

Spirit Held 'Alive' In Many Churches

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 churches for years. Yet, oddly enough, now that some churches are actually "coming alive" with new spiritual power, the greatest element of resistance is coming from the insecure clergy and the ignorant laity within the establishment.

For years, Christians have recognized that there was a certain enthusiasm or "aliveness" among the so-called Pentecostals. However, pride, dignity and ignorance had kept most from even investigating, much less becoming involved, in what they called "fanaticism."

HOWEVER, IN THESE past few years a new surge of power is sweeping through churches of all denominations. It is being rightly recognized as the Spirit of God.

The discovery was first made among Episcopal churches, which for years had mumbled the formulae

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about the Holy Spirit but never had actually received Him. Suddenly some Episcopalians, then Presbyterians, even Methodists and Baptist laymen and ministers were experiencing the phenomena of being "baptized in the Holy Spirit."

When it happened, they were filled with new power — a power synonymous to the power and authority that belonged to Christ and His apostles.

Nor has the receiving of the Spirit of God been limited to Protestants. Fr. Edward O'Connor, chairman of the department of theology at Notre Dame, has written me of the sweeping charisma among many of the Roman Catholic priests on the campus. Fr. O'Connor himself has been "spirit-filled" and testifies his entire ministry has been transformed.

AS COULD be expected, many church leaders are vigorously resisting this "new life" among Christianity. Some even boldly declare it is "of the devil."

When this happens, individual Christians who have received the Holy Spirit are sometimes ostracized, even asked to leave the church because their new zeal and enthusiasm are quite unbecoming. In some cases it has become downright embarrassing, much like a man who wants to have a square dance in a mausoleum.

As a result, little interdenominational cell groups are springing up all over the nation. In Atlanta alone, there are 45 known groups meeting in homes in an atmosphere which smacks of 1st Century Christians in the catacombs. Here they praise God and fellowship in their new-found understanding of the Scriptures.

THE ONE bright spot is that some churches are willing to accept this new phenomena as being of God.

To those who don't, perhaps two Scriptures are needed as warning lights. One is Mark 3:29 — beware when you condemn those who say they have received the Holy Spirit. The other is the advice of Gamaliel to those who tried to stop the apostles.

If it's not of God, it'll die by itself. If it is, then beware lest you try to stop the work of God.