

ideology. By this, Lofton does not suggest that scholars of religion slip into a tacit “acceptance of the logic and valuations of markets” (285); rather, it is a call to historicize the present moment and think about what is obscured by present categories.

Some might complain, with cause, that the volume would more accurately be titled “*Protestant Religion and the Marketplace*” (or even *White Protestant*, excepting the regular appearance of Oprah Winfrey and the cameo by Toni Morrison). Fortunately, the insights it offers will be applicable to a wide array of religious subjects. As such, it is an important addition to the study of religion and markets.

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Diane Frost. *From the Pit to the Market: Politics and the Diamond Economy in Sierra Leone*. Suffolk, UK: James Currey, 2012. xxi + 226 pp. ISBN 978-1-84701-060-5, \$34.95 (cloth).

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Diane Frost’s *From the Pit to the Market* is a wide-ranging account of Sierra Leone’s diamonds, past and present. The narrative takes readers from the country’s mining centers to the global market for stones, regularly contextualizing the nation and its mineral resources in much broader, regional, and international processes. As such, Frost deftly navigates a remarkable amount of source material—including colonial archives and contemporary development reports from an array of international agencies—from which she crafts an accessible, if dense, text that offers utility to a number of different groups of readers.

At the onset, Frost indicates that the book will examine the “social, economic and political role that diamonds have played in Sierra Leone’s development” (1) since their discovery during the British colonial period in the 1930s. To this end, she centers on diamonds as she takes the reader through the history of the colony-cum-independent nation. Readers will likely be at least somewhat familiar with the diamond-fueled violence that prompted the Hollywood film *Blood Diamonds*, as well as a variety of other popular culture contributions. In *From the Pit*, Frost expertly traces back through time to the origins of the conflict, residing in “more complex and deep-rooted historical, socio-economic and political factors” (1). In fact, this is one the book’s core arguments.

Frost's other framing argument resides beyond the conclusion of the country's brutal civil war, as she contends: "Sierra Leone has become the victim of resource predation as far as diamonds are concerned as the search for valuable minerals or scarce resources continues unabated" (1). She subsequently paints a compelling picture of local elites and multinational mining companies colluding to enrich themselves while indifferently impoverishing the nation's populace and draining its finite mineral resources.

The book is organized into two parts, with the first focusing on different facets of Sierra Leone's diamond industry, past and present. The second places the nation's contemporary diamond industry in a global context to consider, for example, how these stones reach the market (both through legal and illicit means); the efficacy, or lack thereof, of the Kimberley Process (instituted to stem the flow of "blood" or "conflict" diamonds); and the ways in which international exploitative practices and policies adversely affect so many (even those individuals at the very bottom of the "diamond chain.") Each part features a series of chapters that are well organized both topically and in terms of their respective lengths.

Frost is at her best when mining the secondary-source literature in order to examine, for example, debates regarding the origins and impetuses for Sierra Leone's protracted, horrific civil conflict in the 1990s and 2000s. She is seemingly equally as comfortable distilling United Nations and governmental reports into manageable bites so that the reader can better understand the ongoing, if oversimplified, debates regarding whether mineral resources constitute a "blessing or a curse" (13). Given her willingness to engage with these various source materials, it is difficult to associate the book with a particular discipline, which I would argue is actually one of the text's many strengths. Frost is a sociologist but one could imagine a political scientist or even a policy wonk eagerly consuming this work as well.

Frost's efforts to capture the voices of individuals involved in the contemporary mining and selling of diamonds in Sierra Leone should be applauded. The oral testimony she gathered illuminates aspects of this story that reports issued by international governing bodies routinely elide. However, Frost seems uncomfortable, and even defensive, deploying this oral evidence. At one point, she avers that this type of evidence is "not 'typical' in the objective, scientific sense" (121), implying that its analytical value is somehow inferior to the explanatory value of written forms of evidence. At another point, she places the word *evidence* in quotation marks when referring to the oral testimony she has gathered, which casts doubt on its validity even as she defends its inclusion. Somewhat unbelievably, two of the four appendices offer rationale, insights into, and further defense

of this methodology. Perhaps hindered by the disciplinary bounds that dictate the evidentiary parameters of sociological research, her awkward engagement with the valuable oral testimony that she has—with considerable difficulty—gathered undermines the very efficacy that this evidence should have.

This concern aside, Frost's work is a welcome addition to the existing literature on Sierra Leone's recent history. Scholars from across an array of disciplines can confidently rely on different aspects of this work as they pursue more focused micro-studies on their topics of choice. Frost has crafted a book that has broad utility, which is a testament to her comfort in navigating such a range of source materials. The reader's understanding of Sierra Leone's peoples, resources, and position in global economic and political contexts is significantly deepened because of Frost's prodigious efforts.

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Vicki Howard. *From Main Street to Mall: The Rise and Fall of the American Department Store*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015. 1 + 295 pp. ISBN 978-0-8122-4728-2, \$34.95 (cloth); ISBN 978-0-8122-9148-3, \$34.95 (e-book).

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A recipient of the 2016 Hagley Prize for best book in business history, *From Main Street to Mall: The Rise and Fall of the American Department Store* is Vicki Howard's much-needed survey of department store history. While the field has enjoyed several important studies from the perspectives of labor history, cultural history, and architectural history, among others, Howard's work provides an essential overview through the lens of business history. The book is organized chronologically, tracing department stores' evolution from dry goods merchants, to grand "palaces of consumption" by the late nineteenth century, and to their decline in the last decades of the twentieth century when discounters such as Kmart, Target, and Wal-Mart came to dominate the retail sector. However, Howard argues that this "fall" was not the inevitable result of "progress" but rather was facilitated by decisions—or lack thereof—from a variety of historical actors, including retail executives, government officials, and consumers themselves. In following their