

Baptist Student Center Groundbreaking

Paul M. Hebert

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The breaking of ground for construction of the permanent Baptist religious center on the campus of our University marks an important milestone not only for your religious group but also in the life of the institution. It brings to fruition the hopes, the aspirations and the religious ideals of all of your faith who have had part in the undertaking, but especially is this occasion meaningful to those of you who have the vision to foresee and plan this great accomplishment and also to those who with determination and devotion to the cause have, through the years, worked incessantly toward the accomplishment of this objective. The institutional congratulations which I bring in the absence of the President are therefore well deserved by you and by your works.

A wise and tolerant policy of our State Government whereby man's inalienable freedom of religion is recognized and he is encouraged in the exercise of that freedom to ~~work~~ worship in accordance with his belief is being exemplified here today. More than twenty years ago, in 1928 to be exact, the Louisiana Legislature declared its policy ~~of favoring~~ in favor of the strengthening of the moral influence of religion in the lives of students at this University.

By Act 240 of 1928, the University was given authority, through its Board of Supervisors, to lease

for a term not to exceed ninety-
nine years for each lease, to
religious organizations, any portion
of the grounds of the University
in order to permit such organizations
to erect and maintain student centers
with facilities for religious worship
and instruction ~~permanent~~
with the architectural plans for each
student center to be approved by the
Board of Supervisors. The beauty
of your student center which has
been so authorized will enhance
the physical aspects of our
Campus, but religious student
centers are institutions for
spiritual guidance and we see
in this accomplishment further

vindication of a policy designed to
enrich the moral life of our University.

Through these facilities which you
will construct, University students
of the Baptist faith will in the
years ahead find that enrichment
in the life of the spirit which
makes for the more completely
educated man; the man who sees
life as imbued with a Divine purpose
and as part of ~~our~~ a Divine plan. ~~The~~ This
~~Religion as a part~~
is why, I think, that the work of
the religious centers on our campus
are so important.

As early as 1819, Thomas Jefferson
established the University motivated in
part by a desire to express his
protest against ~~the~~ the then dominant
sectarian influence in American higher education

as it existed in that early day
prior to the rise of the
publicly supported institutions
of higher learning. ~~as we know them~~
Jefferson suggested though that the
Churches might establish agencies
about the University though not
organically connected with it. He
thereby gave his recognition to the
importance of religious influence in
the well-founded educational
development of the student. Today
we may say that 130 years later, ^{at another great State} the ^{University}
plan upon which you are
embarking compares in a marked
degree with the plan which
Jefferson visualized in the founding
of his University.

To the man of religious
convictions this ceremony is a thrilling
accomplishment. Who can measure the

potential influence for good
implicit in such an undertaking as
this. In the presence of the
Almighty whose cause is here
being advanced according to the
religious beliefs of those of you who
sponsor this project we pause and
we are ~~able~~. I join in
~~the~~ expressing the wish that
His choicest blessings be showered
upon all who so unselfishly
and sincerely work in advancing
His cause.

Your University deserves keen
satisfaction from this occasion. The
sod of clay which you turn here will
soon give way to a structure designed
to endure for generations and through
whose portals students may seek that
guidance along the paths ^{of} your faith
to a stronger spiritual strength guiding their ways
through life.

I congratulate the Louisiana Baptist
On behalf of the University I congratulate
the Louisiana Baptist Convention and
extend ~~to~~ every important good wish to
your pastor and your activity leaders
in this ~~of~~ important undertaking.