



1866: Letter from Mac-Mahon, Governor General of Algeria, offering to Bishop Lavigerie to propose him to Napoleon III as Bishop of the Diocese of Algiers after the death of Bishop Pavy.

Letter to Leopold II, king of Belgium (8th November 1889)

The first and the most serious difficulty that arose, for such an organization (the Anti-slavery Work having a single international Committee or Council) was having to face the diversity of interests and political views, relative to Africa, between the diverse nations of Europe. Since the beginning of this century, our continent had been the object, on the part of the civilized peoples, of generous attempts to introduce the light in these barbarous regions. There was only one means to succeed in this, that of ensuring direction, and consequently, sovereignty or protectorate.

But if the European governments have so done and are ready to make considerable sacrifices, they expect to draw future benefits from it. This gives birth to interests which must be taken into account and about which the governments and the peoples are rightly concerned. Therefore, it was difficult to think, without running the risk of regrettable rivalries and competitions in the very heart of the Work, of forming a single Committee or Council comprised of representatives of all the peoples, as is done in other faith or charitable Works.

The national Councils are therefore independent of one another; it is in their respective nations that they each seek and find their resources. What is held in common is the thought of abolishing the African trafficking and slavery, which gave birth to the Work itself, the thought of civilization and fraternal solidarity, which maintains and preserves the bonds of sympathy between the various Committees. The antislavery Work is based exclusively on the ground of humanity and religion, it pursues no objective but charity and justice.

Slavery exists in all its forms in Africa: trafficking with its manhunt and public markets, indigenous and traditional slavery and, under the name of freedom, the "Free workers", that is to say, subject to the yoke for a time instead of being so for ever. I propose to introduce gradually the necessary solution, to prevent the spread of this slavery, without

creating chaos, to make whatever atrocity is in it disappear.

Slavery as it exists among the Blacks, is nothing but a tissue of cruelty and infamy. There is no master more barbarous for the slave than the black master. He claims for himself the right to inflict every form of torture on him. Sitting high up in the pulpit of St. Gudule, I made the Belgians who surrounded me shudder as I described the atrocities committed in the Congo. I spoke to them, quoting the statements of witnesses of their own nation. I have cited other examples no less odious.

I must add that if today the Christian nations have, on this issue, broken with the last traditions of the past and no longer accept within them either the sale, or the transport, or even the presence of slaves captured by the trade, the same is not true of the Muslim nations, despite very clear texts (General Act of the Conference of Berlin, 26th February 1885, art. 6 and 9)... I must, however, make a distinction here between the slavery as it exists among the Muslims, where it has a gentle character, and that which existed formerly in pagan antiquity, and even in our colonies. I know it, for I have been a witness of it for a long time, and I have said it publicly even in our churches.

For I am determined to render full and open justice to a population of which I am not the pastor, it is true, but with which I have been in relationship in the East and in Africa for many long years.

