Allegorical Depiction of Joseph II's Edict of Toleration of 1781 (1782)

Abstract

Joseph II (r. 1765-90) was one of the leading representatives of "enlightened absolutism." He introduced and saw through many important social and political reforms, including the abolition of juridical serfdom (1781) and the issuance of many edicts of toleration, including the Edict of Toleration of October 13, 1781, which extended religious toleration to Lutherans and Calvinists (members of the two Protestant denominations recognized by the Treaty of Westphalia) and to Orthodox Christians as well. The caption to this image reads: "Memorial to the Toleration established by the best and greatest Emperor Joseph II in his domains and published on October 17 [sic], 1781." The engraving shows representatives of various religious denominations pointing to Joseph's silhouette, which is illuminated – or rather "enlightened" – by a beam from the heavens. The group of four also includes a representative of Judaism (on the left, with a covered head). In early 1782, Joseph issued an Edict of Toleration for the Jews of Lower Austria. The engraving appears to be dedicated to Joseph's sister, French queen and Austrian archduchess Marie Antoinette (1755-93). The French and Austrian coats of arms appear at the bottom of the page.

Source

Source: Copperplate engraving by Johann Friedrich Beer, 1782.
bpk-Bildagentur, image number 30027634. For rights inquiries, please contact Art Resource at requests@artres.com (North America) or bpk-Bildagentur at kontakt@bpk-bildagentur.de (for all other countries).

bpk

Recommended Citation: Allegorical Depiction of Joseph II’s Edict of Toleration of 1781 (1782), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/the-holy-roman-empire-1648-1815/ghdi:image-2914> [November 27, 2024].