

PASTOR POMERANUS: THE LIFE OF JOHANNES BUGENHAGEN AND THE LESSONS  
WE CAN LEARN FROM HIS PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP WITH MARTIN LUTHER

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY

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MEQUON, WI

FEBRUARY 17, 2022

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## ABSTRACT

The opportunity to study Lutheran history has revealed that there are many different aspects to the history of Lutheranism that a Lutheran needs to be enlightened on. It has also revealed that there are many more aspects that have yet to receive proper scholarly attention, and thus proper study and discussion amongst all Lutherans. One such area is the life and work of Johannes Bugenhagen, a fellow Reformer and friend of Martin Luther. Despite being highly influential to Luther and his work, most Lutherans do not know who Bugenhagen was.

My research uncovered the tumultuous path that brought Johannes Bugenhagen into contact with Martin Luther, and that ultimately cemented his place as Luther's pastor in Wittenberg. Bugenhagen impacted the Lutheran Reformation in many ways, from his writings to his work as a teacher at the University of Wittenberg; but his most impactful work was his pastoral care of Martin Luther. Bugenhagen helped Luther through cycles of depression, anxiety and illness. Although we might be tempted to regard Bugenhagen's pastoral approaches as dated and obsolete on their face, a deeper study reveals that Bugenhagen provided comfort from the basis of Scripture, knowing that God's Word would provide more than Bugenhagen's own words could. This type of scriptural pastoral approach is something we can still do today.

## INTRODUCTION

The Lutheran Reformation was an ambitious undertaking. The Roman Catholic Church was strongly rooted throughout Europe, and it had been quite successful in dealing forcefully with those it considered to be heretics. So when an Augustinian monk and professor in Wittenberg took upon himself the challenge of reforming the Church, very few if anyone thought he would succeed. Over five hundred years later, that man, known as Martin Luther, has numerous church bodies which claim to follow his teachings.

Luther was certainly the leader of the Reformation, or at least the leader of the appropriately named Lutheran Reformation.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, this is not an accurate way to describe Luther and his work. With respect to the work of the Church, Luther recognized that God was at work and the true leader of the Reformation.<sup>2</sup> As for the work of writing and preaching God's Word as God's called servants, Luther was at the center of his own team of theologians and scholars in Wittenberg.<sup>3</sup>

Luther needed help and support to carry out his work, and he found it in his circle of friends. Some left over theological differences, such as Andreas Karlstadt. Others stuck by his side for the rest of his life, such as Philipp Melancthon. Melancthon is considered by many

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1. Other Reformations to spring from portions of Luther's reforming work include the Calvinist movement, Zwinglianism, and the English Reformation.

2. Luther said in his second *Invocavit* sermon on March 10, 1522, "I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word: otherwise I did nothing.... I did nothing: the Word of God did it all." Cited from "The Second Sermon, March 10, 1522, Monday after *Invocavit*" by Luther, as found in *Luther's Works, Volume 51: Sermons I*, pp. 77-78.

3. Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God: The Wittenberg School and Its Scripture-Centered Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 8.

scholars to be Luther's right-hand man; but some see the highest level of Luther's circle as a triumvirate.<sup>4</sup> Which member of Luther's circle ought to hold the third position alongside Melancthon and Luther himself? I intend to show that the third man of the Lutheran triumvirate was Johannes Bugenhagen.

What makes Bugenhagen worthy of this spot is not necessarily the attention which has been given to the work that he has done. Only one biography<sup>5</sup> has been written on Bugenhagen in English, and many of his works remain untranslated from their original languages. Rather, it is the significance of the work itself which Bugenhagen did to support his colleagues in ministry and for the Reformation. Bugenhagen would offer support to the Reformation in many ways, whether it was as a skilled preacher, education reformer, musician, traveler, or as pastor and bishop.<sup>6</sup> Bugenhagen's diverse contributions in all these areas reveal that in the study of Lutheran history, Bugenhagen deserves a place next to his more famous friends and colleagues.<sup>7</sup>

A single paper could not thoroughly cover all of the areas in which Bugenhagen impacted the Reformation without turning into a book. I have chosen to focus on the importance of Bugenhagen's work as pastor, with a special focus on Bugenhagen's pastoral relationship with Luther. In order to fully understand this relationship, I will begin with a brief biography of Bugenhagen, focusing particularly upon aspects of Bugenhagen's life that will shape his pastoral work. Then I will proceed to an assessment of the pastoral moments in the work of Bugenhagen

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4. Dennis W. Marzolf, "Johannes Bugenhagen and the Lutheran Mass," *Logia* 2 (April 1993): 14.

5. I was only able to find one biography on Bugenhagen, written by Walter M. Ruccius in the 1920s. German biographies also exist, including one written by Karl August Traugott Vogt in 1867. Vogt was born in Wittenberg and served as a professor and rector at the University of Griefswald, Bugenhagen's alma mater. Philipp Melancthon also wrote a biography in Latin, *De vita Bugenhagii*, in 1558.

6. Marzolf, "Bugenhagen and the Lutheran Mass," 14.

7. Kurt K. Hendel, *Johannes Bugenhagen: Selected Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 2.

for Luther. Lastly, I will conclude with a practical application of their relationship to our work as pastors who will almost certainly be working with and serving other pastors in our ministries.

My intention is to show the benefits for the Lutheran pastor who spends time looking at Bugenhagen's life and work. I will argue that Johannes Bugenhagen is a good early Lutheran role model for pastors to emulate as they seek to carry out their pastoral duties. Even if after reading this paper a pastor finds that he does not possess the personality traits or background that Bugenhagen possessed, and if he finds that he cannot apply Bugenhagen's methods for pastoral care to his own ministry, he can at the very least appreciate the pastoral care which Bugenhagen provided for Luther. Without that pastoral care, Luther and Lutheranism would almost certainly not be where it is today.

## PART ONE: A BIOGRAPHY OF JOHANNES BUGENHAGEN

We will begin with a biography detailing the life of Johannes Bugenhagen. Since Bugenhagen was involved in various fields of ministry, this biography will be written with more of a focus on introducing the reader to Bugenhagen while emphasizing those aspects which affected his practical and pastoral theology.

### **Background and Early Life**

The setting where Johannes Bugenhagen first started his journey to becoming a Lutheran reformer was Wollin, Pomerania.<sup>8</sup> Wollin was used by Slavic tribes in the High Middle Ages as a center of trade and commerce, reaching its high point in the 10th century. When the Slavs started to decline<sup>9</sup> German groups began to move in from the west. This *Ostsiedlung*<sup>10</sup> saw the region become more Germanic in culture as more and more Germans migrated to the area, including the ancestors of the Bugenhagen family. Wollin became a part of the Duchy of Pomerania, which itself became a vassal of the Holy Roman Empire in 1227.<sup>11</sup>

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8. Today the town is known as Wolin, located on an island of the same name in the Baltic Sea, on the northwestern coast of Poland.

9. The rise of the Holy Roman Empire placed a new empire with its border only a few miles away from Wollin. Since the area of Pomerania was more sparsely populated, it was a prime spot for migrants to move in and start living. In contrast, Wollin was farther away from the center of the tribal Slavic peoples. Relationships between the two groups were not cordial.

10. The *Ostsiedlung*, literally translated as “East-settling,” was further boosted by the call for the Northern Crusades, including the Wendish Crusade. Many of the Slavs that lived in the land were assimilated into the Holy Roman Empire.

11. Pomerania had switched hands several times in the 12th century, shifting from Poland to independence, which was followed by the rule of Saxony, the Holy Roman Empire, and Denmark.

On June 24, 1485, a baby boy was born to Wollin alderman<sup>12</sup> Gerhard Bugenhagen and his wife. Both parents were faithful members of the Roman Catholic Church and, in keeping with custom, named their son in accordance with the feast day on which he was born, commemorating the birth of St. John the Baptist.

Not much is known about the upbringing of the young Johannes. Scholars have speculated based on Bugenhagen's later writings in his life. Kurt Hendel notes with support from Melancthon's biography *De vita Bugenhagii* that Bugenhagen's skills with grammar and music hint at a focus on these areas in his early life.<sup>13</sup> His parents undoubtedly looked after young Johannes' spiritual well-being by taking him to church<sup>14</sup>, as Bugenhagen confirmed in his later writings.<sup>15</sup>

Once he reached educational maturity, Bugenhagen went to school at the University of Greifswald in 1502. Greifswald was the newest university in the region of Pomerania, founded in 1456. The more traditional choice of the university in Rostock, founded in 1419<sup>16</sup>, had lost several of its professors to the newer Greifswald. Regardless of his motives, Bugenhagen found a scholastic and humanist education waiting for him. Greifswald offered classical learning and the dissemination of new humanistic ideas.<sup>17</sup>

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12. In German, *Ratsherr*

13. Hendel, *Selected Writings*, 3.

14. There were three churches in Wollin in the Middle Ages. It seems likely, though we cannot be certain, that the Bugenhagens attended the Church of St. Nicholas.

15. Walter M. Ruccius, *John Bugenhagen Pomeranus: A Biographical Sketch* (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication Hours, 1924), 9.

16. The university in Rostock is the third-oldest university still operating in Germany, only younger than the universities at Heidelberg (est. 1386) and Leipzig (est. 1409).

17. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 10.

Hendel notes that several scholars<sup>18</sup> have suggested that Bugenhagen's education at Greifswald was predominantly humanist. Their reason for this assertion is the connection to Hermann von dem Busche, a German humanist who taught at Greifswald before Bugenhagen was beginning his studies. But Hendel notes that there is no concrete evidence of Bugenhagen working with von dem Busche.<sup>19</sup> Thus, Hendel says that we can only be certain that Bugenhagen was exposed to humanist ideas<sup>20</sup>, not that he was necessarily supportive of them.<sup>21</sup> Ruccius concludes that Bugenhagen was never a true humanist; instead, he was shaped by his interactions with those who tended to argue against traditions.<sup>22</sup> He found studying classic literary, theological, and Scriptural sources important.

While Greifswald gave Bugenhagen a quality education and exposure to various scholars, he still lacked the actual experience needed to be fully matured. In 1504, though not yet twenty years old, Bugenhagen left the university and accepted a position as rector of the academy in Trzebiatów (known as Treptow on the Rega), Pomerania. He had been selected by the abbot of the nearby monastery, who came to like Bugenhagen for his practical, business-like approaches.

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18. Among those who support this position are Hermann Hamelmann, Karl A. T. Vogt, Robert Stupperich, Hellmuth Heyden, Hermann Hering, and L.W. Graepp.

19. Hendel, *Selected Writings*, 5. Hendel notes that he is not alone in his objections, as both Roderich Schmidt and Walter Ruccius question whether Bugenhagen had any contact with von dem Busche to begin with.

20. Martin Lohrmann says that later on, Bugenhagen would be influenced by the humanist scholarship of the Catholic theologian and philosopher, Desiderius Erasmus. This was not in the field of humanism, but in the area of church reform.

21. Ruccius' *Biographical Sketch* notes that humanist ideology began at the start of the Renaissance, and it had just begun to reach the schools in northern Germany such as the university at Greifswald.

22. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 10. Ruccius uses the word "iconoclast" here, referring to those who challenged long-held beliefs. Humanism's growth would have resulted in several challenges to the beliefs of traditional Catholicism, as would the movement of the Reformation. I believe that Ruccius' point here is that Bugenhagen was made aware of the Church's problems by these kinds of arguments, and this led him to a deeper study of theology.

The school flourished with Bugenhagen at its head, gaining a positive scholarly reputation.<sup>23</sup> It was readily involved in humanist studies<sup>24</sup> and examining the most recent theological trends.

It was his work at Treptow that led Bugenhagen to consider a career in the Church. With the encouragement of his friends and a growing desire for ministry, Bugenhagen chose to pursue the life and work of a priest. In 1509 he was ordained as the vicar of the collegiate church of St. Mary in Treptow, despite having no formal theological training.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Move to Wittenberg**

Early on in his priestly ministry, Bugenhagen confessed that he had been pursuing righteousness by confession and good works. As he wrote in his commentary on the Psalter later on, after he had left for Wittenberg, he noted how he bound himself to the *opinio legis*, grasping after anything that possessed the odor of sanctity.<sup>26</sup> He gave off the appearance of saintliness, and he had even put human and divine decrees on the same plane as the Pharisees had. He began to

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23. Kurt K. Hendel, "Johann Bugenhagen Pomeranus, Servant of the Gospel," *Lutheran Forum* 50 (2016): 31.

24. As was noted above, Ruccius concludes that Bugenhagen was not a true humanist. However, he was frequently exposed to humanism in nearly every school he worked at. When Bugenhagen arrived at Wittenberg, he joined Luther and Melancthon in reforming the curriculum of Wittenberg from a humanist lean focused on rhetoric, literature, and philosophy, towards one that approached the classical languages like Greek and Latin in a theological way.

25. Hendel, *Selected Writings*, 8.

26. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 14.

embrace certain humanist views such as ethical approaches<sup>27</sup>, mastery of the classical languages, and the study of Scripture.<sup>28</sup> This would have pleased his early superiors in the monastery.

When Luther began to make waves in Saxony in 1517, Bugenhagen was not immediately affected. Just before then he had been sent by Duke Bogislav X of Pomerania to help a man by the name of Georg Spalatin write an inclusive history on Saxony. While he was not much help in finding sources on Saxony, he discovered many on Pomerania, which prompted Bugenhagen to write a detailed history about his homeland.<sup>29</sup>

As Bugenhagen returned home, he began to take note of corruption and other evils that were occurring within the Church. He was influenced by the Dutch philosopher Erasmus to consider matters of church reform.<sup>30</sup> However, Bugenhagen sought only to treat the surface symptoms. He didn't recognize that the Church's problems were coming from the roots of the Church, and thus he continued to defend the Church from the criticisms of others in areas where the Church needed to be fixed. He was earnest in his desire to treat the issues, but with the scope of a practical nurse and not a dissecting, knowledgeable surgeon.<sup>31</sup>

As the matter of Johann Tetzel's indulgence peddling resulted in Tetzel fleeing towards Frankfurt an der Oder, news reached Bugenhagen. As a man interested in keeping up with current theological events, he began to examine this reformer Luther's writings, starting with *On*

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27. The idea behind ethical approaches is the use of human reason to empathize and to understand the importance of life. The ethical approaches reflect on how our morality is shaped by our behavior. Humanism sees this as something that can evolve over time. Christian morality has its basis in what Scripture says.

28. Hendel, *Selected Writings*, 6.

29. Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career: 1521-1530* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 271.

30. Martin J. Lohrmann, "Faith...and Good Works! The Formation of the Lutheran Church through J. Bugenhagen," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 44 (January 2017): 2.

31. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 19.

*the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. Initially, Bugenhagen denounced Luther as a heretic, saying, “There have been many heretics since Christ’s death, but no greater heretic has ever lived than the one who has written this book.”<sup>32</sup> But after reading over Luther’s writing a few more times, he changed his mind, declaring, “The whole world is blind as can be, but this is the one man who sees the truth.”<sup>33</sup> It was not the reputation of Luther that persuaded Bugenhagen – Luther hadn’t even been condemned at the Diet of Worms yet – but rather the power of God working through Luther’s writings.

Bugenhagen was so enthusiastic that he worked zealously to convert his own intellectual circle in Treptow. “Luther fever” spread throughout Pomerania. Bugenhagen yearned to hear more about Luther’s beliefs and wrote to Luther directly for guidance. Luther sent an encouraging reply along with a copy of his *On the Freedom of a Christian*. Luther’s personal encouragement, along with an encouraging invitation from his friend Peter Suave, who was already in Wittenberg, Bugenhagen left Treptow for Wittenberg in 1521.<sup>34</sup> Although he was just starting to blossom in his career, Bugenhagen left behind his influence in Treptow to become a student once again.<sup>35</sup>

When Bugenhagen arrived in Wittenberg, Luther was in hiding at the Wartburg Castle. Bugenhagen was an older “second career” student at thirty-two years old. But he soon found himself doing more than studying. Students from Pomerania were attending school at the

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32. Andrew Pettegree, *Brand Luther: How an Unheralded Monk Turned His Small Town into a Center of Publishing, Made Himself the Most Famous Man in Europe and Started the Protestant Reformation* (Penguin, 2016), 177.

33. Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career*, 272. Also noted in Andrew Pettegree’s *Brand Luther* on p. 177.

34. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 21.

35. Marzolf, “Bugenhagen and the Lutheran Mass,” 14.

university in Wittenberg. They asked him to teach a lecture course on Psalms, which he did in order to earn some money. Philip Melanchthon dropped in to sample these private lectures and found a man with great talent as a biblical scholar. He encouraged Bugenhagen to continue teaching the course, but to make it public.<sup>36</sup>

When Luther returned from exile, he found himself in need of a trustworthy co-worker who could help him restore order in Wittenberg. The radical reforms of Andreas Karlstadt had disrupted worship and closed the church's school. Melanchthon had allowed Karlstadt to get out of control, revealing that the former was not ready to fill Luther's shoes in matters of discipline. But the like-mindedness and active support that Luther could not find in Melanchthon was provided by Bugenhagen.<sup>37</sup>

### **Working for the Lutheran Reformation**

With Luther and Bugenhagen finally acquainted, Luther set forth in making Bugenhagen a part of his Reformation team. Before addressing the radical reforms that Karlstadt had made, Luther sought to stabilize Bugenhagen's income. He was not making much money with his extra lectures, which depended on pay from students who were too poor to pay for them. Luther stepped in and insisted that the All Saints Foundation, which spent its lavish amounts of money on guest lecturers and professors, as well as funding for the town's pastors, pay for

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36. Pettegree, *Brand Luther*, 178.

37. Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career*, 270.

Bugenhagen's work at the university.<sup>38</sup> There was almost certainly resistance from the pro-Catholic Foundation; but Luther had powerful, persuasive friends.<sup>39</sup> Bugenhagen was paid.

Another matter of great importance came along: marriage. It is not certain as to when he met her, but the charm of a young woman named Walpurga<sup>40</sup> had swayed Johannes to ask for her hand in marriage. To marry an evangelical minister was still a difficult choice, especially for a young woman of a respectable family. Nevertheless, the two married in October of 1522. The happy couple received venison from Elector Fredrick as a present.<sup>41</sup> Walpurga would prove to be just as spirited and practical-minded a life partner as Bugenhagen was, supporting him in everything he did.<sup>42</sup> However, with the addition of a wife, Bugenhagen needed a larger, steadier income to provide for their family.<sup>43</sup>

God provided a convenient option to help Bugenhagen out. The pastor at the Town Church of St. Mary's had passed away in 1523, leaving a vacancy. Once again, the wealthy, pro-Catholic All Saints Foundation was in charge of calling a successor. Luther lobbied for Bugenhagen. The Foundation resisted, prompting the town council, university, and even the

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38. Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career*, 273.

39. One need look no further than Luther's sponsor, Elector Frederick, though Luther certainly had strong support throughout every area of Wittenberg.

40. We do not know much about who Walpurga was and where she came from. Some scholars have speculated that she was related to Georg Rörer as his sister or sister-in-law, but there is no evidence to support those claims.

41. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521-1532* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 92.

42. Pettegree, *Brand Luther*, 178.

43. Hendel reports in his *Selected Writings* that the Bugenhagens had children, though the exact number is uncertain. One son, Johannes, and one daughter, Sarah, lived to be adults.

congregation to speak in support of Bugenhagen.<sup>44</sup> The Foundation continued to delay until they finally ran out of time to provide their own candidate. The town council elected Bugenhagen.

When Bugenhagen found out about his election, he was unsure about accepting. He felt the office was beyond his ability. The salary would not, in fact, provide for a married man. Luther chose to solve the problem of Bugenhagen's hesitation with a *fait accompli*, announcing to the congregation from the pulpit that Bugenhagen was to be their new pastor.<sup>45</sup> With Luther's vote of confidence and a congregation that supported him, Bugenhagen took on the task of pastor, which included becoming Luther's father confessor.<sup>46</sup>

At first, there were some concerns that Bugenhagen's Pomeranian accent and tendency to speak in a Low German dialect would make his sermons unintelligible. It was not long before it became clear that these fears were unfounded. Bugenhagen would remain pastor of St. Mary's for thirty-five years.

As Bugenhagen took to his work, he never blazed his own trail. There was no "Bugenhagen brand," for he was faithful to following Luther's trail.<sup>47</sup> One exception was the commentary on Psalms. Both had done treatments on it in the 1520s. Luther supported the publishing of Bugenhagen, and showed his approval by writing a glowing review for the book's preface. Martin Lohrmann notes that when Bugenhagen wrote, his voice was distinctly conversational, like a teacher taking his students on a journey. He didn't use flowery or technical

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44. Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career*, 130.

45. Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career*, 130.

46. Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career*, 274.

47. Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career*, 276.

theological language, but took the time to describe key concepts in clear and understandable ways.<sup>48</sup>

Many of Bugenhagen's writings have, as of 2016, just begun to receive scholarly attention. Hendel notes that while Bugenhagen did not make novel contributions to the Lutheran theological heritage, he was discerning and defensive of that heritage in his writings. He focused especially on the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, the relationship and distinction between faith and works, and sacramental theology, in particular that of the Lord's Supper.<sup>49</sup>

As the Wittenberg city pastor, Bugenhagen's first task was to fill the void of Karlstadt and to rebuild what Karlstadt's radical reforms had destroyed. The school reopened, daily worship was restarted, and care for the individual souls of the city was actually carried out as Bugenhagen made visits to the sick and the imprisoned.<sup>50</sup> Bugenhagen's restraint and pursuit of order in cleaning up the mess that Karlstadt had wrought upon Wittenberg helped him earn Luther's respect.<sup>51</sup>

The pastoral ministry shaped Bugenhagen's vocational identity significantly, especially as he continued to grow familiar with Luther and his fellow reformers. His treatises on monasticism as well as his defense of clerical marriage as God's gift for mankind were rooted in and reflected his desire to follow Scripture.<sup>52</sup>

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48. Lohrmann, "Faith...and Good Works," 3.

49. Hendel, "Servant of the Gospel," 32.

50. Marzolf, "Bugenhagen and the Lutheran Mass," 15.

51. Pettegree, *Brand Luther*, 178.

52. Hendel, "Servant of the Gospel," 31.

Marriage was a major part of Bugenhagen's ministry. He often had to counsel couples who sought to get married, and he officiated at several weddings, including at Luther's marriage to Katie von Bora in June of 1525.<sup>53</sup> Bugenhagen had written a brief order for marriage in 1524 to address this frequent ministry need, which Luther helped shape into a liturgy for marriage in 1529.<sup>54</sup> Bugenhagen also had to deal with cases of divorce, which proved to be a difficult problem because legal models for divorce were scarce.<sup>55</sup> When Luther filled in for Bugenhagen during the latter's absences, he spoke of the distractions in handling cases of marital issues.<sup>56</sup>

As his pastor, Bugenhagen would also find himself dealing with Luther on a personal level as his *Seelsorger*.<sup>57</sup> As Luther's health began to decline already in the late 1520s, Bugenhagen spent many days by Luther's bedside, encouraging him with Scripture, confession and absolution, and the Lord's Supper. These events will be assessed in greater detail when we examine the pastoral relationship between Luther and Bugenhagen.

Wittenberg's worship life saw a turn towards educating the laypeople on matters of Scripture and on the catechism. Bugenhagen valued the catechism greatly, carrying a copy with

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53. Andrew Pettegree notes that the official wedding party was small. Bugenhagen presided, while Lucas Cranach and his wife served as sponsors and witnesses.

54. Brecht, *Shaping and Defining the Reformation*, 258.

55. Brecht, *Shaping and Defining the Reformation*, 93.

56. Armin W. Schuetze, "The Significance of the Reformation for Our Ministry Today," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 83 (1986): 214.

57. A *Seelsorger* is someone who cares for souls. It could just as easily be translated under the catch-all term of pastor, but this term is particularly poignant for the relationship between Luther and Bugenhagen. It had been Luther's troubled soul that had stirred his efforts to reform the Church; but simply pursuing reform did not put his soul at ease. As will be shown in Part Two, Luther's soul was often in distress over a great many things. It was Bugenhagen's call to care for Luther's soul and to comfort him with the Word of God and the means of grace that God had given him to use.

him wherever he went.<sup>58</sup> He treated it four times a year<sup>59</sup> and scolded pastors who disregarded this important teaching tool. In preaching, Bugenhagen proved to be pointed and articulate. These qualities had made him desirable to other cities such as Hamburg, which tried to call Bugenhagen to be their pastor in 1524. Bugenhagen turned down this and many other calls.<sup>60</sup>

Although he was now a pastor, Bugenhagen still taught at the university. He was also balancing the work of being a student, as he was still working towards receiving his doctorate. Once he achieved this in 1533, he was officially recognized as part of the university faculty.<sup>61</sup>

In 1527, an outbreak of the bubonic plague struck Wittenberg. Europe was well aware of the dangers of the plague. Only two centuries earlier it had ravaged the entirety of Europe, bringing with it great suffering and death. Elector John the Steadfast oversaw the moving of the university from Wittenberg to Jena and told the faculty to leave the city. Luther refused to leave the city and its people behind, as did Bugenhagen, who chose to move his family in with Luther's.<sup>62</sup> Bugenhagen held his call and vocation as the city's pastor in high esteem; therefore

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58. Michael Caelius et al., *Sixteenth-Century Biographies of Martin Luther: Justus Jonas and Michael Coelius, Johann Bugenhagen, Philip Melancthon, Johann Walter, Johann Mathesius*, (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2018), 255. The specific source for this reference is Johann Mathesius' *Historien von dem Leben und den Schicksalen des großen Reformators*, Sermon 6 (1525).

59. Brecht, *Shaping and Defining the Reformation*, 274. The reader should note that Luther didn't write his Small and Large Catechisms until 1529, when Bugenhagen was out organizing Lutherans in German cities. It seems more likely that Bugenhagen used his own creation, *The Booklet for Laymen and Children*, which appeared in Wittenberg in 1525. It was written in Low German and was likely written under the influence of Luther. Cf. F. Bente, *Concordia Triglotta* (Minneapolis: Mott, 1955), 76.

60. Ruccius notes that there were several calls, including the aforementioned Hamburg as well as Danzig in 1525.

61. Pettegree, *Brand Luther*, 178.

62. Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career*, 562. In a letter to Nicolaus Hausmann written on November 7, 1527, Luther wrote that Bugenhagen had moved in "not so much for his sake as for mine, so he could be a companion in my isolation."

he determined that he would not desert his vocation for his own personal safety.<sup>63</sup> The outbreak led Luther to write *Whether One May Flee From a Deadly Plague*, which explained his reason for staying behind and taking the risk of catching the disease.

Bugenhagen went beyond his inner mission work of visiting the poor and imprisoned. He sought to alter the way in which a poor fund was gathered, favoring a system that sought to support the poor out of love instead of out of good works.<sup>64</sup> Certain citizens were chosen to administer the fund. They answered to the town council of Wittenberg.

Bugenhagen's pastoral concern for the souls of the city grew into a concern for the souls that might be reached beyond Saxony and Germany. Word of Luther's ideas had spread like wildfire throughout Germany and all of Europe, but the proper organization and structuring of a conversion to Lutheranism required the on-hand assistance of the reformers. Requests began pouring in from various German cities to have someone help them create and establish a Lutheran order. Because Luther was key to the work in Wittenberg, as well as an older man and not in the best of health, younger reformers such as Melanchthon and Bugenhagen were loaned out to help these cities.<sup>65</sup> Luther also avoided travel because he was still an outlaw in political Germany.<sup>66</sup>

Bugenhagen served as a church organizer across northern Germany and Denmark. He started first in Braunschweig. The people were enthusiastic, and slowly but surely, order came

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63. Marzolf, "Bugenhagen and the Lutheran Mass," 15.

64. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 39.

65. Ruccius notes that this was not accomplished without strong pleading on Braunschweig's part. They wrote for Bugenhagen to help them, but he could not be spared. A personal delegation was sent to plead its case, which won the Wittenberg reformers over enough to send Bugenhagen.

66. James M. Kittelson, *Luther: The Reformer* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 247.

out of chaos. He made provisions for the regulation of the curriculum in the city's two Latin schools. He included provisions for the establishment of two German schools for boys, and four schools for girls as well.<sup>67</sup> The order that Bugenhagen wrote for Braunschweig was likely modeled after Luther's liturgical orders, such as the *German Mass*. Using the input of the local clergy, it included orders for a mass, daily Vespers, and weekday Matins. More German options were also incorporated, though Latin was kept in entirety for daily Matins and Vespers.<sup>68</sup>

Once Bugenhagen's order was adopted, Luther insisted that he return to Wittenberg immediately. Luther had been left in charge of St. Mary's in Bugenhagen's absence, and although he was able to preach and prepare his catechisms in worship services, the amount of work in Wittenberg was meant for six pastors.<sup>69</sup> With Bugenhagen gone, there were only two to bear the load: Luther and Justus Jonas.<sup>70</sup> Luther felt smothered by having to "become Bugenhagen."<sup>71</sup>

Before Bugenhagen could get reacquainted with Wittenberg, he was asked to establish a church order in Hamburg. Bugenhagen approached establishing an order there as he had in

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67. Pettegree, *Brand Luther*, 266. Bugenhagen was also important as a social reformer. He was known for promoting universal primary education for both girls and boys. He encouraged churches and governments to care for the poor's immediate needs and to assist them in finding employment and economic stability. Cf. Kurt Hendel, "Johann Bugenhagen Pomeranus, Servant of the Gospel," p. 35.

68. Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism: Choir, Congregation, and Three Centuries of Conflict* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 16.

69. Brecht, *Shaping and Defining the Reformation*, 283.

70. Jonas was the Probst at All Saints' Church, better known as the Schloßkirche, where Luther nailed the 95 Theses.

71. Brecht, *Shaping and Defining the Reformation*, 433.

Braunschweig, preaching frequently once he arrived and gaining local input.<sup>72</sup> The changes stuck, and the gospel bore fruit for the people of Hamburg.

After Hamburg came Lübeck, where once again Bugenhagen began by preaching God's Word. He completed their church order in May of 1531. While he was there, a particularly memorable incident happened. A demon had possessed a girl in the city, and it knew and called Bugenhagen by name, taunting him as a traitor for joining Luther.<sup>73</sup> Bugenhagen was not fazed, and he prayed with the girl for her release.

After Lübeck Bugenhagen spent time restoring order in his homeland of Pomerania as they sought to become solidly Lutheran. The bishop of Cammin, Erasmus von Manteuffel, continued his resistance against the Reformation until his passing in 1544. Once Pomerania was settled and organized, Bugenhagen was then summoned northward to Denmark.

In Denmark<sup>74</sup>, the newly crowned king, Christian III, was a friend to the Lutheran Reformation, but he had been forced into a two-year civil war with the Catholic supporting *Rigsraad*<sup>75</sup> to gain full recognition as Denmark's king. Christian had replaced the Catholic bishops with new evangelical superintendents, then he secured the assistance of Bugenhagen to produce a church order. When he arrived in Copenhagen in 1537, Bugenhagen presided over Christian's coronation ceremony. He functioned like a medieval archbishop, giving commentary

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72. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 66.

73. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 79.

74. At this time, the kingdom of Denmark included Denmark and Norway.

75. The Rigsraad (also spelled Rigsråd), or Danish state/privy council, consisted of noblemen and bishops. They served as an opponent to keep the king's royal power in check.

about the liturgical actions and noting the need for responsible secular authority.<sup>76</sup> Bugenhagen spent almost five years in Denmark, a marvel considering the lack of manpower in Wittenberg with his absence.<sup>77</sup>

Bugenhagen saw the Word's continued success in Denmark, writing to Elector John Fredrick about Lutheranism's rapid spread: "The Gospel is preached purely and powerfully in Denmark. May God grant progress as He has begun."<sup>78</sup> Bugenhagen endeared himself to the king, so much so that he offered Bugenhagen a bishopric in Schleswig with a generous income.<sup>79</sup> Bugenhagen declined, preferring to return to his home in Wittenberg, where Luther was waiting. Still seeking to thank Bugenhagen for his work, the king regularly sent Bugenhagen a cask of butter and a cask of herring. Later this switched to a payment of fifty gulden.<sup>80</sup>

Meanwhile, Luther was growing frustrated with the attitudes of the members at St. Mary's. In January of 1530 he told them that he would cease preaching because of their disobedience and ingratitude; but Bugenhagen's absence forced him to continue preaching.<sup>81</sup> His writing output diminished. He wrote in March of 1531 that he was seriously declining in strength, particularly in the head. In November of that same year he begged Bugenhagen to

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76. Lohrmann, "Faith...and Good Works," 3. Bugenhagen also made a pun in teaching those present at the coronation regarding Christian's duty to the spiritual welfare of the Danish people: "Today is called the coronation, and not the 'swordination.'"

77. Schuetze, "The Significance of the Reformation," 213.

78. Jonathan Gibson and Mark Earney, *Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past for the Present* (Greensboro: New Growth, 2018), 248.

79. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 104.

80. Brecht, *The Preservation of the Church*, 243. King Christian also sent the same gifts to Luther and Melancthon in thanks for loaning Bugenhagen to Denmark.

81. Caelius et al., *Sixteenth-Century Biographies of Martin Luther*, 315 f 196. Luther was also obliged by the persuasions of Melancthon, Bugenhagen, and Georg Major, along with the intervention of the Elector John the Steadfast.

return, “because I am overwhelmed with work and often sick.”<sup>82</sup> It was during this time that the antinomian Johann Agricola stepped in to take a bit of the load off of Luther. This brewed further unrest between Agricola and Luther, with the former filing complaints against the latter and the university’s rector.<sup>83</sup> When Bugenhagen returned between trips, he found Agricola’s complaints to be unfounded and mediated the matter of Agricola’s recantation.<sup>84 85</sup>

Luther once again grew frustrated while Bugenhagen was in Denmark, writing once again: “I am so overloaded with tasks and so troubled with sicknesses that I have often been compelled and still am, to leave my duties unperformed.”<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, Bugenhagen would not return right away, despite Luther’s desperate appeals. Luther, likely in one of his cycles of depression<sup>87</sup>, wrote to his wife Katie on his desire to leave Wittenberg: “I am tired of this city and do not wish to return.” Katie informed Melancthon and Bugenhagen about her husband’s concerns, which in turn prompted them to speak with and encourage their friend.<sup>88</sup>

During his time spreading the Reformation, Bugenhagen was not exclusively focused on creating church orders. He also wrote on matters of the Lord’s Supper, particularly as the

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82. Kittelson, *Luther: The Reformer*, 241.

83. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church, 1532-1546* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 167.

84. Brecht, *The Preservation of the Church*, 170.

85. Agricola was left embittered by his recantation. Johann Mathesius records that he disparaged nearly every doctor and teacher in Wittenberg, assigning them with tags such as one who fiddled on the same string, one who baked a little cake in the pulpit, one who taught only what had already been chewed for him beforehand, and one who was incapable of stopping. It is thought that the last of these tags was aimed at Bugenhagen. Luther would later comment at one of his table talks, “[Agricola] regards Bugenhagen as beneath him, but Bugenhagen is a great theologian, and has much energy.”

86. Schuetze, “The Significance of the Reformation,” 214.

87. Many scholars refer to these as Luther’s *Anfechtungen*. Physicians proved unable to treat them.

88. Brecht, *The Preservation of the Church*, 263.

Sacramentarian Zwingli rose in popularity. Because Luther was already quite busy, Bugenhagen wrote *An Open Letter Against the New Error Concerning the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ*. In doing so Bugenhagen underestimated the Zwinglians and their skills in presenting their view. Martin Bucer tried to mediate, but he ended up alienating both Luther and Bugenhagen by making them appear accepting of Zwinglian ideas.<sup>89</sup>

Bugenhagen tried to clarify his position with a confessional response in 1528; afterwards, he did not involve himself in the matter, including the Marburg Colloquy in 1529. As further examination of their pastoral relationship will show, both Bugenhagen and Luther saw the Lord's Supper as a means of consolation and used it as such.<sup>90</sup> Luther often made use of the Lord's Supper whenever Bugenhagen visited him while he was ill.<sup>91</sup> He relied heavily on the power and promises of the sacrament.

Bugenhagen was often more moderate in his teachings, but he could also be more conservative than Luther, such as in his attitude towards liturgical vestments and liturgical space.<sup>92</sup> In developing his own Mass Bugenhagen balanced tradition and change, incorporating music of the "antique" tradition along with music in the "vernacular" tradition.<sup>93</sup> In his writing

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89. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 48.

90. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 38.

91. Martin J. Lohrmann, "Bugenhagen's Pastoral Care of Luther," *Lutheran Quarterly* 24 (2010), 133. In light of Luther's appreciation for the Lord's Supper, it comes as no surprise that Luther was so offended by his opponents' desire to deny the real presence of Christ in Holy Communion.

92. Marzolf, "Bugenhagen and the Lutheran Mass," 19. Bugenhagen held that the altar should remain in its traditional position. Marzolf also notes that Luther did not have outright influence on these matters, and thus they were not a source of conflict between Bugenhagen and Luther. Luther respected and included other legitimate leaders within his camp to make decisions for the Reformation.

93. Marzolf, "Bugenhagen and the Lutheran Mass," 19. Bugenhagen could also be more conservative than Luther in the melodies he favored, such as using the traditional Latin melodies for chanting the Epistle and the Gospel.

Bugenhagen did not often use polemics, but he did not fully shun them either. He thundered against Rome and radical alike.<sup>94</sup>

Once Bugenhagen was firmly back in Wittenberg<sup>95</sup>, he resumed preaching. Luther and Bugenhagen both got involved in disputes between political leaders and their pastors on matters of authority.<sup>96</sup> Bugenhagen's later writings further revealed his practical spirit which had made him so well-liked wherever he spread the Reformation's ideas. As a parish pastor once again, he was concerned with everyday affairs and the Christian life with its good conduct.<sup>97</sup>

Together with Melancthon, Luther, and the other reformers, Bugenhagen worked on the Bible translation and retranslation committee. Their revision committee was jokingly called the Sanhedrin and met regularly at Luther's house in 1539. Bugenhagen brought his typical jovial disposition to the table.<sup>98</sup> Though he was often the butt of his friends' jokes, including poking fun at his Low German dialect, he could hold his own with a strong wit.<sup>99</sup> Bugenhagen was even known to tell a story or two, often about his adventures throughout northern Europe.

In foreign affairs, the threat of the Holy Roman Empire was still a pressing issue. In 1529 Bugenhagen, along with Nicholas von Amsdorf, supported continued resistance to the emperor,

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94. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 42.

95. Bugenhagen did not arrive back in Wittenberg immediately after his work in Denmark. He spent time working in Schleswig-Holstein, Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (the region which was home to the city of Braunschweig), Hildesheim, and back to Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel before returning.

96. Brecht, *The Preservation of the Church*, 315.

97. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 51.

98. Bugenhagen was known for being festive and friendly. In the years following their translation work, he established a special festival in his house in honor of the translation of the Bible, celebrated on September 21. Not much is known about what Bugenhagen did to celebrate, but he had a good reason to celebrate the event of making the Scriptures accessible to the people of Germany. Cf. Caelius et. al, 471.

99. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 120-21.

and made their position known to Elector John. Bugenhagen considered his opinion in light of a government that was to protect its subjects from an unjust overlord.<sup>100</sup> To him it was not a matter of being political, but simply offering his pastoral counsel to the Elector.

Though it was certainly a concern, the conflicts with the Holy Roman Empire were not quite as pressing as that of the expanding Ottoman Empire. The Turks were advancing, as Suleiman the Magnificent had conquered the Balkans in the 1520s and had been battling in Hungary for quite some time. Elector John Frederick asked Luther and Bugenhagen to appeal to the people for prayer, which they did in January of 1543. They prayed and made use of the Word of God, while recognizing that it remained open whether God would help His people against the threat of conquest and the persecution that would follow, or if He would use the Turks to punish them for their sins.<sup>101</sup>

In 1544, the bishop of Cammin and one of Bugenhagen's oldest opponents, Erasmus von Manteuffel, died.<sup>102</sup> The Pomeranians offered the position to their compatriot. Bugenhagen suggested that he would fill in until a permanent solution could be found, and then only to keep the peace between two dukes who were at odds.<sup>103</sup> In the end, the Pomeranians pursued a different direction towards solving the vacancy. Bugenhagen was relieved to remain in Wittenberg.

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100. Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career*, 655-56.

101. Brecht, *Preservation of the Church*, 356.

102. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 123.

103. Brecht, *The Preservation of the Church*, 316.

### Later Years and Death

The last fifteen years of Bugenhagen's life were relatively uneventful. After his rejection of the call to Cammin, Luther's health continued to decline. When Luther died in Eisleben on February 18, 1546, Bugenhagen was overcome with grief. He had visited Luther many times to treat his spiritual worries as he battled illness and depression, often wondering whether Luther would make it through; but now, when his friend and mentor had finally passed to the glories of heavenly bliss, Bugenhagen had not been by his side to comfort and strengthen him.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, words that Luther had preached in 1542 echoed in the hearts of those reformers left behind: "The preaching of Christ will not perish. Even if I, Philip, Pomeranus die, there will be people who will accept the doctrine and defend it."<sup>105</sup>

The funeral was held on February 22. Thousands were in attendance. Bugenhagen walked in the processional along with several of Luther's colleagues from Wittenberg, as well as many other friends and colleagues from Luther's past. The coffin was placed beneath the pulpit. Bugenhagen preached on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, which was not an unusual choice.

Bugenhagen struggled to speak because of his grief. His sermon was a cry of his disconsolate heart, each word a tear.<sup>106</sup> His words expressed the emotion of someone who had lost a father or friend; but these words confessed to those present what Luther had desired to be preached to all people. "The person has indeed died in Christ, but the mighty, blessed, godly

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104. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 123.

105. Gerhard Bott, Gerhard Ebeling, and Bernd Moeller, *Martin Luther: Sein Leben in Bildern und Texten* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1983), 303. Note that this source is written entirely in German. The text as quoted was translated by me.

106. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 123.

doctrine of this precious man still lives most powerfully.”<sup>107</sup> That doctrine was the teaching of Scripture, that Jesus had lived and died to take away the sins of all people, people like Luther. It was, in Bugenhagen’s opinion, that God had bestowed unspeakable gifts and grace on Christ’s church in Germany and in many other nations through Luther.<sup>108</sup>

Bugenhagen identified Luther with the first of three angels in Revelation 14:6, the one who proclaimed the everlasting gospel. Bugenhagen was confident that, as the text said, a “Babylon would fall” after Luther’s death.<sup>109</sup> Bugenhagen also regarded Luther as the swan prophesied by proto-reformer Jan Hus at his death in 1415. Hus had said, “You are now roasting a goose, but God will awaken a swan whom you will not burn or roast.... After one hundred years I will answer you.”<sup>110</sup> A little over one hundred years later, Luther started the Reformation.

When Bugenhagen finished speaking, Melancthon took the pulpit to say a few words as well. But for the colleagues and students gathered there, it was Bugenhagen’s sermon that shaped the sixteenth-century memorial of Luther in their hearts and minds.<sup>111</sup>

After Luther’s funeral, Bugenhagen found himself embroiled in chaos. Charles V had been looking for an excuse to attack the Schmalkaldic League, a group of Lutheran princes and rulers.<sup>112</sup> Charles had prevented Danish intervention from King Christian in the Treaty of Speyer in 1544; now he turned to deal with the Landgrave of Hesse and Elector John Frederick. With the

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107. Hendel, *Selected Writings*, 114.

108. Brecht, *Preservation of the Church*, 379.

109. Brecht, *Preservation of the Church*, 379.

110. Hendel, *Selected Writings*, 115.

111. Caelius, *Sixteenth-Century Biographies*, xxxviii.

112. The two main members of the League were Elector John Frederick I of Saxony and Philip I, Landgrave of Hesse.

help of Duke Maurice<sup>113</sup> of Saxony, Charles defeated the League and installed Maurice as the Elector.

While the university was moved from Wittenberg, Bugenhagen chose to stay behind to comfort and cheer. He fully expected the emperor to crush the city in a show of imperial power; but when the city was not destroyed, Bugenhagen worked with his new Elector to ensure a peaceful reinstatement of education and government.<sup>114</sup> Although Maurice had sided with Charles, he was also a Lutheran, albeit more cautious in his political dealings. In conversations they had, the Elector won Bugenhagen's confidence.<sup>115</sup>

Some accused Bugenhagen of convincing the previous Elector to go to war in hopes that he would be replaced in defeat. A quick examination of the charges revealed that they were ridiculous rumors on their face.<sup>116</sup> Bugenhagen encouraged cautious obedience to the new authorities, joining Melancthon in a degree of moderation and cooperation.

This practicing of "moderate Lutheranism" led some within the Lutheran camp to accuse those moderates, such as Melancthon and Bugenhagen, of being too conciliatory towards the Catholics, and thus compromising Luther's doctrine. This breakaway group, known as the Gnesio-Lutherans, turned away from the Wittenberg faculty and the city's pastor. Among their number was another of Luther's inner circle, Nicholas von Amsdorf. Not even Luther's closest friends were united on these issues.

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113. In some sources, Moritz.

114. Marzolf, "Bugenhagen and the Lutheran Mass," 15.

115. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 125.

116. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 125.

Unlike Melanchthon, whose involvement in the debate caused the creation of a faction known as the Philippists, Bugenhagen chose not to get involved, instead choosing to focus on his congregation. He attended a few conferences, but was only incidentally involved with the controversies that the Formula of Concord addressed.<sup>117</sup> He refused to sign the Augsburg Interim that the emperor proposed. His attendance at conference for the succeeding Leipzig Interim was seen as tacit approval, even though he gave not such indication. This “guilt by association” was damaging to Bugenhagen’s reputation, and many friends and fellow reformers turned cold towards him for the rest of his life.<sup>118</sup>

Bugenhagen continued to write for a while after Luther’s death. He often wrote back and forth with King Christian in Denmark. He wrote his commentary on Jonah, less as a commentary on the book than as a way of commenting on the matters of the Interim, defending himself from those who attacked his involvement.<sup>119</sup> It also spoke within the context of the Adiaphoristic controversy.<sup>120</sup> Bugenhagen’s writings continued to echo the teachings of Luther and Melanchthon, but Bugenhagen also emphasized these teachings in different ways. For example, true faith matters to the Christian because it leads to truly free works of selfless love and service to the Christian’s neighbor, with no strings attached.<sup>121</sup> Bugenhagen prioritized the role of service, an unsurprising fact since he spent the majority of his Reformation ministry serving others. Along with his writings, Bugenhagen continued to support Wittenberg’s public

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117. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 127.

118. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 127.

119. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 128.

120. Hendel, *Selected Writings*, 74.

121. Lohrmann, “Faith...and Good Works,” 5.

institutions. He continued to teach at the university, with one of his lectures themed around the writings of Augustine.

Bugenhagen's family life remained stable. His daughter Sarah was widowed in 1543 at the young age of twenty-three, forcing her to move back in with her parents. She later remarried to Georg Cracow. Whenever Bugenhagen would allude to his family in writing, he did so in a pious and fatherly way, indicating that life at home was harmonious and not dysfunctional.<sup>122</sup> They enjoyed a certain level of privacy, with most of the reformers' gatherings happening at the Luther house.

Bugenhagen suffered a fall in 1547 that nearly cost him his life. It became apparent to him that his health was fading. He wrote to the Elector about preparing to hand over his pastoral responsibilities in the future. King Christian heard about this and insisted that he accept a gift of Swedish fox furs to make a great coat for Bugenhagen to keep warm.<sup>123</sup> However, Bugenhagen's busy schedule did not come to an end until the last two years of his life.

In 1557 Bugenhagen was finally forced to stop preaching. He still made time to attend daily worship at St. Mary's and offer prayer.<sup>124</sup> Although one eye had now gone blind, he continued his correspondence. It was not until April of 1558 that he found himself bedridden and no longer able to write. On the night of April 19/20, death took Johannes Bugenhagen peacefully, never to awake again in this life. His body was laid to rest in St. Mary's, where he had served God and His people faithfully for half his life. His memory was held dear in the

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122. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 130.

123. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 129.

124. Hendel, *Selected Writings*, 74.

hearts of the northern Lutherans as the man who turned the Baltic Sea into a Lutheran lake, his liturgical influence remaining to this day in the Church.<sup>125</sup>

Blessed be the memory and impact of Johannes Bugenhagen, a faithful servant of both God and the Lutheran Church.

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125. Marzolf, "Bugenhagen and the Lutheran Mass," 15. Marzolf was one of the members of the three-man committee which wrote the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* for the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS). Rite One of their Divine Service is also known as the Bugenhagen Mass.

## PART TWO: EXAMINING THE PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP OF JOHANNES BUGENHAGEN AND MARTIN LUTHER

Much of what we know about Bugenhagen is painted through the lens of his identity as a Lutheran. It makes sense when we consider that Bugenhagen spent almost twenty-five years working closely with Luther. In this part I will provide a look at the relationship between the two reformers, followed by a deeper analysis of the pastoral care that Bugenhagen provided to Luther.

### **An Overview of Their Relationship**

Much of Bugenhagen's life is cast through his work in the Reformation. As a result, it may not surprise the reader to find that this part of the paper will overlap significantly with the biography that precedes it. As pastor of the City Church in Wittenberg, Bugenhagen's duties were not exclusively dedicated to serving Luther. However, since Luther was in many respects a celebrity, more writings have been preserved about Bugenhagen's work in caring for him than for the average member in Wittenberg. A relationship between two people is certain to have its ups and downs, and Luther and Bugenhagen were no exception. Yet even in the little nuances of their relationship, it becomes evident of how close they were with one another, further solidifying the importance and ability of Bugenhagen to serve as Luther's *Seelsorger*.

Some aspects of the relationship are hidden in the devilish details, requiring perhaps a bit of speculation, but still germane to the way they viewed each other. One such example is the naming of Luther's firstborn son. Born on June 7, 1525, the new baby was baptized that same day by the deacon of St. Mary's Georg Rörer, and named Hans. Upon first glance it might seem

as if Luther had named his son after his father, Hans. James Kittelson supports this idea.<sup>126</sup> It is not entirely impossible that he was not named in the custom of naming a child after the feast day, though this seems unlikely considering the Nativity of John the Baptist was not until June 24. However, Martin Brecht states that Hans was so named because of his sponsor, Johannes Bugenhagen.<sup>127</sup> Andrew Pettegree agrees on the source of the name, but mentions that Lucas Cranach was assigned as young Hans' godfather.<sup>128</sup>

Another hidden detail is in the overlap of their writing and reading. The fact that they both recommended each other's writings is not what is at concern here, but the fact that they often wrote on similar topics. Both placed an emphasis on the Psalter towards the beginnings of their respective theological careers. Both referenced Oecolampadius' Isaiah commentary in their works.<sup>129</sup> It was typical for them to share books, as was indicated in their table talks.<sup>130</sup>

Other aspects of their relationship were more publicized. For example, Bugenhagen presided at the Luthers' wedding. It was certainly an honor just to be there, since the Luther's did not invite more than ten people to their official wedding ceremony.<sup>131</sup> Luther and Bugenhagen

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126. Kittelson, *Luther: The Reformer*, 209.

127. Brecht, *Shaping and Defining the Reformation*, 203.

128. Pettegree, *Brand Luther*, 257.

129. Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career*, 577.

130. Martin Luther, *Conversations with Luther: Selections from Recently Published Sources of the Table Talk* (New Canaan: Keats, 1979), 142. The particular occasion for a book swap mentioned here took place on December 12, 1536, when Bugenhagen gave Luther a book on the Council of Constance, which took place to resolve the Western Schism and condemn Jan Hus. The book was written by Ulrich von Richenthal, a citizen of Constance.

131. Part of the motivation behind a small wedding was the conundrum of how many thousands of people would clamor for an invite. Luther also wanted to avoid any challenges or concerns from other friends such as Melancthon, who was upset with Luther over the latter's timing and the former's lack of an invitation. Thus Luther committed another *fait accompli*, as he had done with Bugenhagen's call to St. Mary's.

both worked together on the Wittenberg faculty, with Bugenhagen often mediating disputes between Luther's theological department and the law department. It can be safely assumed that their shared work in spreading the Reformation was another bonding point between the two. Likewise, both Luther and Bugenhagen preached from the same pulpit.<sup>132</sup>

Both reformers shared similar interests, such as music and education. Both wrote orders for worship, and both invested in bettering the education system.<sup>133</sup> Both demonstrated pastoral care for the other. Bugenhagen's care for Luther is evident as Luther's pastor. On the other side, when Bugenhagen was away spreading Lutheranism in Europe, Luther often mentioned Bugenhagen and his activities at Sunday worship. Luther made sure to include him in their prayers.<sup>134</sup> He also served as *Seelsorger* in Bugenhagen's absence, which included several interesting encounters. On one occasion Luther comforted a mercenary who thought the devil wanted to grab him.<sup>135</sup> On another he had to reproach known arsonist Valentine Teuchel and urge him towards repentance, as Teuchel had been condemned to be burned at the stake for torching thirty homes in Wittenberg.<sup>136</sup>

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132. Lohrmann, "Faith...and Good Works," 4. Pulpit fellowship was not a topic that came up in my study of Bugenhagen and Luther. It could be another interesting field to explore. In my opinion, the fact that Bugenhagen and Luther knew each other extremely well and were likely talking about theology together every day suggests that Bugenhagen could trust Luther to preach the Word of God rightly in the St. Mary's pulpit.

133. Much has been written on Luther's impact in the field of education. For those who would seek to know more, I would suggest reading *Luther on Education* by F.V.N. Painter. "The Education of the Christian in Lutheran Legacy" by Theodore Hartwig and "Luther, as Father and Teacher" by Arnold Koelpin. As for Bugenhagen, look no further than his work as rector at Treptow on the Rega and in encouraging the expansion of schools in cities where he drafted church orders as proof of his loving contributions towards the better education of students.

134. Brecht, *Shaping and Defining the Reformation*, 284.

135. Brecht, *The Preservation of the Church*, 13.

136. Timothy F. Lull and Derek R. Nelson, *Resilient Reformer: The Life and Thought of Martin Luther* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 313.

Both men had similar backgrounds. Both came out of a monastic<sup>137</sup> piety: Luther from the Augustinians, Bugenhagen from the influence of the Premonstratensians in Belbuck<sup>138</sup> while he was in Treptow. Both men found a determination to follow new ways for the sake of Christ. Both experienced similar feelings on issues, such as justification.<sup>139</sup> Both men had an attitude of fearlessness, combined with a good sense of humor.

This showed on one particular occasion in November of 1535. Luther and Bugenhagen were setting off to go negotiate with a papal nuncio named Pietro Paolo Vergerio in the Wittenberg Castle. The topic of discussion was to be the participation of evangelicals in the coming papal council.<sup>140</sup> As they set off, Luther commented, “Here go the German pope and Cardinal Pomeranus, God’s instruments.”<sup>141</sup> Although their work did not result in an invitation of Lutherans to the Council of Trent, the potential for Lutheran involvement encouraged Luther to write his own contribution<sup>142</sup> to the Lutheran Confessions in the Smalcald Articles, which were published in 1537.

The Smalcald Articles were one of several pivotal moments in the reformers’ relationship. Carleton Toppe notes how they served as Luther’s “deathbed confession,” even though Luther would not die for another nine years. Luther was sick for a good portion of those

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137. Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career*, 276.

138. The Polish name for the little area next to Treptow (Trzebiatów) is Białoboki.

139. In talking about heretics at one session of table talks, Luther said of original sin, “I should like very much to feel myself formally justified, but I cannot find it in me.” Bugenhagen added, “Doctor, I don’t find it in myself either.”

140. Bott, Ebeling, and Moeller, *Sein Leben in Bildern und Texten*, 329. The next council held would be the Council of Trent in 1545.

141. Brecht, *The Preservation of the Church*, 175.

142. According to Carleton A. Toppe, Luther considered the Smalcald Articles to be “his Augsburg Confession.”

years, laboring in the shadow of death.<sup>143</sup> He had also become pessimistic about the success of the evangelical movement and fell into a depression. His condition desperate, Luther had called for Bugenhagen to give him final directions. Although Luther did recover and complete his work, Bugenhagen wrote down Luther's instructions as the "Confession and Last Testament of the Venerable Father," in case Luther did indeed take a turn for the worse.<sup>144</sup>

The trust Luther showed in Bugenhagen was evident in other areas as well. Fears of witchcraft were alive and well in 16th century Germany. Luther and Bugenhagen were not exceptions to this. Witches were known for stealing or tampering with the milk, as well as stealing butter. In his table talks, Luther laid down the law: "No mercy is to be shown them.... they say that the best way to vex such witches is to put the milk and butter on ice...but Bugenhagen's way is best, to plague them with filth, stirring it often, so that all their things are soiled."<sup>145</sup> In other words, Luther and Bugenhagen both preferred to use feces to chase alleged witches away from their milk.

Another incident occurred on December 16, 1536, both reformers heard a *chasma*.<sup>146</sup> A bright flash of lightning lit up the sky, followed immediately by a terrific crash of thunder. Each was in his own home at the time. Afterwards they discussed whether this terrific weather event signified anything. Their conclusion was that it was plainly satanic.<sup>147</sup>

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143. Carleton A. Toppe, "Luther's Deathbed Confession: the Smalcald Articles," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 80 (1983), 7.

144. Toppe, "Luther's Deathbed Confession," 7.

145. Luther, *Conversations with Luther*, 164. This antidote to witchcraft also came recommended by St. Francis of Assis.

146. Luther, *Conversations with Luther*, 231.

147. Today we hold the benefit of knowing that lightning heats up the air it strikes to nearly 50,000°F, causing it to expand. As the flash ends, the air cools and contracts quickly, causing the sound wave we know as thunder.

Bugenhagen and Luther had many good conversations, and they did agree on many things. Nevertheless, their relationship was not without some level of healthy criticism and debate. As noted in the biography, Bugenhagen did not mirror Luther's *Deutsche Messe* to the letter when he wrote his own liturgical orders. Luther, like many others<sup>148</sup>, did not hold back on his critiques on Bugenhagen's sermon length. Jonas even held a maxim about it: "Don't hail all the soldiers you meet."<sup>149</sup> It often took Bugenhagen ten times as long to say the same thing that Luther said.<sup>150</sup> Bugenhagen was aware of this, and even honored Luther in comparison: "When Luther preaches you are served food roasted and fried. When I preach you get water and bread."<sup>151</sup> Bugenhagen would satisfy, but he recognized the talents his friend had in the realm of homiletics.

It would not be an overstep on our part to say that Luther and Bugenhagen saw each other as brothers.<sup>152</sup> The two were not related in any biological way, yet they could have passed for it in the presence of a stranger. More certainly they were brothers in Christ, with the same faith in the God that saved the world through the same Jesus Christ that they preached to the people of Wittenberg.

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148. It seems as though all of the reformers were aware of Bugenhagen's preaching habits. The heretic Johann Agricola mocked Bugenhagen over it. Katie Luther even complained to her husband about how Bugenhagen had wandered far from his text one day, to which Luther agreed, saying, "Bugenhagen preaches as you women usually talk; he says whatever occurs to him."

149. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 40.

150. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 50.

151. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 40.

152. Brecht notes how Bugenhagen's comfort for Luther was often fraternal (*Shaping and Defining the Reformation*, 396).

### Bugenhagen's Pastoral Care of Luther

At the core of Bugenhagen and Luther's relationship was the matter of pastoral care.

Bugenhagen functioned as pastor, and Luther was certainly a very needy parish member. These cases are not all particularly clear in the timeframe of Luther's life. We will examine Bugenhagen's pastoral care by method used where possible, while retaining those instances where his pastoral care has a timeline.

In 1527 came the first recorded major case of pastoral care. The end of the Peasants' Revolt in 1525 had resulted in a massive loss of life already. Now with the plague's resurgence causing people to flee Wittenberg, including several of the faculty at the university, morale was significantly down. Bugenhagen and Luther, together with their wives and children, stayed behind to help those who had remained. The church deacon, Georg Rörer, had also stayed behind, and his pregnant wife had taken ill. All three families stayed at Luther's house, which became a hospital. It wasn't long before Rörer's wife suffered a miscarriage, followed soon after by her passing.

The amount of stress Luther was experiencing at the time was undoubtedly excruciating, both physically and mentally. There was not a quiet place in the home, nor a quiet place for his mind to set about on the many tasks to be done. His own health was already starting to fail him at age forty-four. On top of that were the episodes of *Anfechtungen*, overwhelming bouts of anxiety coupled with deep sighs and tears of pain.

As Luther sat at the table in great sadness, Bugenhagen consoled him with a quote often cited: "No doubt God is thinking: What more can I do with this man? I have given him so many excellent gifts, and yet he despairs my grace." Luther testified that these words were of great

comfort, as if a voice from heaven had struck him in his heart.<sup>153</sup> On other such occasions, Bugenhagen might say, **“Dear Doctor, what I am telling you, you should accept not as my word but as God’s word which he declares through me.”**<sup>154</sup> In these times Luther confessed that he was brought back to life through God’s word from his pastor.

Luther thought that Bugenhagen may not have realized the impact of these words either. But in those words which were spoken, God worked blessings beyond the intent of his called servant. Whether it had been spoken sarcastically or earnestly is unknown; but such a pastoral rebuke startled Luther out of his melancholic state.<sup>155</sup>

A local physician, Augustine Schurff, was called in to assist in treating Luther, as his illness was not purely spiritual. Both Bugenhagen and Justus Jonas assisted in tending to Luther’s body<sup>156</sup> as they also addressed Luther’s spiritual trials, which often followed his physical sufferings.<sup>157</sup>

Luther’s worries as Bugenhagen recorded them were more often very practical, not necessarily those of a troubled conscience.<sup>158</sup> He worried about leaving behind his then-pregnant wife and young Hans with no money to provide for them. He often prayed that the Lord of

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153. Lohrmann, “Bugenhagen’s Pastoral Care,” 125.

154. Lohrmann, “Bugenhagen’s Pastoral Care,” 125. Lohrmann cites this quote from Kurt Hendel’s “Johannes Bugenhagen, Organizer of the Lutheran Reformation,” found in *Lutheran Quarterly* 18, 4 (2004), 51.

155. Lohrmann, “Bugenhagen’s Pastoral Care,” 125.

156. One instance includes Jonas reviving Luther from a fainting spell by dousing him with cold water. Both Bugenhagen and Jonas took note of when Luther was not eating enough. Likewise, they ensured that he had the best medical care possible.

157. Lohrmann, “Bugenhagen’s Pastoral Care,” 128.

158. Lohrmann, “Bugenhagen’s Pastoral Care,” 128.

widows and orphans look after his family. When he was ill with kidney stones in 1537, he told Bugenhagen to take care of the church, school, his wife and everything else.<sup>159</sup>

Another concern of Luther's was that, as his accusers had said, he was at fault for the troubles in Christendom. He felt responsible for sectarianism, particularly regarding the sacramental controversy with Zwingli. He worried that in dying he would not be able to defend his flock from errors. As with his familial concerns, all of these show a man more grounded in his care for family, community, and the Christian Church at large.<sup>160</sup>

In response, Bugenhagen might highlight these concerns with biblical imagery and quotations. He speculated that Luther's pains may be similar to the "thorn in the flesh" that Satan sent to St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:7. When Luther lamented that he would not die as a martyr, he was reminded that this honor had also been denied to John the Evangelist.<sup>161</sup>

Sometimes Bugenhagen made note of parallels between Scripture and Luther's life. When Luther survived one particular night<sup>162</sup>, Bugenhagen interpreted it through the song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:6: "The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up." He sought to remind Luther and himself that they ought not trust in themselves but continually trust in God. Bugenhagen also compared Luther's trials to those of Job. Like the song of Hannah, these comparisons highlighted the power and efficacy of God's promises and his means of grace. It was with these things that Luther's faith endured in the face of death.<sup>163</sup>

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159. Bott, Ebeling, and Moeller, *Sein Leben in Bildern Und Texten*, 292-93.

160. Lohrmann, "Bugenhagen's Pastoral Care," 128.

161. Lohrmann, "Bugenhagen's Pastoral Care," 129.

162. It is unclear which night this was. According to Lohrmann, "Bugenhagen's Pastoral Care," 126, it seems that this was in July of 1527. Justus Jonas was also present.

163. Lohrmann, "Bugenhagen's Pastoral Care," 130.

On another occasion, during a trip to Kemberg, Luther fell ill while visiting with the pastor Bartholomew Bernhardt. Bugenhagen gave a general biblical interpretation to Luther's suffering: "If such things happened to the prophets, apostles, others and even to the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not surprising if they happen also to this man."<sup>164</sup>

One of the aspects of pastoral care the Luther was eager to use was the practice of private confession and absolution. Often times scholars will refer to Bugenhagen as Luther's "father confessor," with the title being fitting for the man to whom Luther often gave confession. In this respect Bugenhagen took over for Johann von Staupitz, who had been Luther's superior in the Augustinian monastery. In response to Luther's confessions, Bugenhagen might not go as far as Staupitz did, with the latter sometimes speaking of "doll-baby sins" or snapping at Luther while at his wit's end from listening to Luther's constant confessions.<sup>165</sup> Bugenhagen was more direct and sharper, yet still comforting, as Luther would compare to the Holy Spirit's often unexpected speaking.<sup>166</sup> Luther never felt so put off as to discontinue this practice. For the rest of his life he confessed to Bugenhagen.<sup>167</sup>

After he was satisfactorily absolved<sup>168</sup>, Luther would then often partake of the Lord's Supper, where he was assuredly fed the true body and blood of Christ to strengthen his faith.<sup>169</sup> It

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164. Lohrmann, "Bugenhagen's Pastoral Care," 132.

165. Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career*, 275.

166. Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career*, 275.

167. Brecht, *Shaping and Defining the Reformation*, 20.

168. With Bugenhagen, Luther found this to be the case.

169. Caelius et. al, *Sixteenth-Century Biographies*, 259.

was in the promises of forgiveness of his sins and eternal life that Luther found comfort in the Lord's Supper.

Bugenhagen's pastoral care was not always perfectly helpful for Luther. On one occasion, Bugenhagen noted that he had tried "stupidly and anxiously" to reassure a sick Luther by saying that his friends were not ready to part with him. Luther put the words of the apostle Paul to Philipians back at his friend: "For me, dying is gain, but to remain in the flesh is more necessary."<sup>170</sup> Bugenhagen often wondered why it was that the following morning, he would be asked again to console the man who had taught him and knew more than he did. Yet he continued in his calling.

In every aspect of Bugenhagen's pastoral care was the reading of Scripture. Sometimes it was direct reading. Other times it was in prayer and confession. Certainly it was included when distributing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. At times Bugenhagen admitted to feeling overwhelmed and insufficient; but it was in the pastoral office that he found he could speak the Word of comfort and healing to Luther's pain.<sup>171</sup> It was with this same Word that Luther's soul was nourished to health under Bugenhagen's care.

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170. Lohrmann, "Bugenhagen's Pastoral Care," 129.

171. Lohrmann, "Bugenhagen's Pastoral Care," 132.

PART THREE: CONNECTING AND APPLYING BUGENHAGEN'S PASTORAL CARE TO  
TODAY'S PASTORAL CARE PRACTICES

Bugenhagen's role as Luther's pastor was perhaps his most important and persistent contribution to the Reformation movement. This was because he was an excellent spiritual counselor (*Seelsorger*), possessing insight and empathy to both encourage and challenge his friend. He took the time to analyze specific situations and treat them incisively.<sup>172</sup> All these qualities are desirable for a pastor to have as they carry out their ministry.

The relationship between Bugenhagen and Luther is rather unique to situations of pastoral care, primarily because both Bugenhagen and Luther were pastors. Most pastors expect that their ministry will be carried out amongst laypeople with little or no experience in the biblical languages and with no experiential concept of what the pastor's life of ministry is like. But a pastor should not go into the ministry to which he has been called with a preconceived notion of who his sheep will be.

Some pastors will have the privilege to serve in a college, university or preparatory school town as Bugenhagen did, where they will serve people familiar with the ministry.<sup>173</sup> They may even serve those who are far more skilled and familiar with ministry work than they are. In that respect Bugenhagen was no different. He saw Luther as a better preacher and teacher than he

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172. Hendel, *Selected Writings*, 22-23.

173. Even if you, as a pastor, do not have other pastors as your membership, you will almost certainly interact with other pastors at circuit or conference meetings, as well as at district conventions or the rare privilege of serving at a synod convention. Although these kinds of situations are not nearly as identical with the pastoral care of Bugenhagen upon Luther, it would not be impossible to apply these methods to encourage and care for one another in those kinds of situations as well.

was.<sup>174</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of the inner insecurities that Bugenhagen's opinion of Luther might have caused, it did not hinder his work in serving Luther. At the heart of the *Seelsorger* was his pastoral compassion for Luther's spiritual struggles and a personal practical desire to encourage and support the Reformation's leader to carry out his work in being a blessing to both God and men.

Insecurity is not unusual. We are mortal men serving mortal men. All of us still possess a sinful nature. But as both Bugenhagen and Luther knew, it was not about the man who was doing the work, but the Word which was being faithfully preached and was working in hearts. Bugenhagen knew that Scripture could provide wonderful and sometimes new blessings of encouragement to those who read it.<sup>175</sup> His motto was, "*Si Jesum bene scis, satis est, si cetera nescis. Si Jesum nescis, nil est, quod cetera discis.*"<sup>176</sup> So too should the same encouragement motivate us as we seek to shepherd not only to our fellow pastors, but also to all people. It is only when pastors are willing to encourage, strengthen, admonish, correct, and reprove one another with the Word of God that those in fellowship with one another will remain truly united and spiritually strong.<sup>177</sup> It is not about all that we know, or even truly about who we are, but about knowing Jesus and making him known to others.

The shepherd view of the pastor's duty has seemingly fallen out of favor in today's world, largely in part due to the lack of shepherds in many of today's societies. Business models

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174. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 40.

175. Caelius et. al, *Sixteenth-Century Biographies*, 481. Bugenhagen's direct quote is, "Scripture, if read attentively, yields something new every day."

176. Ruccius, *Biographical Sketch*, 132. Translation: "If you know Jesus well, it is enough if you do not know the rest. If you do not know Jesus, what you learn is nothing."

177. Armin W. Schuetze and Irwin J. Habeck, *The Shepherd Under Christ: A Textbook for Pastoral Theology* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1974), 358.

have infiltrated and gained ground in the Church in America. Nevertheless, as John Schuetze points out, picturing the pastor as a shepherd is Scriptural, and its metaphorical use and model for ministry is timeless.<sup>178</sup> The shepherd cares for the flock, protecting it from the wolves looking to sneak in and attack the sheep, and seeking after the ones that stray from the flock. It makes sense for Jesus to call himself the Good Shepherd in John 10 because he does all these things perfectly for his flock.

Yet we must note that the imagery isn't the most ideal for the pastors of today. It is true that these are the same duties that are expected of us, but at best we are imperfect substitutes in filling the role of shepherding God's flock. How? Pastors are sheep too, in need of our own shepherd! God includes pastors as his children, not as ones set apart. We are included in the words of the prophet Isaiah: "All we like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

To this end, the pastor needs a Savior, and he certainly has one. He knows his Shepherd's voice and listens to it, the same voice that has called for him to preach the gospel to all nations and to feed his sheep as well. But that call to provide for Christ's sheep may mean providing for the sheep that he has called to shepherd other sheep as well. Like *simul iustus et peccator*, the pastor is *simul ovis et pastor*. He is a shepherd, and he needs a shepherd.

In some ways, the task is easy. Often times pastors have similar experiences and similar educational backgrounds. They may have gone to school together. On the other hand, those similarities can often become roadblocks. Do I truly know my fellow shepherd? Do I know him

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178. John D. Schuetze, *Doctor of Souls: The Art of Pastoral Theology* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2017), 26.

too well to be an effective shepherd? Will these things distract me from carrying out my vocation?

Likewise, the situation may seem awkward. Some church bodies have left their pastors feeling uncertain of whom to go to. There may be discomfort in going to a superior pastor, or perhaps even to a pastor from the same denomination.<sup>179</sup> May God ensure that we never feel so desperate as to pursue pastoral care from someone who does not share in our confession; but those kinds of roadblocks can rise up. Ministry can seem like a competition. Church politics often interfere with our ministry. They can create clerical suspicions that create caution in communicating with other pastors who might be able to help.

In these kinds of cases, it would be wise to take a page from Bugenhagen's relationship with Luther. Get to know your fellow shepherd first before making assumptions about his character and personal beliefs. Meet with him and talk about him, introducing yourself as well. Read what he has written if you can. Learn where his strengths and weaknesses lie. As the relationship grows, you will be able to provide better pastoral care. This is true for shepherding all sheep.

Your "Luther" may have preconceived notions of pastoral care from his own experiences as a pastor. He may have his own "counseling philosophy," his own way of spiritual care. But here you are called to be his *Seelsorger*. You are more than welcome to follow his advice on how you might provide spiritual care, but rarely should the patient be prescribing his own medicine.

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179. J. Grant Swank, "Who Counsels Ministers When They Have Problems?" *Christianity Today* 27 (November 25, 1983), 58. At writing Swank was a pastor in the Church of the Nazarene. His situation led him to seek the advice of an Episcopalian minister. Swank notes that there were differences in their practices, but that these differences were not concerning as the two reached out towards each other in pursuing divine strength. Although matters of pastoral care are generally private, for the sake of those in my denomination, I would not advise going to a pastor of a different denomination except as an extreme last resort.

He may know what sorts of things he needs to hear: Law, Gospel, and whatever specifics or generalities there may be. But there are always limitations that the sinful flesh provides.

God does not instruct us to follow the ancient proverb, “Physician, heal yourself!” Instead, he urges us in practicing pastoral care to come to him when we are weary or hurt. He encourages us to find our rest and healing in his wings. Even though he has studied the Scriptures many times over, a pastor may forget this comfort. It is the duty of his shepherd to provide him with that comfort, to lead his fellow shepherd back towards the Word which restores their soul. When we share the Word and live it in our everyday lives, the body of Christ is built up.<sup>180</sup> In doing so, we as shepherds can take comfort in the truth that, as we carry out this ministry, we are not alone. Christ promises to be with us.<sup>181</sup>

It's likely that you, as a pastor, will also experience these kinds of struggles as you carry out your ministry. In fact, you can expect to hit nearly every roadblock that a pastor could encounter. In that time, may God provide you with a “Bughagen” to help you through those struggles, to point you back to the Word your Heavenly Father has given for your comfort and confidence. He may take the form of your congregation’s pastor. If you are your congregation’s pastor, he may take the form of an associate or as your circuit pastor. In our extremely well-connected world, he may take on the form of a classmate several states or a whole continent away. Whatever he looks like, treasure the “Bughagen” who seeks to know you and care for your soul. He is the one whom God has called to provide for you, the sheep who needs his loving Shepherd.

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180. Schuetze, *Doctor of Souls*, 32.

181. Schuetze, *Doctor of Souls*, 28.

These acts of “being our brother’s keeper” are to be carried out with an attitude and spirit of humble helpfulness. There is no pride in doing this work. This is not a chance to “one-up” another pastor. As willing as we are to give brotherly admonition, we ought also be just as willing to receive it.<sup>182</sup>

The case may be that, as a pastor, you are isolated from other pastors. Even in a well-connected world, even when there are several sister churches in the same city, it can seem as if you are alone in your ministry. How might a pastor receive his Bugenhagen’s encouragement then? One possibility is to pursue him. Forming a study group made up of pastors within your circuit is one possibility. Social gatherings could also be added, keeping in mind that they should not become another stumbling block that requires pastoral care.<sup>183</sup>

Whether you are in the position of being a “Bugenhagen” or a “Luther,” recognize that God has called you to that vocation. He does not call you to be popular, nor does he ask you to fulfill a certain quota in helping fellow pastors.<sup>184</sup> He calls and asks you to be faithful.<sup>185</sup> That means faithfully studying his Word and sharing it with others. It means being faithful in coming to him in prayer, of faithfully seeking out those whom God has placed in your life to care for you. It includes faithfully enduring the crosses God has placed before you, knowing what awaits for the good and faithful servant.

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182. Habeck and Schuetze, *Shepherd Under Christ*, 358.

183. Habeck and Schuetze in *The Shepherd Under Christ* (p. 18) warn of the potential for synodical gossip to develop when pastor gatherings become predominantly social instead of spiritual.

184. Schuetze, *Doctor of Souls*, 45.

185. Habeck and Schuetze, *Shepherd Under Christ*, 18. Cf. also Schuetze, *Doctor of Souls*, 45.

## CONCLUSION

Although he certainly deserves more attention than he was given, the Reformation was not about Johannes Bugenhagen. Though they have received more fame and attention, the Reformation was not about Melanchthon or Luther either, even though some might have the temptation to admire the latter to the point of making him a demigod. Luther would almost certainly take offense at how much attention he has received already, not to mention how he would react to the fact that we are called Lutherans.

Yet as we go about applying the lessons and appreciating the gifts we have received from Bugenhagen and Luther, let us not forget this timeless truth: our heritage is not based on Reformation tradition, but on the living and abiding Word of God.<sup>186</sup> That point cannot be emphasized enough. The historical examples of pastoral care that Bugenhagen has provided for us are not meant to be some form of pastoral legalism. We are not required to do it as Bugenhagen did it; but we can appreciate his approach, and we can certainly appreciate the tools he used to accomplish pastoral care for his dear friend. With that in mind, I believe that we can consider Johannes Bugenhagen to be a good role model from the early Lutheran Church for what the parish pastor should do in carrying out the ministry of the *Seelsorger*.

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186. Borrowed from Armin W. Schuetze, as found in “The Significance of the Reformation for Our Ministry Today,” p. 215.

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