

Catholic Trends/Summer 2025

Money, Lies, and God: Inside the Movement to Destroy American Democracy by Katherine Stewart (*Bloomsbury*). A look at Christian nationalism that begins riffing of the Last Judgment on a book review by George Scialabba in *Commonweal* ((June 2025)

THE SCENE: The Last Judgment. THE CHARACTERS: Jesus, seated at the right hand of the Father; the twenty-first-century American Christian nationalist leadership (hereafter “the godly”).

THE GODLY: O Lord, we thank Three that we’re not like other men (or needless to say, women): the woke communists, the Marxist socialists, the baby-killers, the sodomites. We strove mightily on earth to relieve the tax burdens of the suffering rich; to ignore the pleas of the presumptuous poor; to keep misguided compassion for the sick and the homeless from unbalancing the federal budget; to instill respect for the God-given authority of fathers, husbands, and policemen; and to prevent innocent children from learning about our country’s sins. We hope you’re pleased and will now grant us everlasting life.

JESUS: Hmmm...That isn’t exactly what I had in mind. What made you think it was?

THE GODLY: Lord, did you not say in Matthew 13: “To them that have much, still more shall be given; while to those who have little, even that which they have shall be taken from them”? We followed your prescription faithfully.

JESUS: Actually, that was a prophecy, not a prescription. I saw that’s how human history would go; I wasn’t recommending it. From what other words of mine did you draw inspiration?

THE GODLY: Gee, we thought that was enough.

JESUS: Well, what did you make of Dives and Lazarus? Or of “sooner will a camel pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man enter heaven”? Or the story of the rich young man who came to me and said: “Master, what should I do to gain eternal life?”—and to whom I said, “If you would be perfect, sell your possessions and give the proceeds to the poor”?

THE GODLY: Did you say that?

JESUS: (*Sighs deeply*) And what about the final word on the subject, that passage in the Gospel of Matthew? “When the Son of Man comes down in his glory, he will say to some: ‘I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me to drink, naked and you clothed me, sick and you cared for me, ignorant and you taught me. Come therefore into the Kingdom of Heaven.’ But to the others he will say: ‘I was hungry and thirsty, and you passed a huge regressive tax cut; sick, and you cut a trillion dollars from Medicaid; ignorant and you built charter schools with public money that I wasn’t allowed to attend. Go therefore to...the other place.’ But those others said to him: “Lord, when did we see you in trouble?” You know we would never have treated you like that.’ And Jesus replied: ‘As I’ve to you often enough, whatever you did to the least of my brethren—to the poorest of the poor—you did to me.’”

THE GODLY: Um....that does ring a bell. But to be honest, we didn’t think that you were serious. After all, very few Christians before us fetishized the poor like that. Can you blame us?

(Very large dark creatures with horns and wings appear and begin carrying off the godly._

JESUS: Yes

Stewart doesn't explain why Christian nationalists have gravitated toward Trump and MAGA, as her account is more descriptive than analytical. In any case 82% of Protestant Evangelicals, the most militantly religious group in the country, voted, according to Stewart, for a compulsively dishonest, tax-cheating, would-be-election-stealer, maritally unfaithful, sexually abusive, non-churchgoer whose entire life has not manifested a single religious impulse or a glimmer of moral awareness. Nonetheless of Trump's 78 million votes—a bare 2.5 million vote majority, hardly a “an overwhelming mandate”—Evangelicals contributed to 30 million—40 percent of his total. When you kick in that 55% of white Catholics who attend Mass weekly who voted for Trump, that is a formidable block of voters. Was their vote purely transactional—a swap of votes for Supreme Court seats? Do they really care about Trump's appalling lack of character? What do they care about?

More on that later.

The potential impact on deportations on American Christian families.

A report co-sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops announced that “at the end of 2024, there were more than 10 million Christian immigrants present in the U.S. who are vulnerable to deportation.” Furthermore, “Overall about 80% of those at risk of deportation are Christians, including about 61% who are Catholic, 13% who are Evangelical and 7% who are adherents to other Christian traditions.”

The cover letter appropriately begins with a scriptural citation: “*The Apostle Paul describes the church of Jesus Christ as ‘one body’ that is ‘not made up of one part but of many,’ each of which is distinct from and yet interdependent upon the other parts*” (1 Cor 12:13-14). It

continues, *“In the United States, immigrants from various countries form integral parts of the Body of Christ. Most, of course, are lawfully present, whether as naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, resettled refugees or others with permanent legal status. But a significant share of the immigrants are part of our body are vulnerable to deportation, whether because they have no legal status or their legal protections could be withdrawn.”*

Bishop Seitz (El Paso, TX) and his colleagues emphasize that such vulnerability has long been the case, but the present situation “is of increased urgency given President Trump’s repeated pledge to carry out ‘the largest deportation in history’.”

The letter ends, *“As you read this report we hope that you will prayerfully ask the Lord what part you should play at a time when so many of our brothers and sisters are fearful of the impacts of deportation.”*

The categories of individuals currently present in the U.S. who could be vulnerable to deportation, include the following:

- Undocumented individuals who either entered unlawfully, without inspection, or who entered on a temporary visa but overstayed that visa.
- Individuals who are currently lawfully present, but whose legal protections were granted by a past administration and could presumably be withdrawn by this administration, including Temporary Protected Status parole (TPS), Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and Deferred Enforced Departure.
- Individuals with a pending immigration court date, including many who are seeking asylum, who could be removed if they are not ultimately granted asylum or other relief in immigration court.

Furthermore, because many of these individuals live in households with U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, or others who are not generally not subject to deportation, the impact on American Christian households goes well beyond those directly at risk

of deportation. The report finds that nearly 7 million U.S. citizen Christians live within the same households as those at risk of deportation. Most of these U.S. citizens are spouses or minor children of the immigrant at risk of deportation.

Overall, one of every 12 Christians in the U.S.—including one out of every 18 evangelical Christians and nearly one out of five Catholics—is vulnerable to deportation or could lose at least one family member if the U.S. government deported all those vulnerable to deportations without any change in law.

What Mark Zuckerberg and the Pope pay for security.

Zuckerberg's reported annual budget for personal security is \$23 million, five times more than what the pope pays for the Swiss Guards.

Trump closing U.S.A.I.D. could cost an estimated 14 million lives by 2030

(*American Digital Magazine*).

<https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2025/07/02/usaid-lancet-humanitarian-aid-hunger-disease-14-million-deaths-251050>

Many Still Watching Mass Online after Pandemic. The CARA *Blog* notes that during the pandemic and lockdown many Catholics turned to the internet to continue some semblance of worship on Sundays. However, it appears that the pandemic has created a new habit. Although in-person Mass attendance has returned to pre-pandemic levels, there is still a higher demand for watching Catholic Mass online than before the pandemic.