



# **Spirit Possession and Popular Religion: From the old world to the new world: Origins of the Shakers**

*Clarke Garrett*

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## Spirit Possession and Popular Religion: From the old world to the new world: Origins of the Shakers

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Pietists, Methodists, and sectarian groups such as the Shakers all shared the conviction that God touched the individual directly and visibly; manifestations of spirit possession, accompanied by prophecy, visions, and ecstatic seizures, became outward signs of an inner expedience, a kind of sacred theater as believers acted out their possession before others. Clarke Garrett follows this "sacred theater" back to the Camisards of southeastern France, an ecstatic Protestant group whose doomed rebellion against Louis XIV led to their dispersal among Huguenot exiles. Then, Garrett writes, "in a form that the Huguenots themselves would probably not have recognized, a dozen English ecstasies, who in their native Manchester had been known as Shakers, brought Huguenot spirit possession to America in 1774." The Shakers emerge as the culmination of the century's religious quest, preserving the immediacy of spirit possession while making it the basis for the formation of an ideal Christian community.

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