

Hamilton College Library

“Home Notes”

Communal Societies Collection

New Acquisitions

Exceptionally Rare Gender Neutral Communal Manifesto

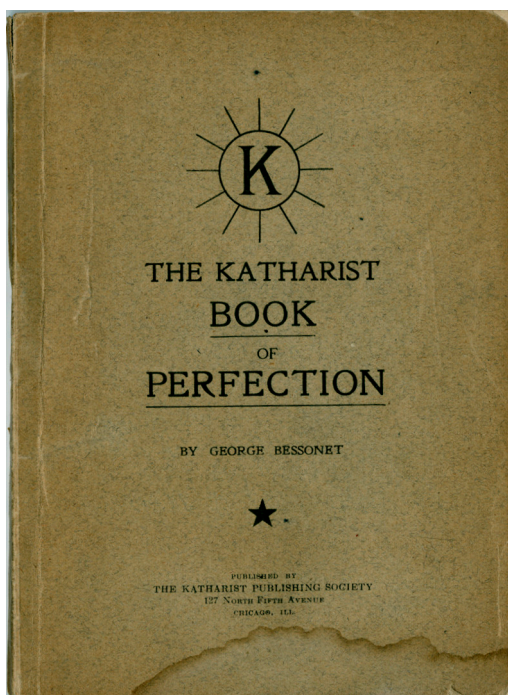
George Bessonnet

The Katharist Book of Perfection.

Chicago: The Katharist Publishing Society, 127 North Fifth Avenue, [1917]. 144 pages.

“The Katharist must boldly declare his/her’s faith and as long as his/her is in the world must find ways to distinguish him/herself from the worldly. Besides the principles which will guide his/her’s life his/her must carry about some badge or peculiarity of dress that will announce to all he may meet that here is a fearless one who dares to live right.”

The holy book of principles and precepts of an obscure gender-neutral sect, evidently founded in Chicago and preaching a sort of vigorous primitive Christianity augmented by reincarnation, physical culture, separate dwellings for spouses, and the midriff designated as “the Sacred Center” (“that part of the

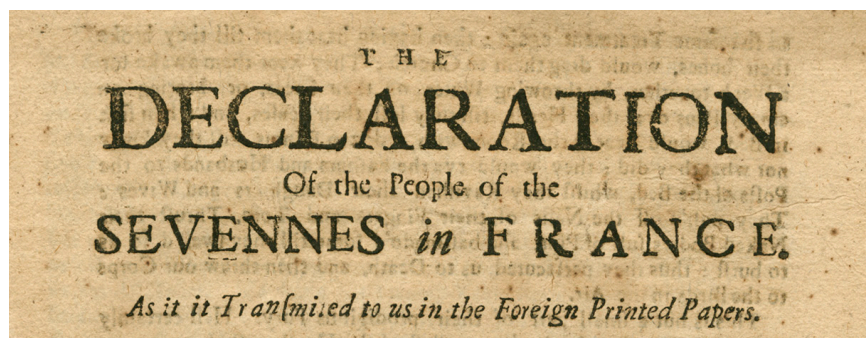


body, twelve inches above and below a line drawn around the body at the navel”) that should always be kept covered and never touched by others except when blending your Sacred Center with a spouse. Bessonnet counsels keeping gender a secret from children and the world at large at least until a Katharist child is seven (twelve is preferred) and includes on the inside front wrapper a helpful explanation of the sect’s gender-neutral pronouns. Bessonnet concludes with a call for those who will join the movement, giving his address at 127 North Fifth Ave. in Chicago. OCLC seems to indicate only one physical holding at the Library of Congress.

The French Prophets

The Declaration of the People of the Sevens in France: as It It [sic] Transmitted to us in the Foreign Printed Papers. [Edinburgh?]: n.p., 1703.

This rare account of the Camisards, or French Prophets, was published in the British Isles three years prior to the emigration of a group led by Élie Marion to London in 1706. OCLC records four holdings, including Hamilton’s.



Shaker Gardener, Apostate, and Entrepreneur

Charles Frederick Crosman. Manuscript Journal 1856-1866.

Crosman was the head gardener at the New Lebanon, New York, Shaker community. He authored *The Gardener’s Manual: Containing Plain and Practical Directions for the Calculation and Management of Some of the Most Useful Culinary Vegetables* (Albany : Hoffman and White, 1835). After apostatizing from the



Shakers in April 1840 he founded the Crosman Seed Company, which is still in business in East Rochester, New York. The present journal records the daily activities of the business—soil preparation, planting, harvesting, seed-saving, sorting and drying—as well as Crosman's family life. A



beautifully illustrated opening contains patriotic calligraphic art framing the names of Crosman family members (see above). The rear pastedown of the volume contains some agricultural information from Crosman's Shaker tenure dated 1825 and 1836.

Rathbun versus Whittaker

The Hampshire Herald

Springfield, Mass., February 14, 1786.

This is a newspaper advertisement for Shaker apostate Daniel Rathbun's *A Letter, from Daniel Rathbun of Richmond, in the county of Berkshire to James Whittacor, Chief Elder of the Church, called Shakers* (Springfield, Mass.: Printed at The Printing-Office near the Great Ferry, 1785). Rathbun's *Letter*, the lengthiest Shaker apostate work published in the eighteenth century, was printed by the same printers who issued this newspaper, as evidenced by the location given in the masthead. Hamilton College also holds an original copy of Rathbun's *Letter*.

