The author of this book criticizes the charismatic renewal movement. He finds fault with it because it has been disruptive and has led to irrational excesses which result in community disintegration.

He therefore judges the charismatic experience, not merely for what it does to the individual Christian, or even to those who comprise a small, select company, but primarily for its effect on the total Christian community (p. 85).

These are the concluding thoughts in this tract against the charismatic movement. What would Dr. Kildahl's position have been with respect to the Jesus movement two millennia ago? As a student of the religious quest, judging experience by "the criteria of love and creative work"--that which leads to productive life for the whole community--he would have condemned those trouble-making followers of the Galilean. Maybe, in fact, this Messiah was the cause of the trouble. Although he talked about loving your neighbour he also said that he came bringing the sword, even dividing families, setting a son against his father (Mat. 10:34).

A clinical psychologist would also have found that members of the Christian sect looked upon Jesus as an authority figure, a rabbi, depending on, if not even taking advantage of, his benevolence (p. 65). Dependence itself may not be pathological or deviant, but in the modern Jesus movement it leads to speaking in tongues which is something a person only does when his ego is not in control of his choices and judgements, as when a child sucks his thumb (p. 36). So Kildahl would have us believe.

There would have been marvelous proof that the followers of Jesus--or if not all of them, a significant number of them--were "more submissive, suggestible, and dependent in the presence of authority figures" (p. 40) than the ordinary Jew or Gentile. They spoke in tongues. Witness what happened on the day of Pentecost. Look at that large group in Corinth. For it is clear, says Kildahl, that glossolalia is possible only when a person submits to the suggestion of an authority figure who tells him that he can speak in tongues and that it is good for him.

The authority figure is an absolute necessity for the acquisition of the ability to speak in tongues, says Kildahl. Whether he be priest, pastor or Christian friend, his relationship to the one seeking acceptance with God is that of a hypnotist.

But let us look more explicitly at Kildahl's views. I have only referred to some of them and have suggested what appear to me to be the inescapable implications of his logic.

Kildahl leaves no room for doubt: "hypnotizability constitutes the sine qua non of the glossolalia experience" (p. 54). He never states explicitly
that a person is in a hypnotic state when he first begins to speak in tongues, but his words leave no other interpretation. For example, he compares the words he uses to induce hypnosis with the words used by a minister at a prayer session (p. 37). He says that tongue speakers have a "strong need for external guidance from some trusted authority" and that "without complete submission to the leader, speaking in tongues [is] not initiated. In psychotherapy, this is called dependent transference" (p. 50).

With the authority figure and the language learner Kildahl has set up what he thinks is the necessary human relation—nonreciprocal and unequal. He also requires a certain kind of setting that will trigger [my term] the candidate's predisposition (inherent in his psychological constitution) for regression. "Without exposure to a regressive group experience, glossolalia [can] not be induced" (p. 59). Only at late hours of the night might speaking in tongues begin. The length and intensity of these night meetings produces a stressful situation which lowers the normal healthy conscious resistance to excessive behaviour (p. 72). Scores of thousands of tongue speakers know this to be nonsense.

This explanatory contraption is as complicated and unnecessary as those conceived by Rube Goldberg. Rube also never seemed to have perceived the simplicity of the tasks he set for himself. Kildahl's fundamental error is in believing that "glossolalia is not completely under the conscious control of the person" (p. 35). "Purposefully motivated sentences like 'I want a drink of water!' are "clearly under the control of the ego," but glossolalia in not (p. 35). He provides no explanation of what conscious ego control is, but he illustrates a contrastive "simple, conscious choice" with deciding to brush one's teeth (p. 64).

But Kildahl's real error is not knowing (or if knowing then not saying) what is the relationship between cognitive processes and speech acts. He provides no psycholinguistic basis to his assertions; in fact, when he uses language like "what controls [the glossolalist's] tongue?" it would appear that his level is naive folk linguistics (p. 35).

Whatever loss of ego control may be, Kildahl is led to believe in it for only one reason: glossolalia "cannot be duplicated by non-tongue-speakers" (p. 35). This sounds as if he were saying that non-tongue-speakers cannot be tongue speakers. That would be a foolish assertion. What he may mean, then, is that you have to go through this process of regression—of losing control over yourself in order to speak in tongues. A person whose ego is master of things will not be able to produce this kind of vocalization. With this his entire argument collapses. The foundation he said was essential for it gives way.

There is abundant and convincing evidence that loss of ego control is not necessary for glossolalia. Some of this was available to Kildahl at the time he was writing his book. He was familiar with it but chose to ignore it. This was supplemented by further studies, all of which are reported in my linguistic and sociological investigation of the nature and use of tongues (Tongues of Men and Angels, The Macmillan Co., 1972). I will not repeat the evidence here,
Even without this last challenge one should see that Kildahl's structure has weaknesses that discourage credibility. Although he assumes that glossolalia results from loss of ego control, as in hypnosis, he makes no attempt to demonstrate this loss. In fact, at the end of the book, after having repeated his thesis in several different ways, he suggests that it would be advisable to determine whether indeed all tongue speakers can be hypnotized! (p. 76).

And how is this hypnotizability measured? By comparing responses from twenty-six glossolalists and thirteen nonglossolalists to the Thematic Aperception Test to measure autonomy and dependence. Kildahl claims that the scores demonstrate that the tongue speakers are more dependent on authority figures, because of the way they interpreted the TAT pictures. And because they are dependent on authority figures, they are therefore more subject to hypnosis. This logical step is the only proof he gives.

These thirty-nine persons represent the basis of the main argument of this book. Although it claims to be the result of ten years' concentrated study of glossolalia (p. xii), no evidence is presented in these pages. The author only refers to work that he and colleagues have done. He gives the reader no way of judging the quality of his data, the reliability of his tests, and the validity of his conclusions.

In a popular book, of course, a publisher does not want to frighten readers with formidable technicalities and statistics. But a responsible author claiming to have performed a scientific task would have protected himself by making certain that the basis of his work was available elsewhere for scrutiny. Kildahl's bibliography is extensive but it cites no such work of his own.

Outside of the TAT study, therefore, there is very little in these pages that is substantive and original. In any case, the bulk of the book is taken up either with summarizing published material or else in repeating itself (pp. 53, 59), with more inconsistency than we expect in a serious study. (For example, meetings in the charismatic renewal movement are both structured and unstructured, pp. 71, 72).

Kildahl's ideas about the relation between glossolalia and hypnotizability are obviously vulnerable to an attack on hypnosis itself. Things are not as simple as he makes them out to be. One could point out, for example, that there are no reliable ways of demonstrating the presence of hypnosis other than depending on a subject's reports; that it is the subject, and not the hypnotist, who prescribes the extent and the expression of the wishes gratified in hypnosis; and that hypnosis is very much a product of the cultural environment in which it occurs.

Kildahl never seems to know whether he is studying individuals or groups. Moreover, he does not seem to understand these groups. For example, he says that "tongue speakers band together, usually in highly visible groups" (p. 66). This presents the ridiculous picture of human beings discovering that they have in common something they acquired independently! (It is the book's rhetoric, not the reader's bias, that leads to wrong inferences.)
Finally, Kildahl fails to make a consistent distinction between the first experience at speaking in tongues, that is, when the ability was "acquired," and the subsequent use of tongues in personal and corporate religious experience. There are undoubtedly psychological correlates of this difference, and it should have been the aim of the psychological investigation to identify these.

This book makes a lot of generalizations about people in the charismatic renewal movement. Most of them are derogatory implicitly or by innuendo. For example, people tended to have a low level of emotional stability rather than an integrated personality if they made strong affirmations about the benefits of glossolalia (pp. 59, 60). But we are not told what these affirmations are, how many people made them, and how this personality type was measured. Moreover, he found these people divisive, tending to get off to themselves for littlePALALISTIC meetings (p. 67). He found that the way they handled their emotions was specific to themselves (p. 68). They were guilty of anger projection, that is, blaming others for problems, even when they are themselves responsible for them (pp. 68ff.). And because they had visions, exorcised demons and attempted "bizarre methods of spiritual healing" (different from experiences we read about in the Bible?), he finds them guilty of histrionic display (p. 71).

Kildahl's generalizations are frequently qualified by words like "tend" and "sometimes." Some of this could not be avoided, but I cannot escape the conclusion that the overall characterization of people in this movement is more a reflection of personal bias than empiric fact. As he admits in a few places, this is a "personal and subjective" summary of his observations of some people in the movement. He is entitled to his preferences, of course. But we have had enough such reports. We already know what people think about Pentecostals and others who seek religious fulfillment in a certain way. It is about time that we know how much truth there is to what people say. Let us have a fair study of a scientifically valid sample of the charismatic population by unbiased investigators. Enough of these hasty and superficial and pseudoscientific essays!

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