

## REVIEW

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kiril Plamen Kartalov from the Scientific Unit ANTHROPOLOGY RESEARCH, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, candidate in the competition for "professor" in the professional field 2.3. Philosophy for the needs of the section "Anthropological Research", announced by the IFS-BAS in the State Gazette No. 61/29.07.2025..

I would like to start this review with an unusual declaration. This time my review will not be short, as usual, but much more extensive - an intention dictated by the importance of the issues considered by the candidate for the title of professor and the almost complete lack of research on the topic in our country.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kiril Kartalov appears at the announced competition with significant scientific output in terms of quantity and quality, solid teaching experience and good achievements in the organization of historical research. He teaches a course of lectures on the history of cultural diplomacy at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan; and a course on the history of diplomacy at the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and in a number of other scientific and teaching institutions. He has participated in a number of projects - mostly at Catholic universities in Italy, Spain and Portugal and at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". but has not supervised any of them. So far, he has not been a scientific supervisor of a doctoral research. Associate Professor Kartalov defended his dissertation on the topic "The Diplomatic Mission of Mons. Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, Apostolic Visitor and Delegate in Bulgaria (1925-1934)" [L'opera di mons. Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, Visitatore e Delegato apostolico in Bulgaria (1925-1934), alla luce delle nuove fonti archivistiche], in 2013 at the Catholic University of Milan, and a major doctorate on the topic "Flowers of the Nations: Essence, History and Significance of Pilgrimage" at the IFS-BAS in 2024.

In 2016, he was elected as an associate professor at the IFS. I was impressed that even before he was habilitated, he was elected as a corresponding member of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences, initially for five years, and as far as I can tell, the election was extended indefinitely. I am not familiar with the weight of such an election and I am simply noting it.

As far as I understand, he has fulfilled the accounting requirement for the number of points (accounting, because points are counted not for quality, but for quantity). He participated in the competition with a sufficient number of monographs, studies and articles. From the "representative" list of citations, it is clear that his works are used by the college – mostly in Italy, but also in Bulgaria. He is an active participant in dozens of international scientific forums. The self-reference for scientific contributions – I have always been suspicious of this requirement of the law, because in my opinion, it is the duty of the reviewers to do it, not the author.

The candidate's main research fully falls within the parameters of the declared competition. It has always been difficult for me to divide the research into those for a doctorate, for a habilitation, for a major doctorate, etc. Especially when it comes, as in this case, to the highest academic position, as it is called by the parody of the law, which we must comply with and which should be the culmination of a complete activity, and not a few titles. In any case, I must say that the works of Associate Professor Kartalov are dedicated mainly to the Catholic Church from the 19th century to the present day. Some of them represent further development

of topics from earlier publications (which I welcome), and others are related to the subject matter of the monograph with which he is applying for a professorship. In this regard, let me make one remark.

Probably for reasons of not increasing the already considerable volume of the monograph submitted for the competition, the notes are printed in such small font that I assume that most readers will have difficulty reading them. I myself have normal vision for my age, I showed the text to all my family members and they were unanimous that the notes are very difficult to read (they are also much paler than the main text). And this means that the conscious reviewer is sometimes mistaken as to whether an original document from the archive is being cited or an already published one (I used a magnifying glass in most cases, but for a monograph of over 500 pages, this turned out to be quite difficult).

Documents testifying to the recognition of his scientific and public activity are also attached.

In a competition of this level and with a candidate who has successfully climbed the academic ladder, it would be unnecessary and frivolous to follow the usual practice in such reviews, which begin with the statement of whether the author knows the main historical works on the topic or not. It is clear that the answer lies in the question itself. Associate Professor Kartalov knows historiography very well, but it serves him only as an auxiliary tool to present his views on the problem and the conclusions he reaches. The issue of the source base is another matter. The publication of the twelve volumes of documents from the papal archives after 1965 looks very much like the so-called "Color Books" published by various governments in the name of one goal or another. And indeed, the very selection of the authors, who, despite their probable scientific good faith were selected obviously because of (I do not mean attachment to) their alleged non-affiliation with circles critical of the papacy. And this is clear to any objective historian. Without a doubt, they support serious historical research, but again, without a doubt, they cannot be considered a *deus ex machina* that will resolve all disputes and smooth out disagreements. It is no coincidence, as Associate Professor Kartalov conscientiously points out, that some of those who selected the documentation come out with their own publications that rely on them. In this sense, it is extremely important and a certain contribution to historiography that the author had the opportunity to get acquainted with the archival collections of the Vatican opened after 2020, and this is clearly evident in the presentation. In other words, I would like to emphasize once again the good faith of Associate Professor Kartalov in the first chapter of his study and, I would say, to a large extent, although not completely, the successful attempt to stay away from historiographic disputes, as up to this point it is difficult to see his own opinion.

The structure of the monograph, which is the main argument for winning the competition, is somewhat deliberately complicated, although the author convincingly justifies his decision. On some of the issues considered by the author, I adhere to a different opinion without claiming that it should be considered the most authoritative. Fundamental to his monograph, and to a considerable part of historiography, is the conviction that the Holocaust of the Jews in Europe is almost a unique phenomenon in history. It seems to me that this is not the case. Even if we forget that during the Roman Empire the vast majority of the Jewish population was massacred, sold into slavery, and displaced, so that by the 2nd century AD very few Jews survived in the lands between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, the Holocaust, although not in the technological sense that was put into the implementation of this policy in Nazi Germany, is a tragic phenomenon that has constantly occurred in history. Not to

mention the well-known pogroms against the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, but the Assyrians were also subjected to almost complete extermination there; the Germans killed about 90% of the Nama and Herero tribes in Southwest Africa; after the targeted attacks of Peruvian and Chilean slave traders at the end of the 19th century, only a dozen Rapanui remained; at the turn of the two centuries, the last Tasmanian Aborigines died out; following the explicit orders of the Emperor Kansu in China in the 18th century, about 90% of the Dzungarians were destroyed; as a result of the Japanese's targeted policy of exterminating the Ainu in Honshu and Hokkaido, there are now only a dozen people left who speak their language, not to mention the famous genocide in Rwanda or the disappearance of about 130 Indian peoples in North America, etc., etc. Not to mention the Bulgarians and Greeks in Eastern Thrace. Not to mention the calls of the Jewish god in the Old Testament to believing Jews to slaughter their opponents to the bone: "Blessed is he who seizes your children and dashes them against the rock!" In other words, the Jews can hardly claim to be exceptional, at least in this respect.

The figure of Pope Pius XII was very interesting to me, although in many cases he looms behind the events being studied. It is common, although there are exceptions, of course, that when the author deeply studies his hero, he almost subconsciously begins to feel sympathy for him. My impression is that Associate Professor Kartalov is fully aware of this danger that faces every conscientious historian and to some extent follows the example of his hero to stay in the shadows and suppress his emotions.

It seems to me that the study would have benefited if the author had paid more attention to the education of his hero, his family environment, the factors that shaped him as a person. Some of these things are mentioned, but only in passing, and then in various places in the monograph. It would have been very interesting for me to understand what was the image of the world and the contradictions in it, taught at the end of the 19th century in Catholic seminaries and universities, how the conflicts between the Catholic Church and other faiths were viewed, not to mention the conflicts within Catholicism itself. What becomes clear is that the dissertation he defended on the concordat probably prepared him well in this extremely important area for the Catholic Church in the 20th century. It is obvious that the Pope is highly educated, knows the classical languages, mandatory for a high priest; German - he spent years in Germany; but how familiar he was with other modern languages we can only guess. Just as an example, Associate Professor Kartalov mentions that he even listened to the news on the radio while eating, and the question immediately arose for me – in what language and on which radio – on the Italian radio controlled by the fascist government, or did he have free access without intermediaries to other information? It seems to me that this would solidify his image.

In history, a number of statements are taken as axioms, some of which I have deep suspicions about. For example, that the word "if" does not exist or that luck does not matter in history. However, in the case of Pius XII, this is hardly true. He had the extremely bad luck of sitting on the papal throne in the midst of the coming world conflict and spending the first six years of his pontificate in conditions in which the voice of the Catholic Church, although important, was not at all as significant as a century earlier. In the image of Pius XII in the monograph of Associate Professor Kartalov, a static image is evident. It was difficult for me to sense differences in his behavior in 1939 and 1945. Whether this was actually characteristic of the Pope or of the researcher's point of view is difficult for me to judge. In any case, there is at least one visible change, and not for the better. The author convincingly proves that in just two or three years the Pope begins to perceive himself not so much as a person as as the

personification of the institution. And this is a common phenomenon. But hence the quoted and emphasized in the monograph “I do not want collaborators, but executors”, which actually narrows down the possible options for choice in crisis situations.

I agree with the author’s position of evaluating events from the point of view of their contemporaries, and only then from the position of our time. So from the point of view of contemporaries the papal encyclical of October 1939 looks quite radical, but viewed in 2025 it looks quite cautious, not to say toothless. It seems to me that such a text might have been justified in peacetime, but not during wartime, when juggling with words is not required, but more direct action. As the encyclical is formulated, according to Kartalov, “saying things without naming them, recalling the principles of Catholic doctrine, without giving the impression that you are arguing with anyone” certainly corresponds to tradition, but how justified is it in the months when tens of thousands of ardent Polish Catholics are dying every week, when it is required not to juggle words, but at least some action.

This is not a criticism, since the Holy See is in an extremely difficult position, when on one side is Poland, and on the other millions of German Catholics, not to mention the still undecided position of Catholic Italy.

In this regard, I wonder why the book does not say more about the Spanish Civil War with the well-known atrocities of the Republicans against the clergy? Nothing is mentioned about whether there was any reaction, even if unofficial, to the occupation of the Czech Republic by the Hitlerites and the creation of an independent Catholic Slovakia with a prelate as president (Tiso is mentioned in one place, but without emphasis on his anti-Jewish policy) - I do not remember there being a similar case elsewhere, if we exclude some Catholic priests in the wars of independence of Mexico and the Philippines, but they did not hold government positions. The millions of Greek Catholics from Ukraine after 1941 are categorically not present in the story. Even less are the Ustashi in Croatia with their primitive cruel anti-Semitism.

The “Black Orchestra” plan, which is supposed to respond to this desire for action, really seems very secular and naive, and I even find it hard to believe that a person as cautious as Pius XII would associate his name and the institution he leads with it, so I share the author’s restraint when discussing it.

I agree with the author that the Pope’s voice is the “most authoritative”, but by no means “the only” one who provides moral assistance to the “most vulnerable”. There are hundreds of them, many of them Catholics, who provide not only moral, not only material assistance, but also sacrifice their lives to save some of the “most vulnerable”. Of course, we must realize that on the shoulders of the Pope lies the enormous responsibility to protect the huge institution at the head of which he stands, and this hinders any more drastic movement. It is no coincidence that the author writes that “Pius’s attention was confined within the confines of his church” (168) and that the Jews were only a nameless part of the innocently slaughtered. The question of defining peace, which, according to the Pope, is an invariable attribute of Catholicism, is, at least for me, a bit controversial, given the centuries-old history of the church. The same applies to supporting democracy in words, while maintaining a strict hierarchical structure and discipline and a centuries-old tendency to silence voices of dissent in the church. Kartalov himself writes about a “highly centralized and vertically oriented church” (166). It is also true what Associate Professor Kartalov emphasizes, that the information the Pope had at his disposal could have been treacherous, deceptive, exaggerated and planted by the Allies to force him to take a position, but still, with all the existing channels of the Catholic Church, including

in the lands occupied by Nazi Germany, this does not seem very likely to me. I had not realized, and in this regard the author is absolutely right that at that time “the Vatican was a small boat of about fifty people, closed between walls, and not with today’s structure and media noise”. I would add, with

The monograph makes it clear that in 1933 the Holy See was deaf even to moderate calls coming from Catholic circles to react in some way to what was happening in Germany. Moreover, it tried to reach a concordat with Hitler, and after his coming to power, albeit veiledly, it praised him as a fighter against communism. Until the thirties, it seemed that the great enemy remained communism, and in the end, neither anti-Semitism nor the Nazis were condemned, but only communism. In fact, as far as the text shows, the position of the papacy regarding Jews, baptized Jews and mixed marriages in Italy is cautious and is quite similar to the caution shown by the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in a similar situation in 1940-1941. Perhaps Associate Professor Kartalov is right when he summarizes his reflections on Benedict XV's policy towards the First World War that "There are always two truths", but this should not be an obstacle to a more active position, as Benedict himself proves with his behavior. I have the feeling that it is Benedict with his policy of maneuvering, placing the church in a neutral position and at the same time - active assistance to those in need, that is an ideal for the author. In any case, the conscientious enumeration of the manifestations of European anti-Semitism from the second half of the 19th century onwards, they say that the Nazi weed thrives on well-fertilized soil. It is significant that after the emergence of a number of anti-Semitic organizations among Catholics, by the thirties of the 20th century the church leadership reproached not them, but an organization such as the Catholic “Society of Friends of Israel”. The author claims that in Europe in the years of the rise of Nazism “Catholicism turned out to be divided into two large parts”, but his presentation shows that the camp of anti-Semites, to one degree or another, had the upper hand.

The text clearly shows that from 1942 onwards, sufficient information about the fate of the Jews arrived at the Vatican. The fact that high church hierarchs chose not to believe them is a matter not so much of the impossibility of confirming them as of their conscience. In recent decades, sufficient information has come to light that the German population (not a few of whom were Catholics) had a fairly clear idea of what was happening to the Jews. It is not accidental that the terms in some of the documents received were changed in order to soften the horror of their content. In other words, by 1943 the Vatican already had a sufficiently complete picture of the evil happening in Europe, but, as the author rightly emphasizes, “This dramatic awareness, however, did not translate into precise and subsequent work of exposure (395). Or as British diplomats quite objectively assessed: “He does not see that with this silence he is desperately endangering his chances of being heard” (431).

As a transfer of responsibility, although justified by the better level of information on the ground, is the Pope’s position that he is silent but gives freedom to the episcopates to react. Personally, I was very pleasantly impressed by the analysis of Marc Chagall’s painting “The White Crucifix” at the beginning of the second chapter and the reasoning derived from it about anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism and the meaning of words in historical research. This is a positive upgrade of the usual historical research methods.

The structure of the study chosen by the author fully corresponds to the stated topic, but not to the title of the monograph, which is artistic, but not factually strong. He convincingly reveals the circumstances surrounding various initiatives, not so much of the Curia as a whole, but of the popes themselves, to achieve peace in various conflicts, but Pius XII appears as an

actively acting hero only around 400 pages - his kind of "Waiting for Godot". In general, his figure can inspire respect, but not likeability. Despite the moderate tone of the author, he has not managed to show the pope as a person who can arouse sympathy and empathy.

Human deeds are judged not only by intentions, no matter how noble they may be, but above all by results. And from this point of view, the encyclicals analyzed in detail are a failure. Moreover, many of the appeals have been endlessly discredited in the long history of the church and, uttered from the mouth of its spokesman, sound like cynicism. In a sense, the "sound of silence" is there, but the Pope is not there, or at least not clearly visible. It is undeniable that the Pope cannot be viewed as a black and white photograph, such as the illustrations in the book; there are many more nuances in his behavior, and it is the right of every researcher to have their own opinion about them – of course, based on the documentation. The very fact that the church has hesitated for so long with the opening of the documents is indicative of fears about what they will reveal.

The deep-rooted conservatism of the relationship between Catholicism and Judaism is clear, and this is also evident from the reaction to the idea of creating a Jewish national home in Palestine from the 1920s onwards. Even in 1948, on the issue of Palestine, the Pope spoke of "free access to the Holy Places, freedom of religion for the various Christian denominations" – but where are the Muslims, the Jews? Sometimes additional explanations are necessary, because it is difficult to expect that the Bulgarian reader will be familiar with the complex vicissitudes surrounding the case of the kidnapping of Edgardo Montara. A positive side of the monograph is that the author quite conscientiously presents the positions of authors who do not share his opinion. Sometimes too conscientiously - the dozens of opinions and opinions, conscientiously cited and analyzed, overshadow the position of Associate Professor Kartalov and in some cases it cannot be grasped.

As is clear from the presentation so far, I do not fully accept some of the conclusions drawn by Associate Professor Kartalov, but this does not at all belittle the intellectual quest that lies behind them. How boring the world would be, and hence historiography, if everyone were unanimous, without differences even on cardinal issues. It is inexplicable to me why the author did not include at least a few sentences about the wartime mission of the papal nuncio in Bulgaria and his impressions of what was happening. However, Bulgaria is one of the few countries in Europe that, for various reasons and to varying degrees, did not respond convincingly to the Nazi calls for anti-Jewish policies. In conclusion, I would like to say that I fully support the candidacy of Associate Professor Kartalov as a knowledgeable and critically thinking researcher with a teaching presence. I will vote "for" his election as professor and I call on the other members of the scientific jury to do so as well.

Academician Ivan Ilchev