

BAPTISTS DIVIDED

Controversy is not readily apparent at Baylor, the world's largest and best-known Southern Baptist university. Its lush campus on the banks of the Brazos River in Waco, Texas, is home to a record 11,556 students this fall—despite efforts to contain enrollment—and applications continue to pour in. But Baylor is a school under siege by a faith divided. Fundamentalists who have dominated the Southern Baptist Convention since 1979 have accused Baylor, along with several Southern Baptist seminaries, of becoming dangerously "liberal."

Few outside the SBC view "Jerusalem on the Brazos" as a liberal place. Though only 60 percent of the students and half the faculty are Baptists, all students are expected to conform to rules so strict that students sometimes refer to

Baylor as "the school of thou-shalt-not-have-fun." Students may not drink or dance on campus; they may not display pictures of beer or pinups in the dorms. "Indecent or immoral conduct, lewd or lascivious action, sexual promiscuity or illicit cohabitation" on or off campus is grounds for expulsion. Of course, some Baylor students have been known to imbibe alcohol and use drugs, dance and even engage in premarital sex. But the source of conflict at Baylor is neither dance nor drugs nor sex; it is the Bible.

Fundamentalist leaders like the Rev. W. A. Criswell of Dallas insist the Bible is without error. Moderate Baptists agree that the Bible was inspired by God, but are freer in interpretation; some even declare a belief

that God may have used evolution to create the universe. Both views have traditionally been acceptable in this non-creedal denomination.

But fundamentalists argue that the religion's teaching should reflect their views as a majority. Otherwise, they say, its schools could lose their religious identities, as Northwestern and others with church affiliations eventually did. In 1979 one fundamentalist criticized a religion-department text that suggested the first five books of the Bible might not have been written by Moses. In 1984 another demanded that a tenured Spanish professor at Baylor be removed because he was a Mormon. The removal of a religion professor who accepted evolution was also sought. Later that year two fundamentalist students presented Baylor president Herbert Reynolds with a "manifesto" demanding that faculty members who could not prove they were born-again Baptists be dismissed. This fall, like-minded students, outraged by a Doonesbury cartoon critical of TV evangelist Pat Robertson, insisted that the student newspaper censor such material.

Reynolds has consistently defied fundamentalist ef-

That old-time religion:
The Baptist Student Union at Baylor, a Southern Baptist stronghold, holds an on-campus revival



PHIL HUBER—BLACK STAR

Fundamental things apply:
The Rev. W. A. Criswell, pastor of the world's largest Southern Baptist church and believer in Biblical infallibility

forts to control the university and declares himself committed to the principle of academic freedom. For 140 years, he notes, Baylor's mission has been to provide

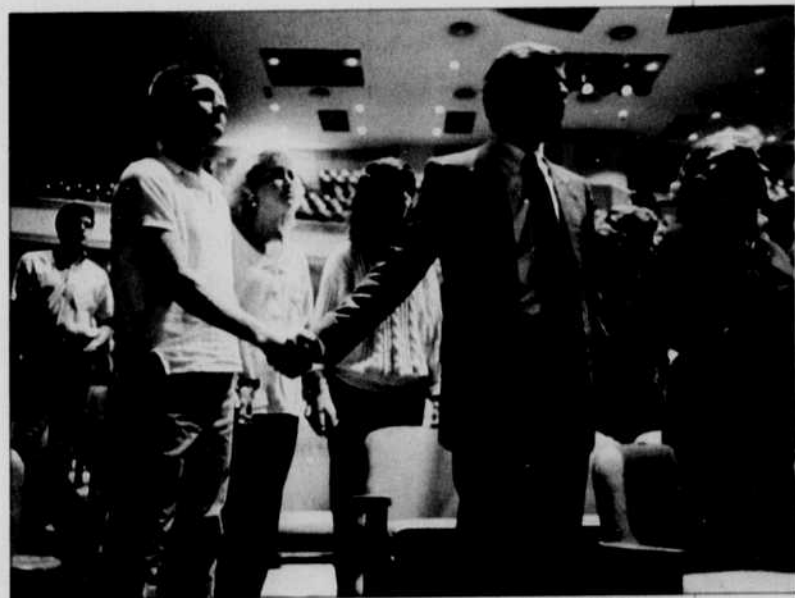
a strong *academic* education in a Christian environment. Its schools of law, nursing, education and business have earned enviable reputations. Most students, says history freshman Reich Chandler, "like Baylor just the way it is." Vows Reynolds, "We are not going to deny our students the right to use their God-given minds in order to better understand God's creation."

In accordance with Baylor's rules, students on both sides of this debate have confined their protests to petitions and letters. A few enjoy the attention the conflict has brought Baylor. Others object. Fundamentalist efforts to change the school "scare me," says journalism senior Jay Eubank. "They make Baptists look like a bunch of fools." Fortunately for Baylor's moderates, the university is operated not by the SBC but by the more moderate Baptist General Convention of Texas, which—at least for now—agrees with biology Prof. Frederick Gehlbach. Says he: "It is Baylor's place to educate its students, not indoctrinate them."

BARBARA BURGOWER with MARK STOUSE in Waco



BAYLOR UNIVERSITY
Firm: Reynolds



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