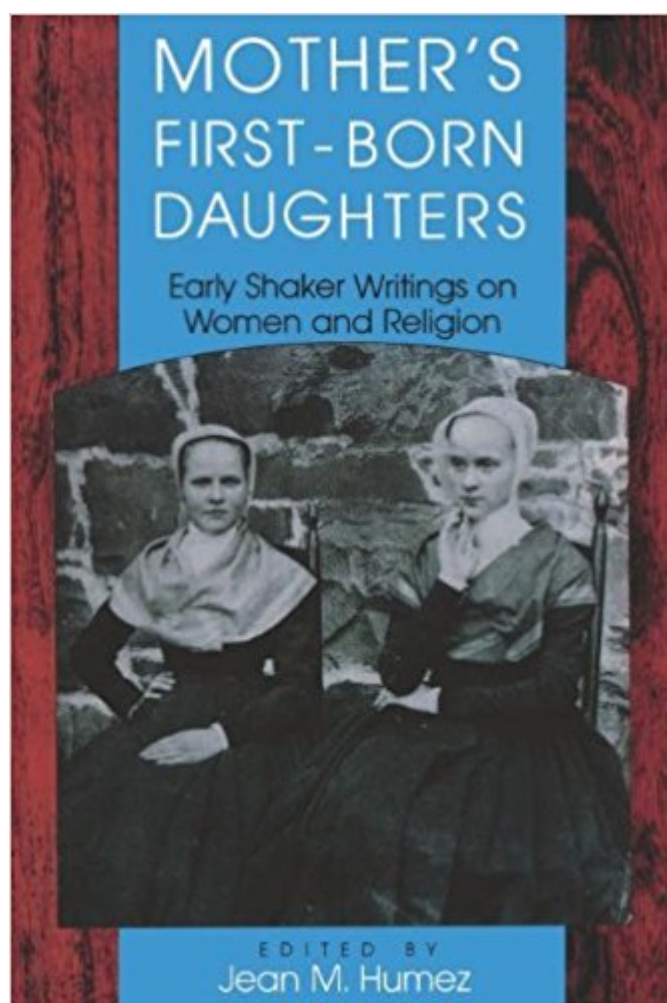


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# Mother's First-Born Daughters: Early Shaker Writings On Women And Religion (Religion In North America)



## Synopsis

"... an excellent collection of writings covering the period 1774-1854... mostly in print for the first time.... Humez provides excellent and clear introductions, emphasizing the ambiguous role of women." *Library Journal* "This very fine book is a valuable contribution to Shaker studies, religious studies, and women's studies." *Journal of American History* "The editor provides insightful commentary, but the power is in the straightforward and powerful words of the women who founded and participated in this most religious American group." *The Bloomsbury Review* "Humez's work is a model of revisionist scholarship, critically objective and editorially balanced, and provides a solid introduction to the early history of the Shakers." *Utopian Studies* "Israel, you have begun to bear for other souls, and you must never give out, till the last soul is gathered in. When you get home, tell your father and stepmother that your mother is risen from the dead." *from the book* A fascinating introduction to the world of the early Shakers, this anthology documents the contributions to Shaker religion made by women during its first seventy years. It gives a more accurate vision of Shakerism and highlights the ways in which gender can play an important role in the creation of a new religious institution.

## Book Information

Series: Religion in North America

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: Indiana University Press (April 22, 1993)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0253207444

ISBN-13: 978-0253207449

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.9 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,303,705 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #62 in [Christian Books & Bibles](#) > [Christian Denominations & Sects](#) > [Protestantism](#) > [Shaker](#) #8483 in [History](#) > [World](#) > [Women in History](#) #13245 in [History](#) > [World](#) > [Religious](#) > [Christianity](#)

## Customer Reviews

Humez (women's studies, Univ. of Massachusetts-Boston) is well known as a biographer and a scholar of Shakerism ( *Gifts of Power* , LJ 6/1/81). The current volume provides an excellent

collection of writings covering the period 1774-1854, nearly all by women and most in print for the first time. The four sections treat of founder Anne Lee, her successor Lucy Wright, correspondence between the Eastern and Western groups, and perspectives on the mid-century "revival." Humez provides clear, excellent introductions, emphasizing the ambiguous role of women. Given the continuing interest in Shakers, who see God as having both male and female incarnations, this collection will be useful not only for the primary material but also for Humez's notes and comments. It will be of value to most public and academic libraries, although specialists may complain about the degree of modernization in the editing.- James H. Sweetland, SLIS, Univ. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

" ... an excellent collection of writings covering the period 1774-1854 ... mostly in print for the first time... Humez provides excellent and clear introductions, emphasizing the ambiguous role of women." Library Journal "This very fine book is a valuable contribution to Shaker studies, religious studies, and women's studies." Journal of American History "The editor provides insightful commentary, but the power is in the straightforward and powerful words of the women who founded and participated in this most religious American group." The Bloomsbury Review "Humez's work is a model of revisionist scholarship, critically objective and editorially balanced, and provides a solid introduction to the early history of the Shakers." Utopian Studies

Jean McMahon Humez stands in all probability as the greatest expert on the fascinating, extinct sect known to the world as The Shakers. Her ability to compile the writings of Rebecca Jackson, one of the most famous converts to Shakerism, in such an effective manner as she did was remarkable. In that work, Humez showed a true mastery of what ought to be seen as a difficult topic. Although a failed postage has meant I have not been able to receive the book, "Mother's First-Born Daughters: Early Shaker Writings on Women and Religion" appears to be as good as Humez' previous work on the topic. Though it meant nothing to me when I first read it, it is fair to say that since that time I have become better able to understand the mysteries that lie at the core of Shaker life. The fact that Shakers had a quite complicated system (as Humez makes us aware) meant that their writings on spiritual topics have not been as available to a reader like me as books dealing with, say, Shaker furniture or cooking. Hence, this collection, when and if I get a chance to read it thoroughly, should be a revelation. The findings I have so far had about it show clearly that Humez is able to "get inside" the lives of Shaker women in a way more general studies of Shakerism never even attempt to do. She seems to be able to show more than just events within communes from 170-210 years

ago in a manner that is rare even among the best-researched histories, especially in the early and late parts of the book. This appears to be very well balanced with commentaries that give the general reader some hop of understanding the text, so that in no way can it be as unreadable as I found it several years back. We really see and feel the religious inspiration of the Shaker mediums, even understanding where they felt it was coming from, when we read Humez' well-edited texts. The feelings and dreams of being possessed by spirits normally seems far removed, yet here it seems totally familiar, as do other aspects of Shaker spirituality discussed in the book. On the whole, these texts cement Jean McMahon-Humez' status as the greatest Shaker historian. Strongly recommended, especially as none of the texts can be found in the equally impressive *The Shakers: Two Centuries Of Spiritual Reflection*. Together, they give a mountain of writings for a modern reader to reflect upon.

Quite remarkable! Worth the time and thought it calls for - very rewarding.

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