

Robert Schoofs, *Pioneers of the Faith: History of the Catholic Mission in Hawaii (1827-1940)*. Honolulu: Louis Boeynaems, 1978. Paper. Pp. 359, bibliography, index, appendix. \$8.00.

A comprehensive history of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Hawai'i, chronicling the formidable achievement of the French, Belgian, and to a lesser degree the Irish clergy, and a documentary account of the native Hawaiian contribution to the rise and growth of Catholicism in the Hawaiian Islands have been compressed into Louis Boeynaem's edition of Robert Schoofs's manuscript, *Pioneers of the Faith*. More encyclopedic than narrative, more faith-promoting than scholarly, *Pioneers of the Faith* eclipses Reginald Yzendoorn's *History of the Catholic Mission in Hawaii*, published in 1927.

Pioneers of the Faith focuses first on the early attempts of French and Belgian priests to establish a Catholic base in Honolulu. From this point, the remaining five books and forty-three chapters are divided into detailed reports of missionary activity, chapel construction, and administration and maintenance of schools and missions, with each book exploring each island, the chapters within each book concentrating on separate island districts. On the one hand, this format lends itself to a convenient island by island depiction of the growth of Catholicism. On the other hand, the entire panorama of the development of the faith decade by decade had to be sacrificed for the six separate island tableaux.

Each tableau has its strengths and weaknesses, but no one will dispute the fact that the tales about the early rise of Catholicism, particularly in Honolulu, are far more appealing than sketches of routine clergy life after footholds have been secured on each island. In other words, the history of Fathers Bachelot, Walsh, and Short and their contributions to the spread of the faith in spite of legal, cultural and social obstacles of the 1840s are much more engrossing than lists of building supplies for chapels and statistics concerning school attendance and baptisms. Other valuable sections of the book include a balanced and comprehensive treatment of Catholic advances on Maui and the short, but poignant description of Father Walsh's work on Lana'i and Ni'ihau. Men of similar zeal appear in the portraits of Bogaert, Heurtel, Ropert, Maiget, De Veuster, Alencastre, and Rouchouze.

Perhaps the most salient success of *Pioneers of the Faith* is the fulfillment of Boeynaems's promise that his book will acknowledge "every church or chapel where the Sacred Hearts priests and brothers worked, until the Mission was taken over by the Diocese." For that achievement alone, *Pioneers of the Faith* must stand as the definitive reference-narrative of the Hawaiian Catholic experience.

It must be said, however, that in a sense, the reference-narrative genre of Boeynaems's book, along with its vascillation between impartial history and a faith-promoting chronicle leads to its major stylistic flaw. By reference-narrative, I mean that frequently the book interrupts itself in mid-narrative to provide short biographies of devoted priests who served in their respective areas. After each profusion of biographical information, the narrative resumes with the reader left to search alone for the narrative thread. If found, the narrative thread soon disappears behind long accounts of a bishop's chapel design or the rigors of establishing a mission school. One has only to read a few pages to be delighted with anecdotes of missionary life, then encounter frustration in the form of elaborate sections of unsifted data one normally finds in an appendix. An example of this deficiency is found between pages 176 and 186, culminating in Boeynaems's admission at one point: "we are running ahead of our story." To return to his story, the author jumps back nearly five decades. Often the reader experiences false starts and dead ends.

Another strain on the reader is Boeynaems's indecision about the stance a professional historian should assume, evidenced by his flattering treatments of many of the major and minor promoters of Catholicism. Providing a few distinguishing characteristics for each priest or bishop, Boeynaems portrays nearly every historical figure in the same frame. According to the author, every priest who labored in Hawai'i had unlimited generosity to Hawaiians, was loved by all the faithful, devoted to simple

living, was reliable, progressive, valiant, durable and guileless. Even if there was no backbiting, jealousy, greed, or sloth that lurk in every organization, Boeynaems's portrayals, intended to make each subject appear divine, leave the skeptical reader unconvinced and the trusting reader skeptical.

In spite of these and other unfortunate blunders ranging in seriousness from numerous typos and hasty features of Hawaiian laymen, Boeynaems's edition of Robert Schoofs's *Pioneers of the Faith* should stand as a landmark in Catholic Hawaiian letters, more for its substance than its uneven tone, balance and style.

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