

Open Letter to Hon. Woodrow Wilson President of the United States

By Rev. G. WOODLY

You may think it a little strange that a humble citizen like myself should address this open letter to you upon a great public question. But the constitution grants the citizen the right of appeal to those who for the time represent them. If the Associated Press dispatches are to be relied upon, you are by armed intervention about to force a treaty upon the Republic of Haiti, giving the United States what you are pleased to term a protectorate. The excuse you give is the establishment of a stable government in that country. I am in favor of stable government, but not stagnated government. Nor am I inclined to deny that revolutions have been entirely too frequent in Haiti. But I cannot agree with you that your intervention and shooting of citizens, under the pretext of the Monroe doctrine, is in the least sense justifiable. And in protesting against it I feel I have the sanction of the millions of race men of this country, as well as all right-thinking whites. If the Monroe doctrine, as you view it, gives you the right under the constitution (which makes you the commander-in-chief of the army and navy) to intervene wherever the people of other countries are having trouble, why, then, has this country not intervened long ago in the republics of South America, Central America and Mexico? Mr. President, most of us who have read the message of President Monroe, Dec. 2, 1823, in which he said to the European powers: "This government will consider any attempt on the part of the allied powers to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety," did not carry with it the right of intervention, but only put this government in the line of a protestant against the European powers forcibly intervening and pushing their systems of monarchy upon the then weak and struggling nations of the New World. Mr. President, this doctrine gives the United States no right whatever to intervene by force of arms in Haiti. I am saying only what is in harmony with all previous interpretation of the Monroe doctrine. No intervention has ever been made by this nation into any independent country under that pretext. If I have been wrongly informed, and the Monroe doctrine is not the pretext, then it seems to me that you do not care to take the public into your confidence and tell us plainly what is your reason. Again, the dispatches say that Wall street has got control of the finances of the government of Haiti and now demands that you, as the executive head of this nation, shall make this government their collecting agent and force the payment of interest, and indirectly to further fasten their grip upon the rich resources of that island. Of course the constitution of the United States makes the president, together with the United States Senate, the

treaty-making power. But that document does not grant the president the right to force a treaty upon Haiti, or any other nation, by intervention and seizure of their ports of entry and custom houses. It strikes me that it is in the interest of bankers and not that of Haiti that you have intervened. I presume, Mr. President, that I need not remind you that, while you are intervening in Haiti, the constitution which you are sworn to enforce is a dead letter in the southern part of this country, so far as the race is concerned. In the last few years thousands of race men have been murdered. Many of them have been buried at the stake and their bones carried away as mementoes. And this species of barbarism still continues. If you are anxious for a protectorate over the race, why not, in pursuance of your oath of office, send troops to protect race citizens of the southern states from the red-handed oligarches? When stable government has been established in Georgia it will be time enough to begin looking after Haiti. Having done nothing to relieve this disgraceful condition in the United States, can the people of Haiti expect any more protection at your hands than we are getting here? The excuse sometimes advanced that the race should look to their several state governments for protection is absurd. As well might we appeal to the court of pandemonium as to state governments that will allow such a state of things to exist. Suppose race men, who outnumber the whites in many parts of the South, were in charge of the state governments, and they proceeded to treat the white citizens as we are now being treated, would you tell them that their only appeal is their state governments, run by their enemy? Nor do I think that you should allow race men, if in power, to hang, shoot and burn white men, women and children at will. It is also well known that the Mole St. Nicholas as a coaling station is one of the objects in view. This is now the property of Haiti, with which she does not want to part. If your policy is a good one, why not grant Japan a coaling station in the Philippines or at Mare Island? Mr. President, that you, together with such United States Senators as Tillman, Vardaman and Smith, should (in view of what I have said as to the conditions in this country) enter into a treaty to protect the race in Haiti seems to me in the highest degree absurd. Why not first protect the race here before going to Haiti? I agree with the Bible that God is no respecter of persons and that as Christ all men are brothers. The white people of this country once sowed slave pens, bullwhips, auction blocks and handcuffs, and reaped a rebellion. Mr. President, let me in closing remind you that this nation is now sowing the seed of lynching in every conceivable barbarous form, and that harvest time is coming.