

summoned, he had a sense of calling. He quit his job and started his journey as a philosopher. I believe Potts's own story highlights a very important point. Namely, that subjective attraction to a specific work and authenticity are indeed vital features of having a calling.

Potts touches on what we might call the hard problem of vocation. A calling is something deeply personal but at the same time, it needs to be prosocial as well. Our theory falters whenever one component is too much or too little emphasized. To find the balance and to explain it in a unifying theory is the real challenge for philosophical research on vocation.

All in all, the book's main topic, calling, is a relatively under-researched issue in contemporary analytic philosophy, and Potts' work is an excellent introduction and also defense of a communitarian conception of vocation. However, this is not the only approach we can take; there can be other, rival theories that might give different answers to the problems highlighted by Potts. I hope those theories will arrive, so the debates concerning work as a calling will be even more rich and fruitful.

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## All the Kingdoms of the World: On Radical Religious Alternatives to Liberalism

**Kevin Vallier**

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023 (320 pages)

Interest in Catholic political philosophy is at an all-time high, as strange as that may sound to the uninitiated. The disintegration of Western political culture threatens an avalanche of anomie, corruption, confusion, and rage. What seemed possible for reinvigorating the ideals of liberal political philosophy, with regard to religious liberty and the protection of traditional religious values, even just thirty or forty years ago, has now been turned upside down by some sort of post-modern psychosis. Faithful Catholics are looking to understand the first principles and duties of Catholics in the chaos of this “post-liberal” age, and a variety of positions have emerged. In this examination, the choice appears to be between defenders of “the ‘liberal’ paradigm of individual rights and limited government against advocates for a ‘post-liberal’ approach that generally eschews government neutrality and envisions a more proactive role for civil authority in promoting the common good.”<sup>1</sup> Among the latter, we find a reinvigorated “Catholic integralism” that asserts the priority of church over state. According to this view, the church as the society singularly

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<sup>1</sup>NCR, December 2022.

instituted by God for the salvation of souls, is authorized and required to exercise its authority not only over itself, but also over the temporal societies of men and their governments, serving as they do only as subsidiary expedients in God's universal providence.<sup>2</sup> Thomas Pink, an advocate for the integralist vision, underscores the continuity of "the magisterial teaching that the state should recognize Catholicism as true and unite with the church as body to her soul."<sup>3</sup> For Pink it is less, or at least not immediately, a question of a political program, but rather it is a question of proper self-understanding in the metaphysical order that is at stake. Others, Adrian Vermeule for instance, are very much committed to some program of transition from failing liberal or socialist states, and *ralliement* to some version of a Christian state—a shared ambition with Edmund Waldstein, O. Cist., and the contributors to his The Josias website.<sup>4</sup>

Kevin Vallier is a philosopher at Bowling Green State University. His *All the Kingdoms of the World* presents a timely and comprehensive analysis of the philosophical and practical aspects of the movement or doctrine identified as "Catholic integralism." The subtitle *On Radical Religious Alternatives to Liberalism* indicates the polemical context and the scope of challenges to liberal paradigms, not just from Catholic integralism, but also from other "perfectionist" systems, including Islamic and Confucian "anti-liberalisms" (chap. 7). The book is concerned with evaluating the perspectives of anti-liberalisms that have gained influence globally in the twenty-first century, and, ultimately, after a fair assessment of their history and arguments, presents their weaknesses in theory and in practice.

Vallier looks methodically at the history and arguments of Catholic integralists with the eye of a political theorist to identify the pivotal questions and modes for assessing their practical significance. His first chapter is devoted to providing definitions, and identifying main players and relevant intellectual and doctrinal contexts, including natural law, canon law, and other Church teachings on authority and the common good. Chapter 2 follows the history of integralism, in theory and in practice, from the Roman Empire up through the apparent decline of papal influence in the nineteenth century, to the pivotal teaching in *Dignitatis Humanae*, a touchstone, which is either read as upholding integralist teaching or as heralding a new paradigm of religious freedom and *modus vivendi* with the modern state. Chapter 3 takes up

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<sup>2</sup> The exchanges at Public Discourse display the depth and weight of the issues, <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/?s=integralism>. A good introduction to the issues is available in National Catholic Register from December 2022, <https://www.ncregister.com/news/showdown-over-american-catholic-political-engagement-entered-new-phase-in-2022>.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Pink, "Integralism, Political Philosophy, and the State," *The Public Discourse*, May 9, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://thejosias.com/2018/03/16/ralliement-two-distinctions/>.

the symmetry argument that values the priority of the spiritual order that operates through the temporal order for obtaining ultimate spiritual goods. History and symmetry, Vallier concedes, are the best arguments for integralism.

Vallier takes up the chief practical difficulties that face the integralist doctrine, that of the strategies and consequences wrapped up in questions of *transition* (chap. 4) and *stability* (chap. 5), and of *justice* (chap. 6), all crucial facets of the problem when dealing with rational human beings in a pluralistic society. There are problems at both the outset of a regime and in its maintenance. Vallier is not without understanding and empathy for the concerns and aspirations of integralists. He concludes his study referencing the possibility that they could find semiautonomous traditional communities that meet their ideal.

No doubt because I am not well-versed in this growing corpus of work around integralist anti-liberalism, I have to confess I am surprised not to see more discussion of Matthew 21:16–21—as also in Mark 12:13–17; and Luke 20:21–26—which seems so probative of any theological consideration of church and state relations. Or for that matter, why is there almost no reference at all to sophisticated reasoning in Augustine’s *City of God* on the two cities? Other passages in Leo XIII’s *Immortale Dei*, sections 45 and 46, make it clear that in the right ordering of church and state, the dual citizenship of Christians confers a duty to involve themselves in public affairs, to “infuse” “popular institutions” with Christian virtue by participating and taking leadership roles, evangelizing, and converting by example of holiness.<sup>5</sup>

As an historian of ideas I have great appreciation for Vallier’s ability to cover such vast territories and complex ideas. The thesis and hypothesis mode of reasoning in Pius IX’s *Syllabus of Errors*, and in subsequent papal social and political teaching, obviously plays a key role in understanding the tradition. The *Syllabus* ends with famous “error” #80, “The Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization.” The thesis/hypothesis mode of reasoning established is not meant to convey the relation of an ideal to a necessitated compromise under the circumstances. Rather, the type of argument is from an abstract “thesis” or proposition of speculative reason that has mathematical certainty, to the concrete circumstances under which an instantiation of the principle must always occur, in that way, speculatively and then “under” specific concrete historical circumstances, ineluctably with what amounts to prudential considerations.<sup>6</sup> Under some circumstances something intolerable in abstract reasoning

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<sup>5</sup>Thomas Behr, “The Nineteenth-Century Historical and Intellectual Context of Catholic Social Teaching,” *Catholic Social Teaching: A Volume of Scholarly Essays*, ed. Gerard Bradley and E. Christian Brugger (Cambridge: CUP, 2019).

<sup>6</sup>Thomas Behr, *Social Justice & Subsidiarity: Luigi Taparelli, SJ, and the Origins of Modern Catholic Social Thought* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 175–76.

could be tolerable, and even more than tolerable, right. On the other hand, something speculatively desirable as a perfection of some sort might in practice be imprudent, impractical, or wrong. This reasoning from speculative to practical reasoning is obviously far from a cavalier exercise but one of utmost seriousness and consequence. I think of *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, Q. 96 on the repression of all vices.

In the *Syllabus*, the “errors” are erroneous as abstract truth claims with universal certitude. Their negation does not lead to a negative inverted truth, that is, the Church is not to remain unreconciled to modern civilization. The error is to take the liberal talking point as a thesis, that is, as an abstract, logical, universal truth. The opposite of those erroneous propositions is not meant as the ideal, this is a list of Errors after all, and to imagine otherwise would require a linguistic twister. When the nineteenth-century popes insist that princes and states must listen to the Church, must concede particular rights, protections, privileges and domains to the Church, that they should enact laws that apply Church teaching, and should not enact those that are contrary, they are appealing to the reason of political figures, calling them to their moral duties in conscience, as commands that they ignore at their own peril (both for temporal consequences and spiritual). The popes have always talked like this to secular rulers; the Investiture Controversy does not get settled, and the contest has left its mark on Western Civilization.<sup>7</sup> Grasping princes, menacing barbarians, and lukewarm emotivists will always be with us. Pius IX concludes the *Syllabus*, on the “double order of things” noting yes that Caesar’s imperium comes from God, and Caesar is made great because of his submission to God, but reiterating that the divine command of Matthew 22:21 has never been violated by “the Church which always and everywhere instructs the faithful to show the respect which they should inviolably have for the supreme authority and its secular rights.” Maintaining our citizenship in the two cities has always involved tensions and temptations. Understanding the right ordering of ourselves, of our own self-government, is worth the recollection that this fine book offers!

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).