



1867: Decree of Emperor Napoleon III appointing Lavigerie Archbishop of Algiers.

Letter to a minister in the French government concerning scientific work (18th January 1880).

Minister,

The Society of the Missionaries of Africa which I founded twelve years ago to serve the missions in the African Interior currently runs a number of mission stations in the equatorial regions of that continent and twenty-seven of its members are working there.

The closest of these mission stations were set up near to Tabora between the east coast and Lake Tanganyika and the others are to be found around the two great lakes, Tanganyika and Nyanza. True to the spirit which has always inspired French missionaries, our members combine their love of God and humanity which nourish their devotion to their work with a deep devotion to their country and to all that might benefit her progress and show her honour. In the special situation in which they find themselves in this still unknown land, they would be pleased indeed if they could render some service to the studies being pursued by our different scientific societies. In their name and my own, I wish therefore to inform you that they are ready to welcome any request which might be made to them in this line.

What prompts us to take this action is that several scientists have approached them or me specifically seeking information on the African Interior concerning their work. But perhaps an overall programme of study could be prepared by competent persons regrouping the requirements of the various branches of science. I would willingly then instruct our missionaries to devote, in a consistent manner, what free time they might have from their apostolate to the research requested of them.

Letter to the French Minister of Religious Affairs (18 January 1886)

Dear Sir,

The cholera that has raged, or rather has been lying concealed in Tunis since September has prevented me from leaving for Rome as I had planned to do last autumn. Now it would seem to have subsided and, as a result, I am thinking of setting off soon.

The twofold aim that I propose to achieve on this journey is already known to the Government of the Republic. The first is to install the French missionaries of Algiers, in charge of the missions in the interior of Africa, in the sanctuary of St. Nicola des Lorrains which has been entrusted to them by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The second is to obtain from the Holy Father the appointment of a French coadjutor for the archdiocese of Carthage, in order to prevent an Italian bishop from being appointed there on my death, according to the plan which I had the honour of submitting to the government and which had been approved by your predecessor, when Mr Flourens was Director General of Religious Affairs.

In giving you these details, Excellency, I am fulfilling a duty of respectful deference, which I ask you to accept, together with that of my highest consideration.

