

COMMUNICATION

To The Editors

Dear sirs:

As one who has devoted almost two decades to research on California religious history, both Catholic and Protestant, and, as one who has great respect for the learning of Father McGloin, and has read with profit *Eloquent Indian* (Stanford University Press), I am, therefore, quite distressed at some of his generalizations in his otherwise commendable "Survey" (*Church History*, September 1960).

Father McGloin says "The Franciscan Friars have successfully preserved and presented in scholarly manner the intriguing story of the twenty-one missions which were founded in present day California 1769-1823." He then cites as the major illustration of this scholarship the monumental work of Father Zephyrn Engelhardt, O.F.M. (1851-1934) being a history of each of these missions, together with a four-volume work *The Missions and Missionaries of California*. While admiring the enormous industry of Father Engelhardt, I waded through almost this total output and was dismayed by his lack of objectivity, his habitual unwillingness to let the early clergy be human beings by scrupulously refraining from any admission of even error in judgment on their part. He castigated uncritically all Spanish and Mexican political and military officials, while largely ignoring the basic cultural and economic factors in

the region without which the religious history can never be understood. Father McGloin's own excellent research is the best judgment I know upon the shocking inadequacies of Engelhardt's work. The late Robert Glass Cleland, probably California's most respected historian (and a man of very generous spirit) said of the Franciscan writer: "Engelhardt was always the apologist, seldom the historian." (*From Wilderness to Empire*, annotated bibliography).

But what is even more serious in McGloin's evaluation is his assumption that the all-important Mission Period has been "presented in a scholarly manner." I am as indebted as is he to the excellent work by Father Geiger and Monsignor James Culleton. But what is distressing to all church historians is that 137 years after the *last* of the justly-celebrated Missions was founded, *not a single definitive history of any one of the 21 Missions exists!*

Let me hasten to add that Protestant and Jewish scholarship in California church history is probably even less advanced than is Catholic research. Outside the valuable work of Professor Clifford M. Drury and President-emeritus Sanford Fleming, there is scarcely anything in print that is definitive in Protestant history.

Yours truly,

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