To be honest about it, that is the view of Christians taken by modern society. Surely those who adhere to all or most of these traditional Christian beliefs are to be regarded as simple-minded.[7]

The "worldly wise," he went on:

just will not have anything to do with miracles [they assume] that everything from Easter morning to the Ascension had to be made up by the groveling enthusiasts (the disciples - ed.) *as part of their plan to get themselves martyred.*[8]

In the midst of this cynicism, he concluded, "We must pray to endure the scorn of the sophisticated world."[9] Justice Scalia's prayers came not a moment too soon. Those who immediately attacked the speech, calling it contrary to American tradition and inconsistent with his role as a judge, seemed blissfully unaware that they were only confirming the truth of what he said.

One professor of constitutional law at American University in Washington, D.C., blasted the speech and remarked, "We expect our Supreme Court justices to be the most secular of our public servants."[10] We? Where in our Declaration of Independence and Constitution is it written that judges must be less endowed with a sense of religious conviction than other officials? The professor could only have been speaking for that group of Americans who agree with *his* own expectation. Most Americans *still* believe that every citizen, regardless of their religious belief, is equal before the law. It is that very equality—the right of Christians to bring their full convictions into the public square—that Justice Scalia, and we at FRC, believe is under attack.

Don't let me leave the impression here that Scalia was without defenders. Among them was syndicated newspaper columnist Cal Thomas, who eloquently reminded his readers that it was a rather well-known "public servant," Abraham Lincoln, who said, "But for this Book [the Bible], we would not know right from wrong."[11]

Is there a difference between Presidents and Supreme Court Justices in this regard? Our history and tradition say otherwise. The Supreme Court begins each day of oral argument with the bailiff stating, "God save this honorable court." As you enter the Supreme Court building, there is, on the right side of the portico, a statue of Moses holding aloft the tablet of the Ten Commandments.

The critics say, "Those are mere symbols, devoid of meaning." They believe that Scalia crossed a line that Justices must never cross—expressing his religious faith. But once again, they don't know our history! Justices of our Supreme Court have time and again pronounced themselves about religious faith in general and Christianity in particular.

John Jay, the first Chief Justice, said in 1777:

Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty, as well as the privilege and the interest, of a Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.[12]

Imagine any public official saying something similar today! No Christian leader or politician would echo Jay's observation today, but the point is, such beliefs were not extraordinary among the men and women who founded this nation. Daniel Webster is esteemed as one of the five greatest senators in U.S. history, by resolution of the Senate.[13] At the bicentennial of the Pilgrims' landing at Plymouth Rock in 1620, Webster's keynote address included these words:

Our ancestors established their system of government on morality and religious sentiment. Moral habits, they believed, cannot safely be trusted on any other foundation than religious principle, nor any government be secure which is not supported by moral habits. Whatever makes men Christians, makes them good citizens.[14]

In July 1835, when Chief Justice John Marshall died, the Liberty Bell was rung, sustaining the crack that is one of the keys to its fame.[15] Are American traditions affronted by the fact that the Liberty Bell, one of a handful of supposedly secular American "shrines," bears the words of Leviticus 25:10: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof"? In 1852, Justice John McLean wrote a letter asserting that "Aside from Revelation, darkness rests upon the world and upon the future. The Bible has shed a glorious light upon the world."[16]

To all of these examples, dozens more could be added, from Lincoln to McKinley to Coolidge, to TR and FDR, to John F. Kennedy, to Jimmy Carter, to Ronald Reagan. Candid assertions of the importance of religious beliefs to democratic institutions transcend partisan divisions. It was Justice William O. Douglas, perhaps the Supreme Court's leading liberal for nearly four decades, who wrote that, "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being."[17]

In short, what Justice Scalia said is in keeping with a long line of statements by American jurists and statesmen. But what about the substance of what he said? Do Christians face any special level of scorn in modern society? Sadly, I believe they do. Among the Beltway publications, the liberal *Washington Post* published the most hostile appraisal of Scalia's speech. Of course, just a few years ago, they printed a front-page story suggesting that Christian voters are "poor, uneducated and easily led."

Just a few weeks ago, the *Los Angeles Times* printed a cartoon showing a crucified Bob Dole. A crown of thorns was depicted lacing his head, with the crown composed of letters spelling out, "Christian Coalition."[18] That same paper, on Easter Sunday, refused to print the regular Johnny Hart comic strip called "B.C." because it referred positively to the Resurrection of Christ. "B.C." was out, and PC, political correctness, was in!

Perhaps the real scourges in our society today are reserved for sincere religious believers *of any kind*. Consider what happened to Marian P. MacDonald and Teen Challenge. Marian spent 32 years building an outstanding record as a public school teacher in Greensboro, North Carolina. She was forced to resign her post last month under pressure from the school system. The reason? She invited members of Teen Challenge to one of her health and physical education classes. Teen Challenge is an extremely effective drug rehabilitation organization that incorporates religious principles in its program.

The visiting teens told MacDonald's class they believed God had helped them overcome drug abuse, but added, "We are not here to push our religion off on anybody." Apparently, that disclaimer was not enough. The school principal sent a note home to parents apologizing for the teens' "insensitive comments." An investigation followed, and MacDonald was essentially fired.[19] Stories like this are all too common.

I believe that Justice Scalia, whose sense of fairness and level of scholarship are without match in the federal judiciary, has paid religion the high compliment of taking it seriously. As I reported to you last month, Christian convictions *are* cause for persecution in many lands around the globe. Bigotry against Christians in America, by comparison, seems mild; but that bigotry is real nonetheless. Moreover, the aggressive, secularizing forces in our nation today are committed to keeping you and me out of government, law, and the public debate on all the great issues.

True religious tolerance *is* the American way. But Justice Scalia's critics would have you believe that the sanctity of human life, traditional marriage, equal access of religious speakers to the public square, and dozens of other ideas are merely a religious creed and not the common code of civilization. In a healthy society, Scalia's articulation of his private thoughts in the setting of a private prayer breakfast would not have been news. That they are news at all tells us a great deal about the crisis facing America today.