

FOURTH

FOURTH BAPTIST CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Pastor Matt Morrell, President • Mr. Alan Hodak, Administrator

Hallowed Halls of Our Congress

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Have you ever seen the movie, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*? As a new freshman Senator, awestruck by all that he discovered on his first trip to the nation's capitol, the idealistic Mr. Smith discovered that not all of those serving in Washington had the same ideals or played by the same rules. While walking the halls of Congress and seeing all the history and references to God and the Bible, he referred to the halls of Congress as the "hallowed halls." I always wondered what the writer meant when using that phrase.

On my second trip to Washington, D.C., representing the Minnesota Association of Christian Schools (MACS), others meeting in Washington and I were treated to a two and half hour tour of those "hallowed halls" late one Tuesday night. The tour was led by Texas Representative, Louie Gohmert, a born-again believer, who holds a degree in history and obviously loves to talk about those "hallowed halls." We heard stories about our heritage for over two hours and now I know why the writer of the movie called those halls "hallowed." "Hallowed" means sanctified, consecrated. The usage of the term may not seem appropriate on the surface (especially with the current condition of government), that is, until you hear the stories and see what is really contained in the many paintings and writings etched within those halls.

President George Washington is everywhere. Considered to be, hands down, the greatest leader of our nation's history, he was convinced to run as our first president, even though he initially resisted, but ran on the insistence of the leaders of the early thirteen colonies. His life was marked by an unbelievable example of godly virtue, bravery and leadership. He was probably the most respected leader of our time and the most revered. His faith in Christ, love for God, and excellent testimony made him our greatest leader.

Set in the floor of the old House of Representatives (now a hall of statues of famous leaders from each state), are several small sealed square plates commemorating the few Representatives, over history, who also served as President of the United States. Among those were Abraham Lincoln, who served only one term, and John Quincy Adams, who served in the House many terms after he served as President. Both men were solid believers who served during the years of slavery in our country. Abraham Lincoln was well-liked by Adams. It is said that Adams took Lincoln under his wing and mentored him for about a year. Lincoln was not reelected to the House, but later became President. Lincoln stated that during the two years he served in the House, Adams would preach on the floor against slavery and that he could not forget his words. It is said that one of the main reasons Lincoln ran for President was to put an end to slavery in our country. One never knows who is listening to our words and watching our life. Lincoln would later testify of Adams' strong influence and example in his own life.

In the Rotunda of our Capitol, the beautiful paintings reflect and record important moments in our early history. The paintings, however, aren't just a record of American history; they also show a belief and dependence upon God as the Sovereign of history and the Provider of a free land for those seeking freedom. In the *Embarkation*

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of the *Pilgrim*, Columbus' men are carrying crosses and are shown praying upon landing on dry ground. In *General George Washington's Resignation of His Commission*, the actual recorded speech gives credit to God as the One who blessed the cause of a new nation. At the end of his speech, he asks for the "protection of Almighty God and those who have the superintendence of them, to His holy keeping." In the *Baptism of Pocahontas*, the new convert to Christianity is kneeling before the preacher, ready to be baptized with her husband standing behind her and others watching. In the *Discovery of the Mississippi*, men in the lower right hand corner of the painting are erecting a cross commemorating God's leading to this wonderful discovery. In the *Declaration of Independence*, many of the signers were believers, some ordained to preach the Gospel.

Exiting the Rotunda, there is a chapel (*Google search The Capitol Rotunda Prayer Room*). It is not very large but it is strategically situated in the middle of both the House and the Senate for the purpose of prayer. There are places to sit in that chapel and there are two places to kneel and pray. The Bible, opened to the 23rd Psalm, is prominently displayed in the middle of the chapel, and there is a beautiful stained glass picture in that chapel. The picture depicts George Washington kneeling in prayer. Psalm 16:1 is etched into that stained glass and it says, "Preserve me, O God, for in Thee do I put my trust." It was from this Psalm that our nation's motto was selected.

Those Hallowed Halls...

In our Congressional briefing, we heard a recurring theme: A Vision of Two Americas. This election could mark a departure from the original vision of our founding fathers should America continue to go in the direction of our current administration's policies. It will no longer be an America of choice. It will be an America of limited choice with many and increasing government controls. This vision of America was not the America our framers sacrificed for, and it is not the America that I know and love.

When the Pilgrims landed on the soil of the New Land, they were seeking religious liberty, a freedom which would allow them to choose how they would worship. Not only were they free to choose their form of worship, their faith could be an active part of their daily lives. It was as recent as 1963 that prayer was taken out of our public school classrooms and eventually God, His Word and His Son were no longer welcomed. In the 70's and 80's, parents who saw the deterioration of our government controlled schools, became concerned and made a conscious decision. They would start Christian schools and pay for the operation of those schools, through tuition, because they rejected the doctrine of "*parens patriae*" and wanted to give their children a strong Biblical worldview as well as a quality education. The freedom to choose how we, as parents, would educate our children, has always been fundamental in our history, with few government controls. Today, we continue to battle our federal and state governments who want to impose national curriculum standards and testing, as determined by a federal government who wants to act as the parents of our children.

We have been battling this very thing in the past year since our state (Minnesota) won the Early Learning Grant (a product of Obama's stimulus plan). This grant is nothing more than a federal attempt to indoctrinate our three and four year olds at the earliest educational point of entry. The new federal attempt to institute

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increasing controls in K-12 education is called the “Elementary and Secondary Education Act” (ESEA). Formerly the “No Child Left Behind Act” under President Bush, the bill has been modified and the reauthorization process is just beginning to heat up. The federal government is tying federal funds to Race to the Top (RTT) competitions so that states will adopt these federal standards. Language which was in the previous “No Child Left Behind Act” that protected private schools has been eliminated which leaves our private schools vulnerable to these same standards. Thankfully, many of our elected officials are currently too busy trying to get reelected to work on this issue, so we have some time before the next session when the battle will begin to heat up again. No doubt, our next effort in the coming session will begin the process of educating and informing our law makers of the importance that language protecting our private schools must be included in the ESEA reauthorization effort.

Why is this protective language so important?

When curriculum standards are federally mandated, those standards may not align with what we are teaching in our Christian schools. The federal government’s mandating of curriculum objectives means that our schools may have to teach many things that we do not believe in, things that we are intentionally trying to keep our children from learning. As Christian parents, we have placed our children under a Christian school philosophy which is an extension of our homes and the very things that we hold dear for our children’s education. This is one of the reasons we send our children to a Christian school. The curriculum chosen is meant to complement what we believe and practice in our homes and fully supports our Christian worldview. And my friends, the longer I am involved in Christian education, the more I realize that we do what we do to teach our children how to think. Worldview is key! The minute we begin to lose the freedom to operate our Christian school autonomously is the minute we have lost a big part of our religious liberty.

The same is true with the current administration’s stand on the HHS Mandate in Obamacare. Extremely controversial, this mandate narrowly defines a religious employer so that few religious institutions may qualify for an exemption to the mandate. It does not allow a Christian business owner or private independent religious institutions like hospitals, schools and colleges to opt out of the inclusion of “preventive services for women” like contraceptives and some abortion-inducing drugs. If a group health plan does not include these provisions, the federal government will impose fines of up to \$100 per day or \$2000 per year if the institution drops health care coverage altogether. Religious freedom, to believe and to live out our beliefs, is now tossed out the window because federal mandates demand otherwise. It is another federal attempt to pay for abortion with our tax dollars, another federal erosion and invasion of our religious liberties.

What would the historical heroes in those hallowed halls say if they were here today?

Thank God for a number of conservative legislators who we met in Congress this past week. People like Michelle Bachmann of Minnesota, Virginia Foxx of North Carolina, Jim Jordan of Ohio, John Fleming of Louisiana, David Schweikert of my home state of Arizona, Ann Marie Buerkle of New York, Jeff Duncan of South Carolina, Tim Huelskamp of Kansas, and many others who are taking our banner and battling daily on our behalf

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for religious liberty, private school autonomy, and parental choice. We praise the Lord for these folks and we need to be praying daily for them. Many are up for reelection and we need them back in Congress. There is still hope that the hallowed halls will remain... hallowed. HOWEVER...

The vision for America may take an interesting twist and turn should we continue on the pace we are presently on. If we reelect our current President and the majority power in the House of Representatives changes, there is little doubt which vision will take over the America we have known.

America is on the verge of the most important election in its history which will determine the future direction of our government and its programs. It becomes incumbent upon us to talk factually and intelligently to people, to give money to strong traditionally conservative candidates, to help those candidates at the federal and state levels, to vote, and most especially, to pray.

I am asking the Lord for His abundant mercy, to not give our nation what we really deserve, but that His grace would truly be upon us in the coming election. Many excellent Senators and Representatives are running for reelection and they are under attack from those who would oppose their values and positions. It is ironic that so many of these hold the same positions as many of our country's founders, yet they are persecuted for their beliefs, the very same beliefs our country was founded upon. Pray for those by name on a daily basis and pray for God's abundant grace in the coming election.

May God give us grace and mercy in the coming election and may the future of America not be an America devoid of God, but an America that is truly "under God" and in whose Name we fully trust.

Those who went before us, in those hallowed halls, set a course for our nation that we cannot allow to be altered. The Word of God is etched in those hallowed halls and the paintings and words of our founders cannot be denied. People came to this country to experience the great blessings of religious freedom and those freedoms must be preserved. The enemy will use anything at his disposal to dupe our nation into thinking that our government wants what is best for us. The best intentions of individuals usually serve those individuals' self-interests. The course America takes must be a course of religious freedom and individual liberty. May we still have that freedom after the November election.

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