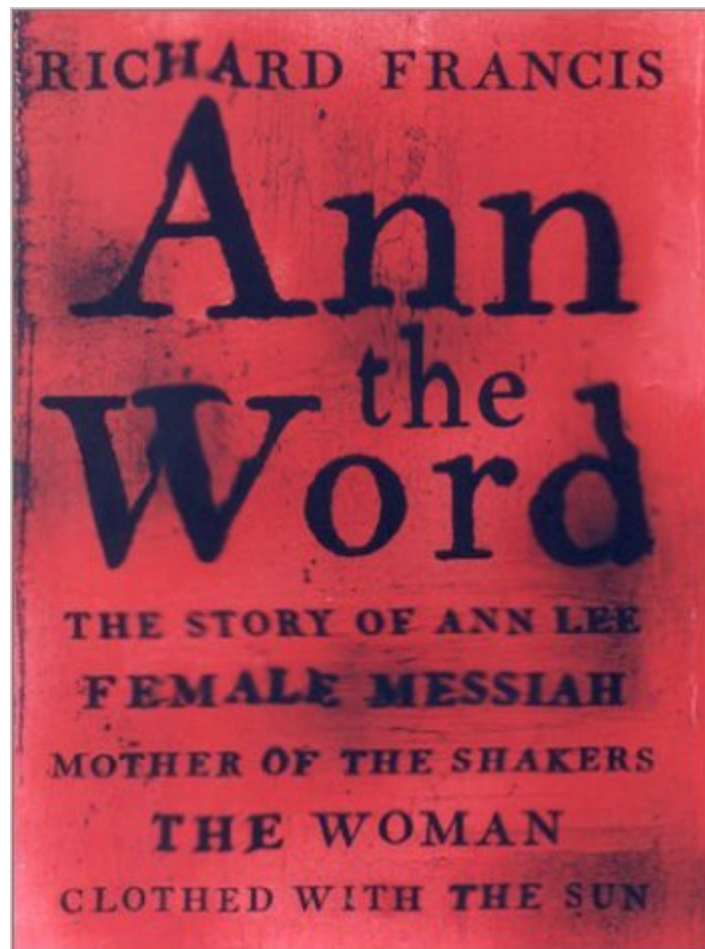


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# **Ann The Word: The Story Of Ann Lee, Female Messiah, Mother Of The Shakers**



## Synopsis

Ann Lee was one of the most extraordinary and mysterious women in the history of Western culture. From humble origins in Manchester, England, this illiterate daughter of a blacksmith became a visionary religious leader who was thought by her followers to be the second incarnation of Christ. She brought the Shaking Quakers, or Shakers, to America on the eve of the revolution. When she died at age 48, she left behind a religious movement that was to have thousands of followers and to become our most successful and important utopian community.

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## Customer Reviews

Ann the Word deserves five stars for its fine writing, the extensive research, and a contextual narrative that helps us understand many events that otherwise seem unduly cruel and brutal. My five-star rating is balanced, however, by the one star awarded the author's annoying armchair psychology that intrudes at every turn - intended, it seems, to explain away anything that might be a little too difficult for the modern, sophisticated reader to swallow. The author is a somewhat gifted writer; he teaches creative writing and has published several previous books. But where this book fails is in its hubris; it is the hindsight of a nineteenth-century belief system that considers itself enlightened, while stubbornly maintaining a one-dimensional and materialistic tunnel vision of possibility. This book ascribes Ann Lee's blunt, often-accurate visions and prophecies to dumb luck, coincidence, and cunningly applied homespun psychological manipulation. The author lacks the magnanimity to simply present the story as revealed through his research, while allowing the reader

to decide what lay behind it all. Nevertheless, we see are privileged to witness the workings and outcome of a true cult and its gifted, charismatic leader. And, ultimately, we see that society needs such cults and fringe movements, places where those who will never fit into the social norms of the day can find a true sense of purpose and fulfillment. Despite the frequent and annoying pop-psychology and a certain shallowness, this is probably the best book available on the roots of Shakerism and Ann Lee.

This is a good introduction to the fascinating religious utopian sect. I had read other more detailed works about Shakers in general. The last of the Shakers live nearby in Maine. This work was more helpful on understanding Ann Lee, for all practical purposes the founder of the Shakers. It doesn't get you lost in footnotes and scholarly apparatus, but the sources are there if you want them. Reads like a novel.

Ann Lee (or Lees as she was born) is one of the most fascinating mystics in modern history. An illiterate born in Manchester, England in the early eighteenth century her life has been put together with confidence and flair by Richard Francis. Ann left no written records but Richard Francis has carefully pieced together what he can of her life from written records of the time and from her followers. Francis really gives us a feel for what life was like in Early Manchester from the population, to the role Ann's family played in the society to how they lived. It is a vivid portrait, her really brings his society to life, the crowded living, the social structure, and the society she dwelt in. It makes fascinating reading. She was a very charismatic person, who probably suffered from Anorexia Nervosa which may explain some of the mystical visions she had. Certainly her mortification of the flesh (refusing to eat for long periods of time, and denying herself sleep) is a symptom which many of histories mystics have employed to call visions of Christ. Ann's charisma soon saw her heading the local branch of Shaker's, and even converting her own family to the religion, her own brother calling her sister and mother in one. This book is not just a biography of Ann, it is a record of early Shakerism, but also a substantial social history of Manchester and mid-eighteenth century America. Francis uses all the historical records available to attempt to flesh out the world which Ann inhabited and to strip away myth associated with her life (which she herself perpetuated) and the reality of what happened to her. I really enjoyed this. It was both well researched and well written. An Easy read without the tabloidism of some historical non-fiction writers. Highly recommended.

I had no idea who Ann Lee was until I took an Early American Lit. class in grad. school. Intrigued by

her, I searched and found this book. I think Francis has written a highly readable book on Ann Lee and the Shakers. This book is a great introduction to both subjects, easy enough to read for the average person and interesting enough to keep the scholar reading. At times, the book almost seems to border on historical fiction, and I became caught up in the story. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants an introduction to Ann Lee or the Shakers, as well as anyone interested in religion & "cults" in general.

Terrific read! There's a lot written about the Shakers, but little about Ann Lee, their founder. This book really fills in the blanks, and the author has some fascinating psychological takes on the subject. A must read for anyone at all interested in the Shakers and American History.

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