

Manchester Guardian October 1933

Manchester Guardian

"I Say No"

Karl Barth's "I Say No," in his manifesto which we print to-day, and the Covenant signed by 2,000 German pastors will seem to many people to be the most encouraging thing in Germany since the Nazis came to power. The protestants do not deal in politics; many of them may sympathise with the secular aims of the Nazi movement. They only take a stand on behalf of conscience in their religion; they will do their duty "in sole allegiance to Holy Writ"; with Barth, they reject the bare idea that the Church is one of "German Christians," as though the spiritual body which they serve could be limited by external decree to Christians of a certain race and blood. Barth's "I Say No" will not ring through the world like that "Here I stand—I can do no other" of the great reformer, but in many ways the spirit of his pamphlet, of the Covenant of the 2,000, and the Declaration of the twenty-two recalls the clear, unyielding will of Luther. They also would have said, as he said with his firm simplicity, "I can and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything contrary to conscience." They too, who refuse to accept the "Aryan paragraph" within the Christian Church, would have declared with him that the "liberty" of the Christian includes a quality of love which makes him "the servant of all," not the contemner of any Christians who have non-Aryan blood in their veins. The German Evangelical churches have had great claims on the admiration of their fellows. They have long been famous for their services to theology and to scholarship. But Karl Barth and the 2,000 pastors now have established a claim to respect and gratitude on the broadest and deepest ground: that of obedience to conscience whatever the result.