathssannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 9.

<sup>89</sup>See Philip M. Soergel, *Wondrous in His Saints: Counter-Reformation Propaganda in Bavaria* (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 60–72, for a discussion of Luther’s view that the Devil tempted pilgrims to worship false idols at pilgrimage sites.

<sup>90</sup>Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathssannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 305.

<sup>91</sup>Leopold Haupt (ed.), *Goerlitzer Rathssannalen: aus den Jahren 1487 bis 1496* (Görlitz, 1841).

<sup>92</sup>Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathssannalen*, ed. Struve, pp. 122–273. Analysed in Czok, ‘Chronistik und innerstädtische Bewegungen’.

<sup>93</sup>Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathssannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 265.

<sup>94</sup>Still central on this topic, Heiko Oberman, *Luther: Mensch zwischen Gott und Teufel* (Berlin, 1982). See also Lyndal Roper, ‘Martin Luther’s Body: The “Stout Doctor” and His Biographers’, *American Historical Review*, 115, 2 (2010), pp. 350–84 and Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet* (London, 2016).

<sup>95</sup>Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathssannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 265.

<sup>96</sup>For formulaic expressions see, for example, Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathssannalen*, ed. Neumann, pp. 27, 349, 542.



Hass explicitly linked the Devil to Martin Luther and the Reformation. When in 1536 he wrote with biting sarcasm that ‘the lovely Martin Luther made the priests run ... like in summer the flies make the pissing cow run towards the bush, so that one [priest] went here, the other [priest] there, stung by the Devil and the flesh more than before’, it is the Devil who stings the priests and replaces God as an active participant in everyday life.<sup>97</sup> Rather than God’s intervening to protect and save, the Devil now seduces fools. Earlier, Hass directly juxtaposes Luther and the Devil. When describing the Reformer’s theology, Hass writes that Luther gave ‘carnal or devilish freedom’ to the priests who wanted to take wives.<sup>98</sup> The above example epitomizes a kind of graphic language (‘pissing cows’) which Hass only uses towards the end of the third volume.<sup>99</sup> It is likely that Hass’s deployment of graphic language—at another point he writes that preachers followed Luther like ‘pigs going to the trough’—was also a response to the explicit language of Lutheran pamphlet literature.<sup>100</sup>

A comparison between a letter sent to Hass whilst in Prague and the corresponding entry in his annals constitutes one of the most striking examples of Hass’s willingness to omit God from his account.<sup>101</sup> The letter from June 1537, which was copied into the Görlitz *Liber Missivarum*, a record of the council’s correspondence, is addressed to Hass and two of his fellow councillors.<sup>102</sup> After the usual salutation, the unknown author writes that ‘through the fate (*Verhengnus*) of the Almighty, awful things have happened’. The letter details how an apprentice tanner shot another citizen and how a ferocious storm knocked down the tip of the church tower. The bad weather also resulted in a fire, destroyed houses and killed a four-year-old, but another child in his crib, ‘thank God’ (*Gott lob*), was left unharmed by the fire. The storm was, reports the letter writer, ‘nothing other than the punishment and wrath of God, for our sins’. The author hopes that God might ‘create and order all this according to his divine will’ and eventually lift the punishment from the town. The letter follows a clear pattern of cause and effect: the town had been sinful (though what sins were committed is not specified); God therefore punished the town and only God can lift the punishment again.

The terrible storm also found its way into Hass’s council annals, though he portrayed it rather differently. Hass illustrated human agency in conjunction with divine benevolence. As the account was composed in 1537, it falls into the phase of writing when Hass once again recorded events as they unfolded. Unlike in the letter, Hass recounts the survival of the child (‘the fire went around it’) and the lightning that struck the church without any references to God. Instead, after relating details about the fire in

<sup>97</sup> Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 300. The irony used by Hass in describing Luther as ‘lovely’ (*der liebe*) is usually a stylistic trope associated with the Devil himself; see Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 81–100.

<sup>98</sup> Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 9.

<sup>99</sup> The editor of the chronicle thought that Hass had been influenced to use more dramatic and colourful language by the changes introduced by Luther into the German language; see Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. vii.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 305.

<sup>101</sup> Stadtarchiv/Ratsarchiv Görlitz, *Liber Missivarum*, vol. 2, folio 414v and r. For the use of letters in early modern Germany, see Lyndal Roper, ‘“To his Most Learned and Dearest Friend”: Reading Luther’s Letters’, *German History*, 28, 3, (2010), pp. 283–95.

<sup>102</sup> Judging from the hand, it is possible that Hass himself copied the letter into the *Liber Missivarum* after he had received that same letter whilst in Prague.

Görlitz, Hass addresses the reader once again directly: ‘You shall not think nor believe that only the people of Görlitz had angered the merciful God.’ In comparison, the letter clearly references divine anger at the Görlitzers’ sins. Hass continues, ‘I do not believe that all the punishments related here occurred only to Görlitz, because the dying, price increases, floods, big thunderstorms, etc. happened in all lands, damaging many people.’<sup>103</sup> Hass fills in more details to prove that Görlitz was not singled out for divine wrath: ‘In Heidelberg the castle was destroyed, with no small damage to the town, in Naumburg the nun’s barn full of crops was set ablaze, etc.’<sup>104</sup> This passage, which generalizes the bad weather, stands in marked contrast to the letter, which centres on a specific time and place, stressing that the events happened ‘among us and at this time’ (*bey uns und iziger zeit*).

Hass also describes how a cleric at Kuhnewalde—at one point Hass calls him a pastor (*Pfarther*) at another a priest (*Priester*)—was struck by thunder. This episode is particularly telling as the *Annales Budissinensis* gives further details of the event.<sup>105</sup> The cleric, Urban Nicolai, had been vicar of Saint Peter’s Church in Bautzen and had converted to Lutheranism. By the time he became preacher in the village of Kuhnewalde in 1536, he had reverted to his Catholic beliefs. At one point he stated publicly that if Luther was right, he, Nicolai, should be struck down by lightning. When a thunderstorm hit Kuhnewalde, he fled into the village church hoping to escape the terrible weather, but, the chronicle records, lightning struck next to him while he was praying in the church, rendering him unconscious. When some farmers rushed to his aid, a second bolt of lightning struck the group of men. However, it killed only Nicolai and not the farmers. In Hass’s account, no reference is made to the cleric’s Catholic beliefs or to his explicit challenge to God to punish him if Luther was right.<sup>106</sup>

In Hass’s view, God was now working in conjunction with human actors and was punishing the whole of Germany, not just Görlitz. He struggled to believe that individuals as pious as a priest who had recently re-converted to Catholicism and nuns could be punished by God, and so he weakened God’s influence on realms which had previously been firmly ruled by the divine. While in his first volume he attributes the protection of Görlitz from fire solely to divine mercy and also credits God with the fire that prevented the cloth makers from conspiring in 1525, now he specifically states that God’s protection needed to be supported by an individual’s actions. At the end of his account of the calamities that befell Görlitz, Hass provides perhaps the most telling account of how he came to see divine intervention:

Rebellions through the whole of the German nation, through the Lutheran preachers, and other evil sects, Zwinglians, Anabaptists, etc., which came from it [Lutheranism], brought turmoil, as has happened here. And it may be the punishment and fate of God, I certainly believe so. It hurts the council nonetheless that the people are so careless, regardless of so much admonition. Then God out of compassion and mercy no longer wants to renew and protect us, unless we want to ourselves. Similarly, if someone sets his own house on fire, God is hardly going to put it out. Another might say, when the old religion was left, and the Lutheran [religion] broke through and was accepted, the German nation was assaulted by many problems.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 333.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Großer, *Lausitzische Merkwürdigkeiten*, vol. 2, p. 20, quoting from the *Annales Budissienses*.

<sup>106</sup> Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 333.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 333–4.

In the marginalia, Hass summarized his view with the words ‘our diligence and work has to occur besides divine intervention’.<sup>108</sup> While this God and the God who had previously saved and protected the town are not mutually exclusive, there has been a change in emphasis. While God was still capable of intervening, if humans were open to such intervention, he had turned away from Görlitz as the people had forsaken him.<sup>109</sup> Interestingly, Hass wrote that the new religions were a divine retribution, showing a punishing side of a previously largely merciful God. For Hass such divine castigation could alone explain why nuns suffered as a result of bad weather and why the whole of Germany ‘was assaulted by many problems’. If only people had chosen to follow the Catholic religion, instead of the Lutheran one, Hass implies, they would have kept God on their side. In Hass’s mind, the solution to the many problems of the German nation was simple: a return to Catholicism would ensure that God would once again benefit the people. It must have been deeply worrying and disturbing to Hass and other Catholics to see their fellow Görlitzers and the urban community move towards certain destruction by turning away from God and his divine powers.<sup>110</sup> Contrary to the undisrupted nature of the first two volumes, agency is now placed with the people who have chosen not to turn to the true God. This interpretation allowed Hass to retain most of his Catholic beliefs intact and explains why he now saw the Devil as a more active player in the town’s affairs. God is only mentioned one more time after Hass describes in this passage how the people chose to forsake him.<sup>111</sup> This final passage is geographically on the fringes of Hass’s world: the victory of emperor and pope over the advances of the Ottoman Empire in 1537. Hass reported that ‘the merciful God had clemently ensured that the movement of the Turks was stopped on water through the Emperor, Pope and Venetians’.<sup>112</sup> Perceiving the Ottoman Empire as a common enemy, Hass envisaged a Christian world unified by its animosity toward the enemy of the ‘Christian name and blood’.<sup>113</sup>

#### IV: Conclusion

After the Reformation had been established in Görlitz, Johannes Hass perceived demonic rather than divine intervention. An analysis of Hass’s account shows us how deeply unsettling, confusing and terrifying the prospect of having multiple and competing belief systems must have seemed to inhabitants of the early modern world. The novel situation led to a variety of individual responses. For Hass it meant changing his understanding of the very nature of God. An analysis of urban historiography from Upper Lusatia and elsewhere in the empire could point to telling similarities. Lutheran chronicles from Zittau dating from around 1600, also feature the Devil.<sup>114</sup> Perhaps the

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 334.

<sup>109</sup>See also Hille, *Providentia*, p. 331, who also argues that Hass now thought ‘human will’ was needed in addition to divine protection.

<sup>110</sup>The Görlitz councillor Paul Schneider, who was also a Catholic and lived contemporaneously with Hass, must have been one last confessional ally; see Hille, *Providentia*, pp. 72–3, and Speer, *Frömmigkeit und Politik*, pp. 46–7.

<sup>111</sup>Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. 354.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.* For a broader discussion of perceptions of Turks and their religion, see Thomas Kaufmann, *Türckenbüchlein: zur christlichen Wahrnehmung ‘türkischer Religion’ in Spätmittelalter und Reformation* (Göttingen, 2008).

<sup>114</sup>Christian-Weise-Bibliothek, Zittau, *Chronik Arnsdorff*, Mscr. A 122b, *Chronik Krodel*, Mscr. A 123, and *Chronik Werner*, Mscr. A 90b. I would like to thank Petr Hrachovec for these references.

despair Hass felt as a result of the rise of the Devil and decline of Catholicism even explains why he ends his annals abruptly in the middle of a sentence. Was he questioning the rationale behind his undertaking in such a corrupt world?

The flexibility displayed by Hass is not unique in an Upper Lusatian context, but it is symptomatic of broader religious developments which were shaped by shared confessional practices later in the sixteenth century. Part of the reason why Upper Lusatia is so fascinating for historians is that the king of Bohemia's limited intervention allowed the towns of the Lusatian League to exercise a considerable degree of religious and political freedom. Whilst the politics of the largely Lutheran town councils ensured that the followers of the Reformation were not persecuted, the councillors could never act decisively against Catholics for fear of royal repercussions. The mixed confessional milieu, resulting in grudging acceptance of other creeds and inter-confessional negotiation, led to an accommodating Lutheranism and, as Hass shows, an equally distinctive Catholicism. Such religious negotiations also occurred in other parts of the Holy Roman Empire where the territorial overlord was comparatively weak or open to religious accommodation, for example in Silesia and Westphalia.<sup>115</sup> Although Hass heavily criticized novelties brought about by the Reformation, he nonetheless incorporated elements of the new confession: a slightly stronger emphasis on Christ, an active and scheming Devil, the absence of saintly intercession, and explicit and crude language. It is likely that these changes in belief and language occurred subconsciously as Hass attempted to make sense of the success of the Reformation. In other instances Hass was also willing to accommodate novel elements in the urban fabric consciously and openly, for instance by commending improvements in schooling. However, he only approved such developments if they did not threaten the urban order, which he valued above all else.

It is possible that Hass had not given up hope that Catholicism with all its theologies and practices would triumph, whether through divine or demonic intervention, that the Lutheran confession would be destroyed and the old faith resurrected in its former glory. This ray of hope might explain the choice of epitaph on his now-lost tombstone, which referenced the resurrection of Lazarus.<sup>116</sup> Even here, however, it is possible to see a connection to Luther's teachings: the Wittenberg Reformer had recommended the Raising of Lazarus (John 11:25) as an epitaph motif in 1542, two years before Hass's death.<sup>117</sup> The renowned epitaph for Michael Meyenburg, a Lutheran and mayor of Nordhausen, by Lucas Cranach the Younger displays the story. So even in his posthumous commemoration, Johannes Hass, a Catholic and mayor of Görlitz, exhibits a confusing mixture of identities, a piety poised somewhere in between Catholicism and Lutheranism.

## Abstract

The council annals of Johannes Hass, the last Catholic mayor of the West Bohemian town of Görlitz, are a fascinating document. In a single source we can see the author's changing interpretation of divine

<sup>115</sup>Luebke, 'Passageriten und Identität', pp. 237–42, and Luebke, *Hometown Religion*.

<sup>116</sup>Hass, *Goerlitzer Rathsannalen*, ed. Struve, p. viii, and information sign in Saint Peter's Church, Görlitz.

<sup>117</sup>Oliver Meys, *Memoria und Bekenntnis. Die Grabdenkmäler evangelischer Landesherren im Heiligen Römischen Reich Deutscher Nation im Zeitalter der Konfessionalisierung* (Regensburg, 2009), p. 877.

intervention between c.1509 and 1542. After the introduction of the Reformation, Hass steadily decreased the importance of God, whilst the Devil became increasingly important. Regardless of Hass's staunch Catholicism, Martin Luther's impact can be felt in his vision of the divine and the demonic as he subconsciously incorporated minor elements of Lutheranism and commented positively on small changes brought about by the Reformation. Hass shows how receptive Catholics were towards Lutheran theology, without necessarily acknowledging it, as long as the new religion did not challenge the urban order. In rich and colourful language, Hass changed the very nature of God, the Devil and the saints. In this way he was responding to the slow but steady introduction of the Reformation in Görlitz. Only by gradually turning God into a passive observer and giving greater agency to human actors could Hass make sense of the absence of a clear sign in favour of the Catholics in Görlitz.

**Keywords:** Bohemia, Reformation, early modern Catholicism, Holy Roman Empire, Chronicles, divine intervention

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