

Three Documents from the Career of Napoleon

Napoleon's proclamation to the people of Alexandria, July 2, 1798:

Peoples of Egypt, you will be told that I have come to destroy your religion: do not believe it! Answer that I have come to restore your rights and punish the usurpers, and that, more than the Mamelukes, I respect God, his Prophet and the Koran...Is it not we who have been through the centuries the friends of the Sultan (may God grant his desires) and the enemies of his enemies?

Napoleon's address to the clergy of Milan in the cathedral on June 5, 1800:

It is my firm intention that the Christian, Catholic, and Roman religion shall be preserved in its entirety, that it shall be publicly performed, and that it shall enjoy this public exercise with as full, extensive, and inviolable freedom as at the time when I came for the first time into these happy lands. All the changes which then occurred, particularly as to discipline, took place against my wishes and my way of thought...No society can exist without morality; there is no good morality without religion. It is religion alone, therefore, that gives to the State a firm and durable support...Do not let the manner in which the late Pope was treated inspire any fear in you: Pius VI owed his misfortunes in part to the intrigues of those in whom he placed his confidence, in part to the cruel policy of the Directory. As soon as I am able to confer with the new Pope, I hope to have the happiness of removing every obstacle which will hinder complete reconciliation between France and the head of the Church.

TO HIS BROTHER JEROME NAPOLEON, KING OF WESTPHALIA

FONTAINEBLEAU, November 15, 1807

I ENCLOSE the Constitution for your Kingdom. It embodies the conditions on which I renounce all my rights of conquest, and all the claims I have acquired over your state. You must faithfully observe it. I am concerned for the happiness of your subjects, not only as it affects your reputation, and my own, but also for its influence on the whole European situation. Don't listen to those who say that your subjects are so accustomed to slavery that they will feel no gratitude for the benefits you give them. There is more intelligence in the Kingdom of Westphalia than they would have you believe; and your throne will never be firmly established except upon the trust and affection of the common people. What German opinion impatiently demands is that men of no rank, but of marked ability, shall have an equal claim upon your favour and your employment, and that every trace of serfdom, or of a feudal hierarchy between the sovereign and the lowest class of his subjects, shall be done away. The benefits of the Code Napoleon, public trial, and the introduction of juries,

will be the leading features of your government. And to tell you the truth, I count more upon their effects, for the extension and consolidation of your rule, than upon the most resounding victories. I want your subjects to enjoy a degree of liberty, equality, and prosperity hitherto unknown to the German people. I want this liberal regime to produce, one way or another, changes which will be of the utmost benefit to the system of the Confederation, and to the strength of your monarchy. Such a method of government will be a stronger barrier between you and Prussia than the Elbe, the fortresses, and the protection of France. What people will want to return under the arbitrary Prussian rule, once it has tasted the benefits of a wise and liberal administration? In Germany, as in France, Italy, and Spain, people long for equality and liberalism. I have been managing the affairs of Europe long enough now to know that the burden of the privileged classes was resented everywhere. Rule constitutionally! Even if reason, and the enlightenment of the age, were not sufficient cause, it would be good policy for one in your position; and you will find that the backing of public opinion gives you a great natural advantage over the absolute Kings who are your neighbours.