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GERMAN *VERSUS* ENGLISH AGGRESSION

The present state of public opinion is quite inexplicable unless we remember that great wars are periods of the abnormal, not only in the political, the industrial, and the commercial, but in the intellectual sphere as well. The mental chaos that confronts us on every hand can be accounted for only on the theory that wars are days of sickness in the life of the human race. The bold assertions, wild speculations, fanciful prophecies which one hears on every hand must be regarded as the incoherent prattle of a delirious public mind. Not only the unthinking public but men of learning have thrown cold reasoning to the winds and are swayed by feeling and passion. The scholar vies with the man of the street in seizing upon vague and conflicting newspaper reports to bolster up his whims and prejudices. Facts are ignored and principles of thought which were formerly deemed fundamental are now utterly disregarded. Personal bias has replaced the desire for truth, with the result that there is found among all classes a decided tendency to represent things not as they are but as people would have them be. The time-honoured and sound principle of historical thought, to subordinate the immediate to the remote cause, is at present generally rejected, and people hasten to fix the responsibility for war on the strength of the conflicting reports that have reached them since the outbreak of the struggle. Instead of judging current events in the penetrating light of the historical past, the public views them in the flickering gleam of a confused present.

Nor do people stop here. They even attempt to reconstruct the past so as to have it conform to their biased notions of the present. They adopt current reports in all their unreliability as a standard of judgment even in regard to those matters that have been firmly established by impartial historical investigation. Even such permanent elements as national characteristics are ascribed to one people or another on the basis of current reports. Is it not utter folly, for example, to assert that Russia is the champion of liberty and the protector of weak states, just because she has issued a proclamation of autonomy to the Poles and happens to be fighting on the side of Belgium? And is it not

equally absurd to call England the guardian of the rights of nationality because she professes to have entered the conflict on the part of a weak neighbour? Are we no longer able to distinguish between occasion and cause, between incidentals and fundamentals?

By such indiscriminate and reckless bestowal of praise upon the one party public opinion lays itself open to the suspicion that its vehement accusations against the other rest upon an equally insecure foundation. At all events, the excited state of the public mind makes an investigation into the charges preferred against Germany, chief among which is that of aggression, most timely.

If we indulge in a little reasoning of the kind that was in vogue before the war, we shall agree, I think, that such a fault as aggressiveness cannot be regarded as a mere spasmodic impulse by which a great nation would allow itself to be plunged into a hazardous conflict but must rather be viewed as an inherent national characteristic. And when we bear in mind that the lives of peoples are not measured by years but by decades and centuries, we naturally expect such a trait as aggressiveness to manifest itself repeatedly in the life of a nation. To determine Germany's aggressive spirit, therefore, we may ignore what people say or think of her present course of action and be guided solely by her past as established before the impartial tribunal of history. And since it is becoming more and more clear, even to the less discerning, that the issue in this tremendous struggle is a trial of strength between Germany and England, and moreover since the English are the people who first attributed this incriminating trait to the Germans, it seems but reasonable to compare England's acts of aggression in her past with those of Germany during the same period.

In discussing the aggression of a nation, however, we must be careful not to confuse the internal affairs that made for consolidation with those acts that were encroachments upon the integrity or independence of foreign peoples. Every united country which has emerged from the remote past has its own history of consolidation, in which one tribe assumed the leadership and encroached upon the presumable rights of its brother tribes. Without such aggression on the part of one state the unification of a whole people would have been impossible; and what we have called aggression in this case is in reality nothing

but a *rapprochement* between the various factions and subdivisions of a homogeneous people. The expansion of Prussia under Bismarck which brought about the unification of Germany can not therefore be called aggression, certainly not more so than the acts of certain portions of the English people which created a united England or the activities of the Capetians which led to the unity of France. If Prussia is condemned, as she has been in certain quarters, for coercing the smaller German states to help her found the Empire, then the Northern States were likewise at fault in taking up arms against the South to preserve the American Union.

Further, to understand the nature of aggression more fully we must not only exclude the internal affairs of a nation but also distinguish between the annexation of regions inhabited by savage tribes and the seizure of lands occupied by organized states representing a modern or an ancient civilization. In the former case the aggressor lays claim to what he has seized by the so-called right of discovery or exploration; in the latter his acts must be designated by the more opprobrious term of conquest.

In the light of these distinctions let us now consider English and German expansion during the period prior to the formation of the German Empire, and secondly from 1870 to the outbreak of the present war. It is common knowledge that the earlier acquisitions of England are scattered over all parts of the globe. No other modern nation has been either so enterprising or so successful in colonization. To provide room for the surplus or the discontented elements of her population England as early as the seventeenth century established colonies in North America. Other territories occupied by England in the same manner are Australia and New Zealand. All these portions of her extensive empire Great Britain accordingly holds by the legitimate right of colonization. In none of these places has she violated any civilized man's rights. But such acquisitions constitute only a minor part of Great Britain's vast over-sea possessions. A far greater portion of her empire has been obtained by encroaching upon the rights of other peoples. From France she took the greater part of Canada, territory which had been discovered, explored, and settled by the French and to which they had a more inherent right than they ever had to Alsace or Lorraine. From Spain she captured Gibraltar, while from Denmark she wrested Helgoland, at the same time destroying the fleet of this kingdom

in an action which for treachery is, perhaps, without a parallel in the annals of modern history. In seizing Hong Kong from China England extended her conquests to the Far East and thereby paved the way for future encroachments in this corner of the globe. While there stands as the climax to this series of aggressions the subjugation of India, in which the conqueror not only violated the territorial integrity but completely destroyed the independence of a nation possessed of an ancient civilization. The question whether the civilization of India was not inferior to that of England is here quite impertinent.

The only incident in German history in any way comparable to England's conquest of India is Prussia's incorporation of a part of Poland. Although this conquest was partly thrust upon the Germanic power by the aggressive initiative of Russia and is to a certain degree excusable on the plea that Poland with its quite impossible internal conditions was, as a next-door neighbour, a constant source of menace to the security of the Prussian state, we shall not endeavour to extenuate the destruction of the integrity and the independence of Poland by calling it anything more palliating than an act of outright aggression. The other German acquisitions of territory before the founding of the Empire were Schleswig-Holstein and Alsace-Lorraine. In both of these instances the causes and circumstances leading up to the annexation were, however, quite different from those which obtained in the case of Poland.

The Schleswig-Holstein question was one of the most involved in the history of European diplomacy. Lord Palmerston once said that only three persons had ever understood it; one was dead, one crazy, and he himself, the third, had forgotten what it was all about. Fortunately for us the intricate details of this question do not concern us here. To determine the degree of Germany's aggression we need understand only the main issues. They are comparatively simple, although they take us back as far as the tenth century. In the Middle Ages Schleswig was a fief of Denmark, while the duchy of Holstein owed allegiance to the Holy Roman Empire. During the tenth and eleventh centuries the greater part of Schleswig was populated by Germans and soon formed a close union with Holstein. In 1460 the two provinces elected the Danish ruler—not as their king, however, but merely as their overlord. In return the Danish ruler had to grant a charter of privileges, in which he solemnly promised that the two

provinces should remain united for all time and never be incorporated in the Danish monarchy. Every new ruler in Denmark on ascending the throne reconfirmed the special privileges of the two duchies, and for centuries this purely personal relationship between the rulers of Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein continued in force. The distinctive character of Holstein was moreover emphasized by the fact that this duchy was one of the Confederation of German States and the Danish king in his capacity as Duke of Holstein a member of the German Diet. As such his rights in the provinces were naturally more limited than in his own kingdom. Although nominally commander-in-chief of the Schleswig-Holstein forces he did not possess the right to command these troops without the consent of the estates of the two duchies. The army of Schleswig-Holstein was quite distinct from that of Denmark, having not only separate regiments but also its own national colours. The same distinctive character of the provinces is also seen in the rights of their estates to refuse taxes to the Danish government. Then, again, a different law of succession obtained in Schleswig-Holstein from that in the kingdom proper. Whereas succession in both the male and the female line was in force in Denmark, the two provinces in accordance with the old German Salic law recognized succession only in the male line.

Over against this loose connection with Denmark the duchies had ever since 1460 maintained a most close and intimate union with each other. Not only did they have a common army, common executive officials, common courts; but all state establishments, such as the University of Kiel, and all penal and philanthropic institutions were owned and controlled conjointly. And although the changes of centuries had affected, in some respects, the relation between the provinces and Denmark, the two fundamental rights of Schleswig-Holstein, that they should remain one and inseparable and should never be incorporated in the Danish monarchy, were never tampered with by the Danish crown. Schleswig and Holstein were accordingly, to all intents and purposes, independent provinces under the suzerainty of Denmark.

The first attempt to change the political status of Schleswig-Holstein was made in 1807, when the Holy Roman Empire, of which Holstein was a member, had come to an end. Denmark regarded this as the opportune moment to incorporate both provinces; but this attempt to encroach on their autonomy was resisted by the Schleswig-Holsteiners with so much determination

that it was doomed to failure. This Danish scheme of aggrandizement, however, was revived in 1849, when under the impulse of constitutional government a strong party, the so-called Eider Danes, was formed with the avowed purpose of incorporating at least the province of Schleswig in the Danish monarchy. That the ambition of the Eider Danes did not embrace Holstein as well is explained by the fact that this province had in 1815 become a member of the German Confederation. When it became clear to the duchies that Denmark was bent on tearing Schleswig from Holstein and making it an incorporate part of the Danish state, they forthwith took up arms to defend their liberty. This war resulted in the intervention of the powers and the Conference of London. In the London Protocol, drawn up by this conference, the ancient right of the two provinces to remain inseparable was again reiterated, and it was further stipulated that the relation between the duchies and Denmark could not be changed unless by common consent, the *status quo* being thus guaranteed for the future. In spite of this international agreement the Eider Danes continued their agitation for a greater Denmark and in 1855 went so far as to promulgate a new constitution for both the kingdom and the duchies, without the consent of the latter. When the German Confederation protested on behalf of Holstein, the Danes declared that they would annul the constitution for Holstein but retain it for Schleswig. This meant of course incorporation of the latter province and was a flagrant violation of the rights of the duchies as they had existed since 1460 and had been confirmed time and again by Denmark herself and only recently by all the Great Powers. The provinces now appealed to Germany for assistance, and the well-known result was their complete separation from the kingdom of Denmark. The Eider Danes, thanks to their aggressive attempts to change the right of suzerainty to that of complete sovereignty, destroyed even that loose personal relation which had existed for centuries between Schleswig-Holstein and the Danish kingdom.

But if the political phase of the Schleswig-Holstein question seems favourable to the German side, its racial aspect is even more so. The most important point to remember in this connection is that Holstein had from time immemorial been German, and that fully two-thirds of the population of Schleswig were also German, so that over 85 per cent. of the two provinces considered as a unit were of German stock. Only that part of Schleswig

which borders on Denmark was inhabited by a mixed population, the Germans living in the cities and the Danes occupying the country districts. In these districts the Danes used the Danish language in church and school, but employed German in commercial life and in official court proceedings. In Holstein and in the greater part of Schleswig the people read only German newspapers, and from all parts of both provinces the young people flocked to the German University of Kiel for their higher education. In his national characteristics the Schleswig-Holsteiner also differed from the Dane and had a national consciousness quite his own. And this feeling that the inhabitants of the duchies had a distinct nationality was fully shared by the Danes of the kingdom, who regarded their German neighbours of the two provinces as phlegmatic, awkward, narrow-minded, pedantic beings, who were destined to be governed by a superior race and owed their independence entirely to lack of aggressiveness on the part of Denmark.

With such sentiments as these towards the inhabitants of Schleswig-Holstein it is not surprising that during the awakening of Danish national aspirations a reign of oppression and tyranny should have been instituted in the provinces with the object of making Danes of recalcitrant Germans. The freedom of the press, which was safeguarded by the constitution in Denmark, was abolished in the German duchies and political meetings of any kind prohibited; not even gatherings of three persons for the purpose of petitioning the king were permitted. Everywhere German officials were removed and Danes appointed in their place and in the districts of a mixed population German teachers and divines were banished. In spite of such oppressive measures the powerful states of the German Confederation refrained for fully ten years from intervention. In view of all these facts it would seem as though the real aggressor was not Germany against Denmark but Denmark against the two weak German provinces.

The Alsace-Lorraine problem, like that of Schleswig-Holstein, must likewise be examined in the light of the past. To determine the degree of aggression of the two nations involved it is by no means sufficient merely to state that the two provinces had belonged to France before 1870 and were then conquered by Germany. The problem arose no more through Germany's annexation of the provinces than it seems to be settled thereby

in our own day; just like any similar case, it must be judged in the light of its origin and development during centuries.

Originally, centuries before either modern Germany or France came into existence, the country along the Rhine known as Alsace and Lorraine was settled by Germans and later formed a part of Charlemagne's empire. When at the death of Louis the Pious this empire was divided among his three sons, the boundary line between France and Germany was established for the first time. This line extended almost due north and south some distance west of Verdun so that this city as well as Metz and Toul belonged to Germany. By the treaty of 887 this line of demarcation was again confirmed and continued to form the boundary between France and Germany for more than seven hundred years. In the fourteenth century French ambitions were directed toward Lorraine, though no serious attempts at conquest were made until 1552, when Henry II seized the cities of Verdun, Toul, and Metz. Later, during the Thirty Years' War, when the various German states were arrayed against each other in civil strife, French armies began to overrun German territory west of the Rhine. Many cities were occupied, some by force of arms, others through negotiations with the Catholic bishops and counts, who ceded some of their territory to France, a Catholic power, to prevent its falling into the hands of the Swedes or other Protestants. At the close of the Thirty Years' War France retained a part of Alsace, asserting that she had conquered it from the Emperor, although this province did not belong to him at the time but to a side line of the House of Hapsburg. In the treaty of Westphalia the clauses relating to the new French conquest were so indefinite and ambiguous that France at the time took possession of only a small portion of what she claimed on the basis of this same treaty thirty years later. Only when Germany was involved in a new war against the Turks and was thus unable to resist an invasion from the west did France dare to place her own construction on the treaty of Westphalia and begin to conquer the whole of Alsace and Lorraine. Louis XIV in a ruthless manner now seized the ten free imperial cities west of the Rhine, chief of them Strassburg, and incorporated them in his monarchy despite the protest of the inhabitants and the Empire. Germany was so exhausted by her campaigns that in the peace of Ryswick she was compelled to cede Alsace and Lorraine and the ten free cities to the conqueror. At the end of the seventeenth century

Alsace and Lorraine had accordingly through conquest become a part of France; and this political status continued till 1870, when after a campaign unparalleled in its successes Germany decided to take back, as the prize of victory, the two provinces, which in her days of weakness had been wrested from her.

This brief survey of the history of Alsace-Lorraine is sufficient to show how mistaken those people are who imply that the two provinces were territory to which France had originally an inherent right. But even if in spite of historical facts we should concede that France had as much right to these provinces as Germany, the balance of race in this case, as in that of Schleswig-Holstein, is preponderantly on the side of Germany.

As was stated before, the Germans settled in Alsace-Lorraine as early as the fourth century of the Christian era. After the division of the Frankish empire Alsace was held by the dukes of Swabia and later by the Hapsburgs. A number of free cities sprang up, and the two provinces participated as fully in the intellectual and spiritual life of the German people as any other part of the Empire. After the French conquest systematic attempts were made to assimilate the inhabitants to the French, but without success. The people of both provinces clung tenaciously to their German language and to the traditions of their Teutonic forefathers. How deeply the life of the people continued to be imbued with German ideals is illustrated by the fact that a hundred years after their conquest Herder and Goethe could collect the choicest treasures of German *Volkslieder* among the Alsatians. Not until the time of the French Revolution, when French and Germans were more closely drawn together by the common ideal of democracy, did the French spirit penetrate even the higher classes.

But the defenders of France usually condone her seizure of these German provinces by a reference to the spirit of the times. It is true, they tell us, that the original fault lay with France; she conquered German territory and incorporated it in her kingdom, but this happened at a time when the feeling of nationality was not so strongly developed as it was when Germany reclaimed these provinces. Viewed from the political standpoint this is undoubtedly true. When France conquered Alsace-Lorraine the integrity of large states and the political status of small states were much less secure than in 1870. Border provinces of larger states were frequently exchanged as though they were mere

chattels of barter. Furthermore, it must be remembered that the German Empire was at that time a mere confederation of states, and accordingly a much looser union than France was two hundred years later. But if these considerations help us to extenuate France's aggression, they can hardly justify it. However one may look at it, the fact remains that France in annexing Alsace and Lorraine obtained possession of two German provinces by aggression and conquest, and that she is therefore responsible for originating one of the most difficult problems of European politics. A point that we are apt to lose sight of when considering that the political connexion of these provinces was less close when France seized them than their union with France in 1870, is that the spiritual ties such as language and tradition were originally much more intimate between Alsace-Lorraine and the remainder of Germany than they were later on between these provinces and France. People generally forget that the separation from Germany in the seventeenth century was felt more keenly by the inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine than their separation from France in the nineteenth century. It seems but little known that for a hundred years after the conquest the conquerors failed completely to win this German people over to French ideals. Do those who condemn Germany by pointing to the French sympathies of the modern Alsatians know that their forefathers were for a hundred years even more bitter against France? And if Germany has as yet not fully succeeded in conciliating the provinces, who knows but what they will be more completely in sympathy with German ideals seventy years after their return to the original possessors than they were with Gallic ideals during their two centuries of French rule? And this would be quite natural, for fully eighty per cent. of the inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine are and always have been of German stock. They speak the German language as their mother tongue; only twenty per cent. speak French or a *patois* of French.

The history of Schleswig-Holstein and of Alsace-Lorraine in its political and racial aspects is sufficient to show that in annexing these provinces Germany cannot be accused of unjust aggression. She merely took back what had been unjustly wrested from her in the days of her weakness. Had Germany been united and able to defend what was hers, neither Denmark nor France would have dared to encroach upon her territory, and

there would never have been either a Schleswig-Holstein or an Alsace-Lorraine question.

There are, perhaps, but few defenders of English policy who would not admit that England has been aggressive in the past—much more so, if anything, than her present enemy. England's aggressiveness is, however, generally palliated by the name of opportunism and her conquests, as well as those of France, extenuated by a reference to the spirit of the times in which they were perpetrated. England and France, we are told, aggressed when modern civilization was still in its boyhood; they, as it were, sowed their wild oats when modern civilization was in its youth, and that is why the world is overlooking their sins. Conquests, we are reminded, formerly belonged to the established order of things, which England with the rest of the world has happily outgrown. Only Germany, we are assured, preaches barbaric principles and puts them into practice in our enlightened age. And so Germany's sins, though they may be far less than those of either England or France, become far greater by virtue of the higher moral standard of the world now prevailing.

But is it really true that the leopard has changed his spots? Has England actually experienced the change of heart ascribed to her by her friends? Is she now actuated only by the highest sentiments of international justice? Does she stand ever ready to defend the independence of weaker states, even when her own interests are not involved? And what on the other hand are the recent aggressive acts of Germany which are so discreditable to her when viewed in the light of our own times? To answer these questions we must compare the expansion of the two countries in our own day since the founding of the German Empire to the outbreak of the present war. Why we should not include the present war also has been explained before. Only after matters have been cleared up by the historian, shall we be able to determine in how far one nation or the other was the real aggressor.

Since the only lands remaining to be occupied by civilized nations in 1875 were the islands of the Pacific and the African continent, we must turn to those parts of the world. On the African continent England in 1875 possessed only 250,000 square miles. At present her African possessions comprise 3,700,000 square miles. During the last forty years England has accordingly taken possession of 3,450,000 square miles of territory in

Africa alone. Add to this her recent acquisitions of 112,000 square miles in Oceania and New Guinea, and you have a total of 3,562,000 square miles. With these figures let us compare the German acquisitions in Africa, Oceania, and New Guinea, and we have respectively 910,150 square miles, 24,200, and 70,843, or a total of 1,005,193 square miles. Is it not strange that the country which is denounced as the most unscrupulous aggressor of our day should have seized not even one-third as much territory as England during the period when the latter is lauded for its unselfishness? The disproportion becomes even much greater when we consider that England's new acquisitions are of vastly superior commercial value on account of their superior natural resources and more favourable climatic conditions and their infinitely greater strategic importance.

Figures like the above become even more significant when we consider the motives by which the two nations were actuated in their new acquisitions. When in 1871 Germany took her place among the nations as a new world power, she found that the choice lands of the world were claimed by others. Russia, whose home territory comprises half of Europe, possessed also half of the Asiatic continent. France had her colonies in northern Africa, and Great Britain could boast that the sun never set upon her empire. Even the smaller nations, like Holland, Portugal, and Belgium, had their colonial domains. All these nations and especially England had territory enough and to spare, Germany alone was in bitter need of new lands. Confronted as she was by the problem of an evergrowing population with not a square foot of outside territory, her longing for new lands was natural, pathetic, almost tragic. Her desire for expansion was dictated by grim necessity. Yet in spite of this national exigency Germany took merely what had been discarded by others and thus by her African and insular acquisitions did not infringe upon the rights of any other power. This fact explains why Germany of all the Great Powers was the only one that did not wage a war of aggression. France, in spite of her stationary population, has indulged in "peaceful penetration" of Morocco. Russia, which owned half of Europe and Asia, could not resist the *Drang nach Osten* and clashed with Japan. And peaceful England, which possessed millions of square miles of the richest land that was still waiting to be inhabited, did not hesitate to make war upon the Boer Republics and upon Egypt. In each of these cases the

present allies attacked weaker states. All these wars must accordingly be rated as wars of aggression. Only Germany, which was in bitter need of new territory, kept the peace although her offensive strength was admittedly as great as, if not greater than, that of any of her rivals.

From whatever angle we regard the records of expansion in Africa, they result greatly in Germany's favour. Great Britain's acts on the continent of Africa have been immeasurably more aggressive than those of her rival. But what of the acts of the two nations in China? No nation has ever been more denounced, especially by England, than Germany for the seizure of Kiao-Chau. The seizure of Kiao-Chau was no doubt an act of aggression, and Germany's reputation for fair play has suffered much through her conduct in China. But is it not strange that whereas we criticize Germany so severely for Kiao-Chau, most of us do not seem even to know of the British seizure of Wei-Hai-Wei, although England holds this territory under like conditions to those under which Germany held Kiao-Chau, and its occupation is in every regard as much an encroachment upon the integrity of China.

In view of England's professions of unselfishness and her denunciations of Germany's aggressiveness in our day, it is fairly startling to find that Great Britain has annexed fully three and a half times as much territory during the last forty years and has in general employed far more high-handed methods than Germany. While as though determined not to be outdone by any other power, England brought her record quite up to date when only three years ago she ousted the American financier from Persia and to all intents and purposes established a protectorate over that country, an act which, if we may judge by precedent, will soon be followed by complete annexation.

But all this aggression on the part of England is in keeping with her time-honoured international policy. As history indicates, a double relationship is the guide of her statesmen—balance of power and supremacy. The former is insisted on as her guiding principle among the other powers, the latter is claimed as the innate right of Great Britain herself. There must be balance of power on land, that is the imperative demand of international fairness and justice; yet England must be mistress of the seas! But if there is to be balance of power, why not make it pertain equally to all, both on land and sea? How can any one profess to be guided by the sense of fairness when laying down rules of

conduct for others which he refuses to obey himself? To one looking a little more closely, it is quite clear that Great Britain's one and only aim in her foreign policy is the preponderance of Great Britain. To England the balance of power is not an end in itself but merely the means to perpetuate her own supremacy. The history of international diplomacy for the last four hundred years demonstrates that England is satisfied to dwell not as one among equals but only as a superior among inferiors. That is why during the last three hundred years England's hostility was directed necessarily towards Spain, Holland, France, and Germany; that is, invariably towards that nation which at the time was next to her in power and hence most likely to threaten her supremacy.

Our examination of the remoter and immediate past proves one point beyond doubt: that the accusation of aggression against Germany can not be based on historical facts. This truth is also borne out inferentially by all newspaper and magazine articles written against Germany since the beginning of the present war. In nine cases out of ten, statements derogatory to the Germans are based on speeches of the Emperor, some of which he never made; on his alleged belief in the divine right of kings; or on doctrines of her philosophers, such as Nietzsche; or on the teachings of her professors, like Treitschke; and above all on the sayings and writings of German jingoes, such as Bernhardi, whose book is devoured by the wholesale in England and America while it is practically unknown in Germany. In lieu of facts people base their assertions on mere theories. In short, the accusations against Germany are founded almost exclusively on what people regard to be her doctrine of life. Germany is condemned to-day not for what she has done or is doing but for what people consider to be her intentions. Germany, accordingly, finds herself in the position of the heretic in the Middle Ages, who was persecuted not for his immoral deeds but for his distasteful ideas.

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