

June 27, 1942
 500-000 (Kaiser file)

Dear President Spruell:

Professor Parsons has suggested that I write you frankly and confidentially about Dr. Kantorowicz and the general subject of medieval history at California. I hope you will not think this letter too frank and that you will treat it as confidential.

The middle ages and the renaissance are the essential foundation for the study of later European history. It is impossible for an institution to be really strong in European history without their foundations. Look over the leading departments of history in the country. In every case you will find medieval history strong even at the cost of other fields. At Penn, when a great department was wrecked by retirements, the next expensive replacement was in medieval history. Harvard is already strong in the field, yet only ~~last~~ last month I was consulted on the merits of a half dozen men, some of whom would not a fortnight to move. Princeton is primarily an undergraduate institution; yet with a small fraction of the students, medievalists of professorial grade cost almost as much a man in the 19th century. So it goes. I could continue the inventory ad nauseam - if I haven't reached that point already.

Here we have no scholar of acknowledged distinction in either the middle ages or the renaissance.

Schaeffer is an excellent teacher and a useful colleague; he has not fulfilled his undoubted scholarly promise. Guttridge is a scholar in his field, but he is only an accomplished amateur in the renaissance & reformation. Such a condition does not exist in another great American university. While this condition

exists our work in European history is crippled.

In my opinion an exile should not be kept on unless he is clearly much better than any available American scholar. If we could afford the best American scholar, we should look over the field before making a choice. Since we are not in a position to take the pick of the field, Kantorowicz is our best bet. His scholarship has won international recognition. His knowledge has an unusually wide range, extending through the renaissance. His special field, medieval intellectual history, is the most important and most difficult.

Undoubtedly his present status is bad from our point of view as well as his - no man can do his best work in such a situation. If possible he should be given the full professorship he deserves. But even the present setup is better than having the one man here who is nationally known as an able scholar in an essential field. If we cannot buy the top man available in the country, we should certainly keep Kantorowicz in one way or another.

Again, I hope you do not find this expression of my opinion too frank.

Sincerely yours,

Raymond Sontag