PART TWO

CRUSADES AFTER THE REFORMATION
CHAPTER THREE

CRUSADE AND REFORMATION

During his reign, Christian II worked to create a national church that was to be under his control and supervision although still a Catholic Church. Christian was drawn towards the new religious ideas of reform that began to flourish in the first decades of the sixteenth century—especially those of Martin Luther. He had representatives at the Reichstag in Worms in 1521, where Luther had to defend his beliefs. The papal legate Alexander reported in his reports to the pope that it was rumoured in the city that Christian had sent these envoys to get Luther to come to Denmark. Many Catholics who wanted to reform the existing church were very inspired by Luther as well and initially Luther did not consider a break with Rome. One Danish example is the Carmelite friar Paulus Helie (c. 1485–1534/39), who even translated some of Luther’s works into Danish. He distanced himself from the more extreme ideas of Luther but praised his stress on the need for reforms. Later, when the extent to which Luther broke away from the church became clear, Helie began wholeheartedly to fight the Protestants as the heretics he believed them to be. From this perspective, Christian’s interest in the ideas of Luther is not very surprising. Shortly after his escape from Denmark, his wish to meet Luther personally was fulfilled and he heard Luther preach. Never had he heard the Gospels preached like this. Christian became a Lutheran.¹ That, however, did not diminish his efforts to have himself presented as a crusading king and a champion of the faith.

¹ Cf. Lausten 1987c, pp. 9–25; Lausten 1995, pp. 17–29; Lausten 2002, pp. 29–65; Lyby 1993, pp. 44–45. As pointed out by the Danish theologian Thorkild C. Lyby, the concepts of “Lutheran” and “Lutheranism” are problematic especially for the early period in the 1520s. The terms were often used negatively by contemporary conservative Catholics. It is perhaps possible to use on a personal level, meaning an adherent of Luther’s teachings, but canonically it is inadequate until 1555 or at least until 1529. Instead, one should perhaps speak of Catholics and their counterparts as Evangelicals on a political level, Lyby 1993, pp. 137–53. The terms Lutheran and Lutheranism will be used more loosely in the following to describe the group of people and princes who were influenced by Luther’s teachings.