

Tablets to Napoleon III: Comparison

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This overview was originally prepared for students of the Wilmette Institute. In attempting to piece together what we know about these two Tablets I looked up what I could in a few sources, including The Leiden List of the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh (bahai-library.com/resources/leiden.list), the Bibliography for the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh (bahai-library.com/resources/1868-77.html and at .../1877-92.html), *God Passes By*, and a letter from the Universal House of Justice online at bahai-library.com/uhj/napoleon.victoria.html. Here's most of the salient historical information I can find about these two Tablets (additions or corrections would be appreciated):

Lawh-i

Napulyun I (First Tablet to Napoleon III)

Lawh-i Napulyun II (Second Tablet to Napoleon III)

Dates:

Lawh-i

Napulyun I (First Tablet to Napoleon III), was written in Edirne, "[a]lmost immediately after the "Most Great Separation" had been effected" (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, 171. The "Most Great Separation" can be dated to March 1866 (Basic Bahá'í Chronology), so we can safely assume that the Tablet was revealed sometime between early 1866 and 1867. (Shoghi Effendi's use of the word "immediately" here does not necessarily mean the next week or the next month, though it could. In a book covering one hundred years of history, as *God Passes By* does, "almost immediately" could conceivably be even a couple months.)

Lawh-i Napulyun II (Second Tablet to Napoleon III), was written in Akká, while Bahá'u'lláh was living in the barracks. In *God Passes By*, page 207, Shoghi Effendi writes: "To the Emperor of the French, Napoleon III, the most prominent and influential monarch of his day in the West, designated by Him as the "Chief of Sovereigns," and who, to quote His words, had "cast behind his back" the Tablet revealed for him in Adrianople, He, while a prisoner in the army barracks, addressed a second Tablet and transmitted it through the French agent in Akká." Here are the dates we can use to figure this out: From the Basic Bahá'í Chronology, we get the following information:

1868

Aug. 12: Bahá'u'lláh and His family set out for Gallipoli
Aug. 21: Bahá'u'lláh and His family leave Gallipoli
Aug. 21: the steamer docks at Alexandria
Aug. 31: the steamer arrives in Haifa; Bahá'u'lláh and His family begin a
2-year, 2-month, 5-day confinement in a citadel

1870

Oct.: Bahá'u'lláh is moved to the house of Malik, where He stays for three
months

This means that Bahá'u'lláh would have written this letter sometime between
Aug. 1868 and Oct. 1870. In Epistle to the Son of the Wolf page 45,
Bahá'u'lláh writes "After Our arrival in the Most Great Prison there reached
Us

a letter from his Minister, the first part of which was in Persian, and the
latter in his own handwriting." This would seem to indicate that the second
Tablet would have been written in 1868-69. The Leiden List gives the date of
revelation as "1869," but doesn't specify a source for that information.

Translations:

This

Tablet is not translated. Bahá'u'lláh Himself mentions the Tablet in Epistle
to the Son of the Wolf page 45, where He says "...Among them was Napoleon
III, who is reported to have made a certain statement, as a result of which We
sent him Our Tablet while in Adrianople. To this, however, he did not
reply..."

Sections of this Tablet are translated in Gleanings CLVIII, CVII
(Súratu'l-Haykal), Epistle to the Son of the Wolf 46-56, and
Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh 17-23. The section trans. in Promised Day
is Come 46-49 (page numbers differ in different editions) is extracts from
the text trans. in Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh 17-23, with minor
variations, but Promised Day is Come 48 has one paragraph beginning
"Abandon thy palaces" which is not in Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh. A
section included in Epistle to the Son of the Wolf 49-50 as part of this
tablet is separately presented in Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh 95-6 with
some translation differences. Some passages were also translated and included
in Moojan Momen's Selections from the Writings of E.G. Browne, 273-4,
311.

Note, too, this clue in the text: "Thus have the mighty verses of Thy Lord been
again sent down unto thee" (emphasis added).

References from other sources:

mention of recipient Bahá'u'lláh Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh 210; Kitáb-i-Aqdas 15, K86, 164, notes 117-8; discussion of recipient Abdu'l-Bahá Some Answered Questions 32-3; discussion of France in the 1870s Secret of Divine Civilization 62-3, PUP 27-8, 203, 211, 223, 398, 432; mention of Napoleon I 67-8; God Passes By 173, 207-8, 225-6; mentions of tablet and recipient Promised Day Is Come paragraphs 39, 69-70, 83, 116, 118, 120-6, 140; Balyuzi Eminent Bahá'ís 208-9; quoted Taherzadeh Covenant 22-3; discussion of tablet Taherzadeh Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh vol.2 368-9; mention of tablet Revelation vol.3 109-10

mention

in Basic Bahá'í Dictionary 13 and photograph of subject in ibid. 131; date in A Basic Bahá'í Chronology 88; Some Answered Questions 32-33; Promulgation of Universal Peace 27-28, 211, 223; God Passes By 207; Promised Day is Come 32, 77, 79-84, 92; comments from the Universal House of Justice on Napoleon's response to this Tablet at Bahá'i-library.org/uhj/napoleon.victoria.html; discussion in Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh vol. 2 369; vol.3 81, 110-115, 149, 201; mention of subject in vol.4 95, 249, 388, 434; Bahá'u'lláh: King of Glory 320, 352, 392, 426; Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh 21-22; 'Abdul-Bahá: Centre of the Covenant 63.

mention of subject in Hatcher/Martin's Bahá'í Faith...Global Religion 45-46; discussion of Tablet and subject Juan Cole Modernity and the Millennium 60, 63-64, 76, 124, 127, 131, 155; discussion of Tablet's prophecy in Gary Matthews Challenge of Bahá'u'lláh 43-44; some comments on Bahá'u'lláh's address of subject in this Tablet in Juan Cole "Iranian Millenarianism and Democratic Thought in the 19th Century" in International Journal of Middle East Studies 24 (1992), 1-26 passim.

Authoritative information:

God

Passes By 171-72:

Almost immediately after the "Most Great Separation" had been effected, the weightiest Tablets associated with His sojourn in Adrianople were revealed. The Súriy-i-Mulúk, the most momentous Tablet revealed by Bahá'u'lláh; ... the first Tablet to Napoleon III, in which the Emperor of the French is addressed and the sincerity of his professions put to the test;... — these may be regarded not only as the most outstanding among the innumerable Tablets revealed in Adrianople, but as occupying a foremost position among all the writings of the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation.

God Passes By 173:

... To Napoleon III Bahá'u'lláh addressed a specific Tablet,

which was forwarded through one of the French ministers to the Emperor, in which He dwelt on the sufferings endured by Himself and His followers; avowed their innocence; reminded him of his two pronouncements on behalf of the oppressed and the helpless; and, desiring to test the sincerity of his motives, called upon him to "inquire into the condition of such as have been wronged," and "extend his care to the weak," and look upon Him and His fellow-exiles "with the eye of loving-kindness."

God

Passes By 207:

... To the Emperor of the French, Napoleon III, the most prominent and influential monarch of his day in the West, designated by Him as the "Chief of Sovereigns," and who, to quote His words, had "cast behind his back" the Tablet revealed for him in Adrianople, He, while a prisoner in the army barracks, addressed a second Tablet and transmitted it through the French agent in Akká. In this He announces the coming of "Him Who is the Unconstrained," whose purpose is to "quicken the world" and unite its peoples; unequivocally asserts that Jesus Christ was the Herald of His Mission; proclaims the fall of "the stars of the firmament of knowledge," who have turned aside from Him; exposes that monarch's insincerity; and clearly prophesies that his kingdom shall be "thrown into confusion," that his "empire shall pass" from his hands, and that "commotions shall seize all the people in that land," unless he arises to help the Cause of God and follow Him Who is His Spirit.

Letter

from the Universal House of Justice, online at

<http://bahai-library.com/uhj/napoleon.victoria.html>:

... With regard to whether Napoleon III did receive the first Tablet addressed to him, in addition to the information in *The Promised Day is Come*, we find in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, particularly in *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), page 45, that the first Tablet had been delivered, and that although there was no reply from the Emperor, a French minister had written a letter to Bahá'u'lláh, part of which He quotes in that work. Further, in *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabíl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1996), page 586, we see that most of the Tablets had been delivered to their recipients. There is also reference to the method by which the Tablets were delivered, specifically that Tablets to the "Monarchs of Europe" were "sent through the post."...

Biography:

The

American Heritage Dictionary gives the following definition of Napoleon:

"Originally Charles Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. Known as Louis Napoleon.

1808-1873. Emperor of the French (1852-1871). A nephew of Napoleon I, he led the Bonapartist opposition to Louis Philippe and became president of the Second Republic (1848). After proclaiming himself emperor (1852), he instituted reforms and rebuilt Paris. His successful imperialist ventures were overshadowed by a failed campaign in Mexico (1861-1867) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), which resulted in his deposition."

One student provided a more detailed biography of Napoleon III, which I paraphrase and add to as follows: Louis Napoleon Bonaparte was born in Paris, on April 20, 1808, the third and last son of King Louis of France and Queen Hortense of Holland. His uncle was Napoleon I, thus making him heir to the throne of France. After the downfall of his uncle, in an invasion of Russia, the Bonaparte family was banished from France.

Napoleon III was educated privately in Switzerland and Bavaria. His mother taught him the history of the Napoleonic legend. Thus he was possessed to emulate the example, and finish the interrupted work, of his imperial Uncle. However, Napoleon III was known as a dreamer and a conspirator; he had a shifting nature that was hypocritical and reckless.

In his desire to further the work of his uncle he began to aggrandize himself and formulate a political program. He portrayed himself as a social reformer, political liberal, military expert and proponent of agricultural and industrial development. He desired to overthrow the monarchy but, failing in his attempt, he was deported to America.

In 1836 and 1840 he led two unsuccessful attempts to overthrow the regime of King Louis Phillippe. He was captured and condemned to life imprisonment. He escaped to London in 1846, but returned in 1848. King Louis Philippi was ousted in 1848 and Louis Napoleon renewed his quest as a candidate for the Presidency of the new French republic. To the astonishment of political veterans, he won by a landslide. However, in 1849 the Royalists had a legislative victory limiting him to a 4 year term. Resolving this by a coup d'état on December 2 1851, he assumed dictatorial powers, extending his term to ten years.

His reign is divided into two periods by historians. The dictatorship persisted until 1860; thereafter he began a series of liberal reforms that culminated in a limited monarchy. This period was marked by labor legislation, a movement toward free trade, and a revival of opposition parties. His most durable work was the reconstruction of Paris.

However, he was blinded to the dangers of French security and because of his own passions and desires he was a weak leader. In 1870 he led France to defeat in the Franco-Prussian War in the Battle of Sedan (1870), an event which marked one of the greatest military capitulations recorded in modern history. A ferocious civil war ensued, and the crowning of William I, the Prussian King, as Emperor of a unified Germany, took place in the Palace of Versailles. Napoleon III died in exile on January 9 1873 at Chislehurst, England.

— Tablets to Napoleon III: Comparison (Used by permission of the curator)