

Emperor and Electors: Emperor and Empire in a Single Image, *Germany's Joyous Salute* (1663–64)

Abstract

This copperplate engraving by Abraham Aubry shows Emperor Leopold I (1640–1705) among his electors. The engraving presents Leopold as the embodiment of the empire; at the same time, it gives due attention to his electors and thereby renders visible the empire's constitutional structure. The iconography supports the accompanying verse, which celebrates “our Leopold, the German leader and Emperor,” while recognizing the “throng of princes, who hold up our German Empire, like marble columns.”

Until the seventeenth century, figural arrangements of this sort were mainstays of imperial imagery—they offered a way to represent the entirety of the empire, both as an association of persons and as a unit capable of action. In this case, the necessary action would have been defending the Holy Roman Empire against the Ottoman Empire. Leopold I. presided over the empire from 1658 to 1705, a period characterized by frequent conflict with the Ottomans. Indeed, war is referenced in the engraving itself in the pictures-within-pictures that appear behind the electors. The accompanying verse, which is transcribed below, introduces this conflict as battle between Christianity and (Muslim) tyranny, between the German fatherland and a Turkish enemy, a “wrathful lion’s brood” that “rushed and stormed the borders of our empire, with unbridled wrath.”

Source



Germany's Joyous Salute

To Happy Continuation of the Gathering of the Holy Roman Empire's Highest Leaders and Members,
Conducted with God in Regensburg.

Welcome, joyous light! You long-desired time!
Says our fatherland, which revels in hope,
As it now sees the gods from German soil,
How they are now gathering in great numbers.
Now, in the great distress put upon us by God,
Who, because of our sins, has set upon us
The Mohammedan host, which presses us so fiercely
And wants to force Christ's free people into servitude.
Oh God! How they, that wrathful lion's brood,
Have rushed and stormed the borders of our empire,
With unbridled wrath, how they have plagued us Germans
With threats, and with stinging whips
Have sought to chasten us, so that through their hand
The dear German land would be destroyed,
Without the land's old wounds of war
Being all healed, the wounds which we so sorely felt,
That pain still stabs our legs without cease,
And many a man, comfortless, speaks of distress and misery.
Thus, the gods' house gathers its forces
And through good counsel strives for our weal,
So that the enemy's spite, the Turks' proud glory,
Loses all force at last, is made a scorned mockery.
But we, we who hate the name of war,
After we sat for thirty years in war's fire,
And felt its flames which scorched our skin
And consumed all strength and power completely,
Are still not yet equal to what now again torments us,
And if God inflicts it, may even rob us of our breath.
If in future again returned to a state of peace,
We would, after the stress, soon be glad for such repose,
Which is not accustomed to jest with false deceit,
Nor does it hide the flame in a previously kindled heart.
And too, [instead of] what 'til now has been deplored everywhere,
The talk of poverty and nothing but deprivation,
May blessings, through heavenly prosperity
From God's gentle hand, finally bring us joy.
May everyone at home and where his plow wheel goes,
By his fig tree, and where his grapevine stands,
For his wife and child in undisturbed delight,

Revel with certainty in constant love, without grief.
Everyone who is of a German mind will therefore rejoice,
And where valor is armed with honesty,
The path is strewn everywhere with olive sprigs.
Where our Leopold, the German leader and Emperor,
Together with the throng of princes, who hold up
Our German Empire, like marble columns
That stand without teetering, and now are seen in hosts
On the streets of the noble city on the Ister,
Everyone calls out his hosanna to him.
Lord! Help! Lord! Bring peace and well-enjoyed repose
In your Christendom. Lord! Let it succeed,
That which your princes now seek to accomplish,
To the glory of your name and our safety.
Oh Lord! Direct their path to peace and unity.
All right, great God has everything in his hands,
He who can give peace and is able to send war.
Hear, you people! You people! Who are most afflicted,
Because the Christians' enemy commits such great evil.
The Lord keep you and let your yearnings,
Your hopes, and what you tightly embrace in your thoughts
Be joyfully fulfilled. May He give word and deed,
As His Christendom has almost long enough
Borne its guilt; now be it healed again
Of troubles and disgrace, of blows, wounds, bruises,
And all other afflictions. May He, God of all gods,
King, Prince of the earth, the Ruler Zeboath,
Protect against the tyranny of Christians' enemy
And destroy and lay waste to its battle forces.
May He provide advice when peace is sought.
May He show means for driving off the enemy
And routing it that it must flee,
And retreat again on the seven paths to the land
Whence it came, not to the Holy Land
Which does not belong to it, to the banks of hell's shore,
Where Mohammed's heaven was laid open to him,
He who was borne by devils into Pluto's fold.
You Christian princes! All right, you, rouse yourselves,
Go, go with God as counselor, to protect your empire,
May God grant happiness and well-being! He himself will rule
Your deeds and surely guide everything to a good end.

To be found at Paulus Fürsten, Art Dealer in Nuremberg.

Translation: Kathleen Dell'Orto

Source: Engraving by Abraham Aubry, Nuremberg, 1663/64, in Wolfgang Harms, ed, *Deutsche Illustrierte Flugblätter des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2. Munich, 1980, p. 379. Original: Herzog August Bibliothek (HAB) Wolfenbüttel.

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Recommended Citation: Emperor and Electors: Emperor and Empire in a Single Image, Germany's Joyous Salute (1663–64), published in: German History Intersections, <<https://germanhistory-intersections.org/en/germanness/ghis:image-220>> [July 12, 2025].