

The Princely Councilor (1698)

Abstract

Under patriarchal and absolutist rule, subjects had the opportunity to approach their sovereign or his advisers with grievances or requests. At appointed hours, petitioners were permitted to submit their concerns and receive counsel. In this scene, the stooping posture of the subject and the magnanimous gesture of the official present the state as a benevolent and fair mediator of societal interests.

The full title of the image is “The Princely Councilor. The State’s Most Splendid Consort is Benevolence” [“Das herrlichste Geleit des Staates ist Güttigkeit”]. The text reads:

The sun doth shine on pauper’s shacks
As brightly as on rich men’s roofs:
Thus, toward everyone as well
The High must distribute help and counsel.
If one does not grant those hard-pressed an audience,
Then God won’t hear them either.

[Die Sonne strahlt die Bettel-Hütten
Gleich hell wie reiche Däche an:
Womit auch gegen Jederman,
der hohe Hülff und Rath aus schütten.
Gönnt man Bedrangten kein Gesicht,
so höret Gott auch gleichfalls nicht.]

Copperplate engraving by Johann Christoph Weigel (after 1654-1726) from his *Abbildung der Gemein-Nützlichen Haupt-Stände* (Regensburg, 1698) with verses from Abraham a Sancta Clara (1644-1709). Abraham a Sancta Clara was an Augustinian monk who became famous for his earthy, humor-filled sermons and his prolific writings and treatises on moral and religious themes. He was appointed imperial court preacher by Leopold I (r. 1648-1705).

Source



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Recommended Citation: The Princely Councilor (1698), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/the-holy-roman-empire-1648-1815/ghdi:image-2721> [July 16, 2024].