



**1861:** The Pope receives favourably Lavigerie in audience after the intervention of the prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization. Lavigerie had been accused of collaborating with the French government in the distribution of Catholic aid to the Middle East.

### Letter to the Work of the Propagation of the Faith (17 February 1886)

Gentlemen,

Since Bishop Livinhac and Bishop Charbonnier had the honour of recently sending you their reports on their apostolic vicariates, which had been published in the *Bulletin des Missions Catholiques*, I do not think I need to speak to you about them now. I will content myself with telling you that the news received from their caravans was as good as it could be; everything was going as smoothly as possible, and no Father had yet fallen ill. They must by now have arrived at their destinations. I will simply add that the son of Mtesa, who succeeded his father as King of Uganda, personally sent his canoes to bring Father Lourdel and two of his companions from the other side of Lake Nyanza to settle near him permanently. Before ascending to the throne, he had come, as you know, to be secretly instructed by them on the truths of religion, and one may expect from this circumstance the happiest results.

Today I would like to speak to you in particular about the missions of the Upper Congo and especially about the attempt we are making to establish missions in [this region of the] Upper Congo, taking as a starting point not Zanzibar, as the missionaries established in Massanze did, but the very mouth of the Congo. Three fathers left for this purpose, passing through Lisbon: Fathers Dupont, Schynse and Merlon. Their instructions were to go up the river to the place where, after crossing the equator, it descends to its source, that is, to Lake Tanganyika, and to choose, beyond the limits of the jurisdiction of the Fathers of the Holy Spirit, the sites on the banks of the river, either on the right side or the left, which they considered suitable for the installation of missions; in other words, those which, under favourable climatic conditions, would have the advantage of gathering around them a numerous indigenous population. The letters we have received so far tell us of the difficulties, hopes and needs of these new stations.

Father Dupont wrote to me from Brazzaville on November 27th:

« Our journey in the caravan was a happy one even though ten porters disappeared and left us after three days of walking. This incident delayed us for eight days, and so it took us twenty-seven days to get to Stanley Pool." Regrettably, we only had a small part of our luggage with us, due to the lack of porters. Major Parmentier promised to send our luggage to Manyanga as soon as possible, where we could have our porters pick it up once the first loads had been deposited at the Pool. For this reason, Father Schynse stayed at Manyanga, to receive our luggage and hand it over to the porters whom I am now sending back to him. The problems we experience here are no doubt due to the nature of things, but also because we have waited too long for help that was always promised to us and that we never received. A little higher than Lukulela station is the mouth of the river Irebu. The population is very numerous there, and almost opposite, on the other side of the river, is the post of Bonga that France has abandoned. I have thought of these two places and I do not think that the authorities will make difficulties for me, but the project must be implemented and I am looking for the means to do so. On the other hand, we saw Mr. Wisseman. He kept saying: 'go to the Baluba (people who live on a right-hand tributary of the Upper Kassai), that is your place, you will do much good there and with ease'. Since then, I have seen several of those gentlemen who have accompanied Colonel de Winte to that land and they all told me the same thing. The Baluba form a population which is numerous; they are rich, simple, trustful, and very eager to learn about Europe. Everyone agrees that they are the most interesting people in the hinterlands of Africa. What is more, I know that the Governor General is anxious to see us settled there immediately in order to prevent the Protestants from arriving before us. »

