

PERSPECTIVE

By Jamie Buckingham

"Come alive!" is the cry of the new generation. The mods are saying to the establishment: "Enough of your dead tradition. Show us life . . . action . . . reality."

They have been saying it to the church for years—and many times with legitimate reason. The charge of "dead churches" is tragically accurate too many times. Churches are infamous as the repositories of dead tradition — the one institution that can be counted on to resist change . . . whose symbol is the barnacle encrusted anchor rather than the hoisted sail.

All churches are not dead. Many are alive, throbbing with the heart beat of God. But there's still that element in all who are satisfied to sing "Onward Christian Soldiers" while sitting down, and who insist on designing their buildings to look like mausoleums rather than gymnasiums.

Halford Luccock told the story of the mother who put her little boy to bed and then went in to read the paper. The child appeared at the door and whimpered he was afraid of the dark. The mother said, "Don't be afraid. God's in the room with you." The child returned to his room and peered into the darkness. "God," he whispered, "if you're in there don't you dare move—you'll scare me to death."



This seems to be the whispered prayer in many churches today. It's an ironic prayer, for from the very beginning of the Judio-Christian concept God has been pictured as a God on the move. Abraham was described as a "pilgrim," always moving. Jesus never owned a home but was constantly on the move. And when the woman at the well asked Him if God were to be worshiped in the Temple Jesus said, "God is a Spirit. If you try to put the wind in a box you lose it. You worship God by following—not sitting down."

Words like this have a strange sound in the ears of people who for centuries have built elaborate boxes so they can have a place to "go and worship."

But in these recent years the Spirit of God seems to have come alive in many churches. The rumblings and stirrings sound almost like the rattle of dry bones coming together to form a marching army.

Ironically, many who are being "filled with the Spirit" are looked upon as fanatics, much like a man who might suggest a square dance in a graveyard. Sometimes they are frozen out and have to find refuge in small interdenominational prayer groups that meet in homes. (Shades of the first century!)

The one bright spot is the fact that more and more churches are accepting this new surge of vitality (or renewal) as the revelation of God—and like a ship that has been becalmed for many years, are hoisting their sails to move forward.