

LutherFacts #28

As a reformer, Martin Luther emerged as a person able, in most cases, to move others to follow his vision. "Martin Luther did not reform the church by himself," notes one source. An obvious example is Philipp Melanchthon, who helped Luther shape his theological ideas into their final form. Less known is Johannes Bugenhagen (1485–1558), sometimes called "The Second Apostle of the North" for expanding the Lutheran reforms beyond Germany. He had initially rejected but then enthusiastically endorsed Luther's reform agenda, moved to Wittenberg in 1523, and a decade later earned his Doctorate of Theology at the University. Originally from Pomerania, Bugenhagen later influenced Denmark's Christian III—who had witnessed Luther's stand at the Diet of Worms—to formally convert and more importantly in 1537 to change the Danish-Norwegian state church to Lutheranism. Bugenhagen also played a similar role in transforming the state churches in Hildesheim, Hamburg, Lubeck, Pomerania, East Frisia, Schleswig-Holstein, Braunschweig, and Brunswick-Wolfenbützel. Martin Luther had a dramatic impact on Bugenhagen and, in the years that followed, that led to the broader religious, social, and political changes that swept through Northern Europe and Scandinavia.