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*The Economics of Sainthood: Religious Change Among the  
Rimrock Navajos* Kendall A. Blanchard

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## Book Reviews

**BLANCHARD, KENDALL A.** *The Economics of Sainthood: Religious Change among the Rimrock Navajos.* Cranbury, N. J.: Fairleigh Dickinson, 1976. 240 pp. \$16.50. Also, Associated University Presses, Inc., 1977. 240 pp. \$6.50.

Reviewed by Lawrence Coates, professor of history at Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho.

Kendall A. Blanchard deserves praise for attempting, as too few have done, a serious study of the effects of Christian ideals on the traditional Indian economy.

Rejecting Max Weber's classic thesis that Protestantism provided the ethical underpinning for capitalism, Blanchard adapted S. N. Eisenstadt's ideas in "The Protestant-Ethic Thesis in an Analytical and Comparative Framework" from *The Protestant-Ethic and Modernization* in creating his own two-dimensional model relating theology, ethics, and economics. One dimension compares the economic behavior of Navajos who still practice their traditional religion with the economic behavior of Mormon and Nazarene Navajo converts. The other dimension compares the degree of church activity of these Navajo Christians with the degree of their active acceptance of their religions' ethics.

Using this model, Blanchard concludes that Nazarene and Mormon Navajos make more money, have better jobs, have more education and technical training, and consequently are more successful, from the white viewpoint, than those Navajos who follow their traditional religious ways. His research reveals, however, that the Navajo converts fail to internalize Nazarene and Mormon values, so Weber's Protestant-ethic thesis cannot explain why they succeed economically. It is not the religious ideology, but the institutional activities of the two churches that causes the economic change, says Blanchard, as the converts accept not theological values, but practical benefits like better education, employment, and standard of living.

Despite the ideas put forward by his study, Blanchard's book has some weaknesses. First, though he describes the ethnological characteristics of traditional Navajo economy, he fails to show the

flow of production and distribution of its goods and services, so the reader never gets a clear picture of how the traditional economy works in practice and, without that clear picture, cannot visualize the comparison between the traditional economy and the market economy functioning in Rimrock. Blanchard promises but never provides a micro economic model showing the flow of goods and services for both economies in Rimrock.

A second flaw is the author's apparent lack of understanding of the economic and religious ideas and practices of Latter-day Saints during the nineteenth century. His discussion of them suggests he is unaware of such economic movements as the United Order, cooperatives, and communitarian experiments among Mormons in the Southwest—all of which he could have found covered in studies such as Leonard J. Arrington's standard, *The Great Basin Kingdom*, or in Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May's *Building the Kingdom of God: Community and Cooperation among the Mormons*. Blanchard also limited his study of the Mormons and the Indians to one source, David Kay Flake's Master's thesis, "A History of Mormon Missionary Work with the Hopi, Navajo, and Zuni Indians." Several other studies have been done on this topic and many primary sources which he failed to consult are open to scholarly research in the LDS Church Historical Department.

Third, *Economics of Sainthood* could make a greater contribution if it were written in a more appealing style. Some chapters are laced with jargon that has meaning only to anthropologists. For instance, wade through this, from the introduction (p. 36): "Eisenstadt's transformative-capacities concept can be more productive if it is understood in terms of two subcomponents that I have labeled *theological-ethical capacities* and *institutional capacities*. Inherent in the first subdivision are the theoretical aspects of the traditional Protestant-ethic problem"—not pleasure reading.

Finally, until corroborative studies are done, we must wonder about the study's accuracy, since Blanchard's sample was only thirty-four families (233 people): seventeen families were traditional Navajos, only four were Mormon, and thirteen were Nazarene. Even minor inaccuracies among such a small sample could drastically alter the conclusions.

Even with these weaknesses, *Economics of Sainthood* is a valuable focus on the interaction between religion and economic change; we hope it will encourage other studies. Moreover, it will be interesting to see if time and other research substantiate or contradict Blanchard's prediction, an outgrowth of assumptions inherited from

Weber, regarding the future of the Mormons and the Nazarenes: “The Nazarene and Mormon programs will become increasingly less significant. Once they have lost their economic function, and this appears imminent, missionary efforts in the area will die, appealing to only a handful of those remaining ‘misfits’ and ‘malcontents’ ” (pp. 226–27).