

Letter 120: 11 December [1521], Wittenberg, Melanchthon to Capito or Nikolaus Demut

Printed in *Melanchthons Briefwechsel: Kritische und kommentierte Gesamtausgabe*, ed. H. Scheible (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1977), vol. T1, pp. 410-412, #189. The letter is addressed to Capito or “in his absence, to the provost of the Neue Stift,” i.e. Demut.

[*Summary*]: Melanchthon is sending Capito a copy of Luther’s letter to Albert of Brandenburg [from 1 December 1521]. He urges Capito to speak with Albert in private and to be supportive of Luther. Citing the New Testament, Melanchthon says that if Luther was divinely sent to reform the church, then people must not ignore or reject either God’s messenger or his message. Luther has been much more moderate than Elijah, Elisha or Christ ever were. He clarifies that all who are divinely sent to preach the gospel are prophets. The people need to be “salted” by the restored message and worship of God. Melanchthon need not explain this in more detail to a theologian like Capito. He warns that Luther will publish [*Wider den Abgott zu Halle*], if Albert does not respond in the right way. He notes that the archbishop has already disparaged indulgences. It should therefore be easy to do away with them altogether. Capito will no doubt appreciate the fact that Luther has restricted his criticisms to the matter of indulgences. Melanchthon has made every effort to prevent the publication of Luther’s criticism and will continue to do so, if Capito does his share.