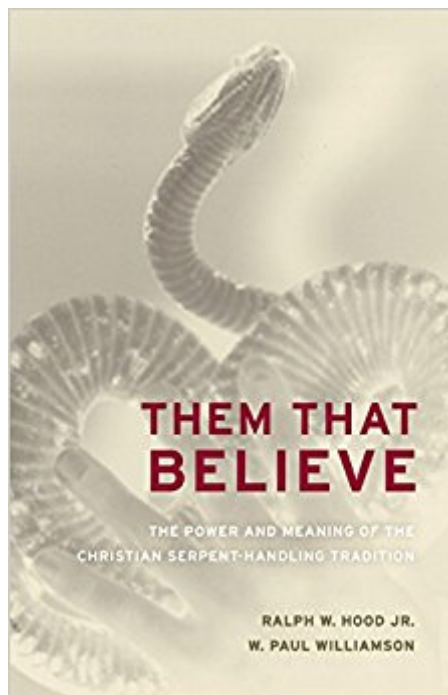




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# Them That Believe: The Power And Meaning Of The Christian Serpent-Handling Tradition



## Synopsis

Although outlawed in many states, serpent handling remains an active religious practice—and one that is far more stereotyped than understood. Ralph W. Hood, Jr. and W. Paul Williamson have spent fifteen years touring serpent-handling churches in Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, and West Virginia, conducting scores of interviews with serpent handlers, and witnessing hundreds of serpent-handling services. In this illuminating book they present the most in-depth, comprehensive study of serpent handling to date. *Them That Believe* not only explores facets of this religious practice—including handling, preaching, and the near-death experiences of individuals who were bitten but survived—but also provides a rich analysis of this phenomenon from historical, social, religious, and psychological perspectives.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"There is no competing work that matches *Them That Believe*; it is both original and stimulating. The scholarship is superior, and reflects well the 15 years the authors have worked on this project. This is an outstanding work."—Margaret Poloma, author of *Main Street Mystics: The Toronto Blessing and Reviving Pentecostalism* "This book provides one of the most comprehensive and thoroughly researched reports on serpent handling Christians ever written. The use of multiple methodological lenses (e.g., sociology, ethnographic participant-observation, phenomenological psychology) adds a depth and richness not seen in other works. The book is very well written and arranged, and the scholarship is excellent."—Stephen Parker, author of *Led by the Spirit*:

## Toward a Practical Theology of Pentecostal Discernment and Decision Making

Ralph W. Hood, Jr. is Professor of Psychology at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. W. Paul Williamson is Associate Professor of Psychology at Henderson State University. Hood and Williamson are coauthors, with Peter C. Hill, of *The Psychology of Religious Fundamentalism*.

This is great research work on this interesting faith and its followers. I had read Dennis Covington's *Salvation on Sand Mountain* before, which I really enjoyed, despite the criticism from other researchers of serpent-handlers. Covington's is a much easier read, written more as a journalist than a researcher. However, this book represents years of research by the authors and really explores a variety of important themes of this religious movement, using methods from psychology of religion. True to their intent, the authors present both their methods and their conclusion, allowing the reader to validate these. Hood and Williamson offer an empathetic look at these followers and argue that many of the misgivings about them are in fact due to misconceptions rather than reality. This is a great book for those who are truly interested in this subject.

This book is not an entertaining book at all. It isn't intended to be one. The authors are very studied men who have devoted more time than anyone else in forming healthy, respectful relationships with serpent handlers. This reads like a textbook or a thesis paper so be sure you are looking for scholarly reading if you purchase this. My hat goes off to these men for their work sociological work and the deep respect that they show to those about whom they are writing.

Interesting and informative. Good documentary photography about an intriguing topic. This would be of value to the scholar or the person with a special interest in religious practices in Appalachia. The serpent handlers are a small group compared to the membership in various other churches, but the nature of their beliefs and practices makes them very interesting.

An intriguing look at belief with some surprising, assumption-challenging information. Fascinating!

This is really fascinating. Made me almost (only almost) want to go out and give it a try. Living far to the North that is thankfully not an option!

It's amazing that the authors can take on such an interesting and fascinating subject and make it

mind-numbingly boring. They're obviously academics, but they only appear to be interested in writing for academics. This book is dull, dull, dull. No self-respecting serpent would strike it.

By far of the least value unless you're studying for a degree in Theology. Very wordy and learned with tons of names and book titles referenced. Written from the perspective of a college professor rather than an old-time spirit-filled preacher. IE Long on data, way too analytical for good faith style reading. MT

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