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Summary Article: **Pentecostalism**

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worldwide 20th–21st-century Christian movement that emphasizes the experience of Spirit baptism, generally evidenced by speaking in tongues (glossolalia). The name derives from Pentecost, the Greek name for the Jewish Feast of Weeks, which falls on the fiftieth day after Passover. On this day the Holy Spirit descended upon the first Christians enabling them to “speak in other tongues” (see *Acts* 2:1–4). Besides glossolalia, Pentecostals promote other gifts of the Spirit (*charismata*), including faith healing, prophecy, and exorcism. Ecstatic experience remains the unifying element of the movement. Pentecostals in America are generally conservative evangelical in their beliefs (see fundamentalism), but no unified stance on matters of doctrine and polity exists among adherents. Pentecostal churches are also strong in Indonesia, sub-Saharan Africa, and parts of Latin America and Europe. Pentecostal churches around the world cooperate through the Pentecostal World Conference, first held in Sweden (1939). The American counterpart to the conference is the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches of North America; it is not a policy-setting organization.

“Classical” Pentecostalism

What is sometimes called *classical* Pentecostalism grew out of the late 19th-century Holiness Movement in the United States. The Holiness preacher Charles Fox Parham began preaching (1901) to his Topeka congregation that speaking in tongues was objective evidence of baptism in the Spirit. After Parham's Los Angeles–based Apostolic Faith mission became the center of a great revival (1906), the movement quickly spread around the world. Over the next two decades the movement split along doctrinal and racial lines. Of the many Pentecostalist denominations in the United States today, the largest are the Church of God in Christ, with about 5.5 million members (2000); the Assemblies of God, with about 2.5 million members (2000); the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, with about 1.5 million members (2000); and the Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.), with about 870,000 members (2000).

The Charismatic Movement

A second form of Pentecostalism arose in the 1960s after many non-Pentecostals became aware of Pentecostalism through an earlier Pentecostal revival organized by faith-healing evangelists (notably Oral Roberts). The formal origin of the *new* Pentecostalism or *charismatic* movement, as it is often called, is traced to Dennis Bennett, an Episcopal minister who declared to his congregation in Van Nuys, California (1961) that he was speaking in tongues. Following Bennett's confession the charismatic movement appeared in nearly all the Protestant denominations, the Roman Catholic church, and, to a lesser extent, in Eastern Orthodox communions. With the support of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, founded (1951) to provide lay support for faith-healers, the *charismatic* movement spread throughout the world.

Other Offshoots

A third type of Pentecostalism consists of independent schismatic offshoots of the mission churches and wholly indigenous sects which adopt or tolerate beliefs and practices such as ancestor worship and polygamy. These Pentecostals, mostly nonwhites, abound in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Pentecostalism has attracted the poor, minorities, and the dispossessed, although it is not limited to

these groups. It has also afforded a prominent role to women leaders.

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