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Asian experience, like ancient philosophical values and “ancestor worship,” are sensitively handled so as to allow Asian Christians to translate these venerable traditions into culturally relevant christologies. Although I am not prepared to suggest Phan’s *Christianity with an Asian Face* as a “must read” on Asian Christianity, it remains an exciting and insightful work in the genre.

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The Moral Vision of Cesar Chávez

Frederick John Dalton

Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003

200 pages, \$23.07 Softcover

In the years when protest filled the American landscape, and martyrs like the Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King, Jr., filled the front pages, the saintly figure of Cesar Chávez and his United Farm Workers Movement (UFW) received comparatively little attention. In spite of this lack of national mass media coverage, often reserved for the Vietnam War and its fallout, the Chicano labour movement, inspired and led by the diminutive hero of Delano, California, made history and produced one of the few genuine American saints. Dalton’s fine work describes and analyses these realities in a way that is both thoughtful and inspirational.

After acknowledging the personal impact Cesar Chávez had on his life, the author sets for himself the task of defining La Causa’s leader from the standpoint of his “moral vision.” Such a goal faces the serious pitfall of being obsessed with concepts to the detriment of context, the particular sin of white, western and comfortable ethicists. Dalton does not fall into this trap. To be sure, his careful prose avoids the rhetoric of an impassioned partisan, but he takes great pains to present a “flesh and blood” union and its charismatic leader. We encounter the privation and hardship of the Chicano field hands and their families through Chávez’ own background. We see the familial

and cultural influences that shaped his values: his mother's and grandmother's direct principles of honesty and grass-roots piety, the liberating role of the Virgin of Guadalupe and his special affection for Francis of Assisi. Dalton tells us of Chávez' conversion to a radical lifestyle of simplicity and non-violent direct action in the farm workers' movement (1962), and the subsequent forty-year journey of that blend of Mexican-American Catholicism and union militancy which characterized the UFW. Peppered throughout this journey we find extensive quotes from Cesar Chávez himself. However, as promised, we read extensive material about the values that shaped and guided La Causa and its leader — justice, human integrity and, above all, non-violent direct action as guide for standard and less traditional forms of union protest. Interspersed with pickets, strikes and boycotts, we find the use of Chicano Catholic piety, such as prayers, fasts, vigils, liturgies and pilgrimages, in the midst of struggles. In spite of some secular resistance within the UFW movement Cesar insisted on the connection between his Catholic piety and the struggle.

Although Dalton spends little time on the flaws and frailties of his saint and the movement, nonetheless he notes these clearly so that his readers do not leave his study with false notions of a plastic saint. Certainly the author emphasizes the Catholic Christian character of the moral vision of Cesar Chávez, as well he should, but he underscores also the wider impact of Chávez and his UFW. Both represent the first successful effort in American history to organize and mobilize farm workers successfully, and both represent important early efforts to develop a powerful Mexican-American consciousness whose full impact is not yet apparent. For those wishing inspiration in the cause of justice or simply a sensitive powerful account of Cesar Chávez and La Causa, Dalton's excellent *The Moral Vision of Cesar Chávez* is a must.

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