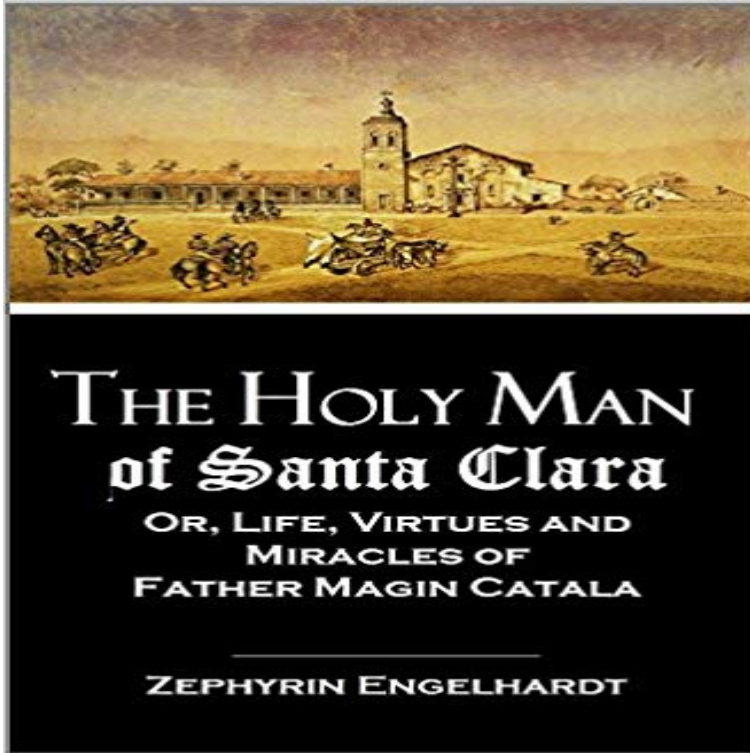


The Holy Man of Santa Clara: Or, Life, Virtues and Miracles of Father Magin Catala (1909)



Zephyrin Engelhardt, O.F.M., (1851-1934) was a German-born Roman Catholic priest and clerical historian of the Franciscan Order. Engelhardt, known as the Father of Mission History, compiled extensive histories of the twenty-one Spanish missions in Alta California as well as other Franciscan settlements in Baja California and Arizona during the first decades of the 20th century. Engelhardt's work is today considered to be the standard authority regarding California mission history. Magin Catala (1761 - 1830) was a Catholic missionary. Catala was born in Montblanc, Catalonia, Spain. In 1777 he joined the Franciscan Order in Barcelona, and was ordained in 1785. He arrived in the City of Mexico in 1786, and entered the missionary college of San Fernando there. For thirty-six years he labored with Father Jose Viader at the Santa Clara Indian mission. He became renowned for his miracles and prophecies. The figure of a crucifix in Mission Santa Clara de Asis is said to have leaned forward to commend him when preaching. The cause of his beatification was introduced in 1884. Some accounts of Magin's miracles: I and some Indians were perishing from thirst in a region where there was no water. Suddenly Fr. Magin appeared and asked us what the matter was. We told him that we were dying for want of water to drink. Go over there, he said, and you will find water. The Indians were surprised, for no water had ever been known to exist anywhere in the neighborhood. We went there, and joyfully discovered very much water to drink. Secundino Robles related under oath that, when he was a boy already well grown up, at one time innumerable locusts or grasshoppers, called chapulas by the Indians, settled down upon the fields and orchards and devoured everything green in Santa Clara Valley. The afflicted people appealed to Fr. Magin for help. The servant of God directed some of the insects to be

brought to him. When he saw them, he said: Let us go into the church. There he put on his stole, recited some prayers, and then ordered the locusts to be taken back where they had been caught. No sooner had the little creatures been set at liberty in the field, when all the locusts rose in a body, and flying away plunged into the sea. One year, about 1823 or 1824, the whole valley was suffering from a great drought. It had not rained during the entire preceding winter, nor in the spring that succeeded it. About 5,000 sheep perished. In other places the people suffered similarly. The inhabitants, therefore, asked Fr. Magin for relief. He invited all the people to join him in prayer for rain. It was the month of April. A day was set apart for a solemn procession to beg Heaven for pity upon the people. After holy Mass, during which Fr. Magin preached, the procession set out from the church and wended its way through the Alameda halfway to San Jose, and then turned back. The great Crucifix, surrounded by many burning candles, was borne in the procession. When the praying multitude had reached the last station of the Way of the Cross erected along the Alameda, a black cloud was seen far away in the mountains to the west. It grew larger and wider and approached rapidly. When we were about 300 or 600 feet from the church, the rain began to fall in torrents and it was accompanied by a heavy wind. After having without success counseled Garcia to stop smoking during mass, during one mass suddenly the Father stopped preaching and said: Let us recite an Our Father and a Hail Mary for an individual who is about to be devoured by a monster. The people tremblingly joined in the prayer, for they knew from experience what such announcements meant. While the people were saying those prayers, Garcia rushed through the door into the church, exclaiming that a big snake wanted to swallow him. It was not merely a snake, Fr. Magin declared, but the devil himself. Originally published 1909

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