Patrick Wilkinson. *Church Clothes: Land, Mission and the End of Apartheid in South Africa.* Washington, D.C.: Maisonneuve Press, 2004. 298 pp. $46.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-944624-39-5.

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Published on H-SAfrica (January, 2006)

With its clothes image drawn from Thomas Carlyle, Patrick Wilkinson's title signals his intentions in considering land reform in post-apartheid South Africa.[1] Wilkinson implies that underneath the new legislative garments the old apartheid continues, in churches as in the state. He approaches land reform as "a contemporary policy problem in terms of cultural theory" (p. 40). Accordingly, "culture" is understood in Morse Peckham's terms as "instructions for performance" (pp. 2, 40, 146-150, 192).[2] Apartheid is mostly about "cultural power" (p. 201). "The Church" (in the form of missions) functioned as "knowledge production centers of apartheid" (p. 26). Land dispossession proceeded in terms of a cultural system that not only assigned to each person a race and to each race a place, but also turned such assignations into imperatives. Continued landlessness confirms that apartheid's core cultural imperatives endure relatively unaltered in another guise (p. 213). A thorough transformation of apartheid's cultural structures (p. 206) demands an alternative cultural production (p. 186). As "the only mass-based ideological institutions outside the State," this role falls to the churches (p. 210). Yet, given the role of the Churches in establishing apartheid, a complete transformation of "the Church" itself is prerequisite (p. 11).

The author's major contribution to the land debate is to place mission at the center of the colonial project of dispossession (p. 77). Mission stations provided the prescriptive and exemplary groundwork for apartheid as a division of land between white owners and black laborers (pp. 35, 169). As knowledge production centers, missions inscribed a sense of the superiority of "European civilization" on black converts (pp. 144, 161, 163, 187, 191). "Missionary practice" provided "the foundation for indirect rule" and supported influx control (pp. 165-166). "Missionary trust lands were the model for the homelands not its [*sic*] opposite" (p. 166, but compare p. 173). Apartheid extended these prescriptions to allow a white minority to deprive a majority of indigenes of "their land," mostly through coercive dispossession (pp. 20, 64, 78, 169-170).

Their historical support for dispossession obliges the churches to be particularly "responsible for land reform" in post-apartheid South

Africa (pp. 23, 209, 228), instead of defaulting to a misplaced sense of neutrality. Large sections of "the Church" participated and profited "from the dispossession of the black majority" (pp. 65, 87). Approximately 475 mission stations were established across South Africa between 1737 and 1904.[3] Mission stations often received up to 8,000 acres for tenants (n. 340), with missions controlling 175,000 acres in Natal, for instance (p. 169).

Certain church authorities were not above expelling "blacks from their homes with police assistance" (p. 65-66). The Hermannsberg Mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of South Africa actively prevented black land ownership. At its Perseverance station in KwaZulu Natal, the Mission displaced blacks under the Land Acts without state prodding (pp. 85; n. 348). Similarly, the Berlin Missionary Society sold its mission land to white farmers, who often evicted black mission tenants (p. 85). The Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa whitewashed "their apartheid practices by transferring ownership to holding companies designed to administer church investments" (pp. 65, 191).[4] Other missions referred to include the American Board Mission (p. 169) and Lovedale Mission (pp. 83-89, 168). Wilkinson could also have mentioned the Dutch Reformed Church's collusion with the state to replace the community on the Ebenhaeser mission (Western Cape) with a white community between 1909 and 1926.[5]

Wilkinson tempers critique of mission by pointing to well-known variations in missionary attitudes towards settlers, indigenes, and colonial administrators (pp. 158-160, 167, 188). Yet even where missionaries did oppose colonial policies, "mission always assumed the superiority of Christian European culture" (p. 170). The cultural fault line of assumed Western superiority extends from Cape liberalism across supposed distinctions of class and race to the present. Even until the 1930s, the so-called English-speaking churches operated with a Trusteeship mentality towards blacks (p.

96). The belief that blacks could be equals if they were "civilized" characterized the recent white opposition (for example, the Progressive Federal Party) as much as the post-1990 National Party (pp. 110-111). "Even the anti-apartheid churches were complicit in their will to advance white, European civilization" (p. 171).

Wilkinson covers ground familiar to scholars working on land reform. Like others, he touches on the slowness of implementation, the implicit rural-urban divide, the promotion of small African commercial farmer elites, and the exclusion of the majority of urban landless people from any benefits. His research reflects the intense scrutiny of denominational land that began in the 1990s by ecclesial, academic, state and non-government agencies.

The book's datedness constitutes its core strength and weakness. Despite the 2004 publication date, Wilkinson completed his research in 1991 (pp. 24, 26). His critique is limited to the F. W. De Klerk government's Abolition of Racially Based Land Measures Act (1991), the White Paper on Land Reform (1991), and its five associated bills (pp. 24, 113-143). The penultimate chapter ends with the 1994 election of Nelson Mandela. The only concession to the subsequent decade is a passing reference to a 2001 book (n. 899). On the other hand, the dated nature of Wilkinson's contentions enables readers to measure the extent of progress towards equitable land redistribution.

Wilkinson's argument that "the contours of the land debate have not altered substantially" since 1991 rings both false and true. A number of policies, structures and legislation have since evolved.[6] Section 25 of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution (1996) mandates land reform while protecting private property. The 1997 White Paper on South African Land Policy outlines the three legs of the current land reform program: restitution in terms of the Restitution of Land Rights Act, 1994; redistribution; and labor tenant security in line with the Land Reform (1996) and the Exten-

sion of Security of Tenure Acts (1997). The direction of land reform was strongly influenced by the National Land Committee (a land rights network) and the World Bank prior to 1993.[7] Restitution of land lost through expropriation after 1913 has been most successful. Yet the almost 900,000 people who benefited represent 25.7 percent of an estimated 3.5 million people displaced by racially based land measures.[8] Redistribution and improving tenure rights of farm laborers lag far behind restitution, with 3.1 million hectares of land redistributed since 1994.[9] Any gains were more than offset by the estimated 942,303 people who were evicted from farms since 1994.[10]

Church land ownership received far more attention since 1991 than Wilkinson could have anticipated. By 1999 the Department of Land Affairs considered proposals "for dealing with the church as a substantial landowner," and identified 7,500 names under which church land was registered. [11] The South African Council of Churches convened two conferences on land (1997, 2001)--one with the National Land Committee--and issued position papers on the state's land reform initiatives (2003, 2004). The Church Land Programme was launched in 2000 as an independent non-governmental body to help denominations resolve land-related issues, and to liaise between landless peoples and the churches.

Various denominations also embarked on land reform projects, often in conjunction with non-governmental organizations. The Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA) convened a land summit (2002) that was facilitated by the Church Land Programme. Another followed for non-South African dioceses (2004).[12] The Church of the Province investigated the extent of its own land ownership, and designated Bishop Rubin Phillip of the Diocese of Natal as "Liaison Bishop for Land in the CPSA." The Methodist Church of Southern Africa in 2004 commissioned the Community Organisation Resource Centre to audit their land in KwaZulu Natal and in the East-

ern Cape with an eye to redress.[13] The Catholic Church was to follow suit in 2005. These investigations overtake Wilkinson's conclusion that apart from a limited survey by the Roman Catholic Church, "no similar surveys" were completed "in other provinces or by other churches" (p. 64). Nor can Willkinson's conclusion be sustained that churches from 1984 on dealt with land only "parenthetically," except for responses to forced removals (pp. 81-82).

Denominations with the largest percentage of church land also initiated audits and designed related programs, including the Moravian Church, which held property in the Deeds Office under eleven names.[14] The Moravians signed the Genadendal Accord with the Minister of Land Affairs to improve tenure rights of people on its land.[15] The Evangelical Lutheran Church intended to redistribute farmland on "most" of their seventeen mission farms, including a "large portion" of the original Hermannsburg Mission, founded in 1854 at Kranskop in KwaZulu Natal. [16] The (mostly white) Dutch Reformed Church's 2002 synod claimed that "the church does not have enough ground available" to significantly contribute "to land reform." The synod did ask Dutch Reformed bodies to record their land ownership and to consider making land available for redistribution.[17]

Wilkinson may be pleasantly surprised to find that the land debate seems not only to be shifting, but doing so in a direction that he had anticipated. He insisted that market mechanisms alone would not achieve an equitable land redistribution (p. 107). In addition, some existing land regimes in South Africa are incompatible with "absolute property rights in Roman-Dutch law" (p. 102) as envisioned in the Constitution. In similar arguments recently, the "willing buyer, willing seller" principle was identified by state and non-government agents as a particular stumbling block. Participants in a National Land Summit held in July 2005 recommended jettisoning the

principle, and called for expropriation where other measures fail.[18] The state has since issued its first expropriation order, in September 2005, but not without compensation.[19] Remarkably, Wilkinson's prescriptions for land reform (compensation, labor tenure, communal ownership, p. 102) tally with the major policies adopted by the state since 1996. He anticipated some of the delivery mechanisms (for example, a Land Claims Court), as well as the slow pace of redistribution and cost constraints (pp. 103-104).

Wilkinson's argument that the racial distribution of land outside urban areas in post-apartheid South Africa will largely remain unchanged also remains valid. Of the 87 percent of South Africa's agricultural land that whites held in 1994, only 3 percent had been redistributed by 2005. The government's aim was to redistribute 30 percent by 2014.[20] The urgency of South Africa's land reform emerges more clearly when one considers that in Zimbabwe only 30 percent of agricultural land was white-owned by 1986.[21] Wilkinson contends that skewed land distribution in Britain (as in the United States) is an equal but submerged reality, with 3.6 percent of the population owning 81 percent of the land (n. 162, cf. pp. 56-57).

One of the conceptual weaknesses of the book is Wilkinson's undifferentiated use of "the Church," which obscures the concrete reality that he wants to reveal (p. 150). This usage indicates his inability to specify the extent to which individual denominations are actually implicated in land dispossession. "The Church" is a theological term that lacks empirical roots and submerges the variation of religious organization in South Africa in terms of racial, political, social, and class differences. Some African Independent Churches (for example, the Ibandla amaNazaretha in KwaZulu Natal, and the Zion Christian Church in Limpopo), as well as the African Methodist Episcopal Church, are black land-owning churches. Wilkinson's umbrella term leads him to the questionable

conclusion that, like their denominations (all of them!), black clergy carry "the legal 'whiteness' of land ownership" (p. 209). Admittedly, Wilkinson's generalized term does not invalidate his contention that denominational officials and policies generally support the priority of Western cultural forms.

Wilkinson's sweeping condemnation of mission complicity in land dispossession does not allow for sufficient attention to any exceptions. He does mention the South African Council of Churches' unsuccessful attempt in 1987 to purchase Holgat farm (North West Province) for three Tswana communities. The transaction was blocked by a Lutheran minister and white farmers who complained to the apartheid government (p. 95). Other exceptions include the 1851 purchase by Reverend J. Allison and ninety converts of a 6,123-acre farm where they obtained freehold in what today is Edendale, near Pietermaritzburg. In the 1870s, Bishop Colenso helped the Mqhawe buy 9,000 acres for tribal land in KwaZulu Natal.[22] The Swiss Mission gave the village of Valdezia Mambedi in Limpopo Province--which they had established as a haven for indigenous refugees--to the (black) Evangelical Presbyterian Church in 1875.

Disappointingly, the book lacks an index. Copious footnotes occasionally occupy more space than the text. The frequent use of German without translation in footnotes and quotations may not be useful for most audiences outside Europe. Occasionally the text is marred by unclear sentence construction, such as "a contingent relationship to human endeavour spiritual specialization" (p. 93). Peter Walshe is frequently misspelled as "Walsche." References are made to [Willie] "Jonkers" instead of Jonker, and to "Piet (Skiet) Randolph" instead of Rudolph. Much of the description on p. 95 of the South African Council of Churches' attempt to purchase Holgat is used verbatim without quotation marks from the cited Black Sash publication.[23]

The theoretical aspects of Wilkinson's arguments would have been strengthened had he considered possible linkages between South Africa's land malaise and the cultural elements of the world system under conditions of globalization. By using insights from Roland Robertson, John W. Meyer and others who insist that culture functions independently within the world system, Wilkinson could have broadened the depth of his analysis without surrendering his cultural perspective.[24]

Notes

[1]. Wilkinson does not indicate which extant version of Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus [The Tailor Re-Tailored]: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdrckh in Three Books* (ca. 1833) he quotes from (p. 8).

[2]. Morse Peckham, *Explanation and Power: The Control of Human Behavior* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979).

[3]. Gunther Pakendorf, "'For There is No Power But of God': The Berlin Mission and the Challenges of Colonial South Africa," *Missionalia* 25 (1997): pp. 255-273, available at www.geocities.com/missionalia/germiss1.htm .

[4]. Erich Hertel (compiler), *Many Faces, One Mission: ELM Co-Workers in Southern Africa* (Evangelical Lutheran Mission, 2004), p. 5, available at www.elm-mission.net/english/data/suedafrika/many_faces.pdf .

[5]. Legal Resources Centre, *Joint Press Release: Commission on Restitution of Land Rights and the Ebenhaeser Land Claims Committee* (2005), available at www.lrc.org.za/Features/Archive*detail.asp?art*ID=145 .

[6]. For a summary of relevant legislation, see Robin Attfield, Johan Hattingh and Manamela Matshabaphala, "Sustainable Development, Sustainable Livelihoods and Land Reform in South Africa: A Conceptual and Ethical Inquiry," *Third World Quarterly* 25 (2004): pp. 405421.

[7]. Gavin Williams, "Setting the Agenda: A Critique of the World Bank's Rural Restructuring Programme for South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22 (1996): pp.139-167.

[8]. Department of Land Affairs, *Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa (revised version): An Overview in Preparation for the Land Summit, 27 - 31 July 2005*, available at http://land.pwv.gov.za/publications/Land_Summit/Position%20paper%202.DOC . See also Attfield et al., "Sustainable Development," p. 412.

[9]. Department of Land Affairs, *Land and Agrarian Reform*, p. 9.

[10]. Nkuzi Development Association and Social Surveys Africa, *National Evictions Survey. Briefing to Parliamentary Portfolio Committee for Agriculture and Land Affairs* (2005), available at www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0001559/Parliament_Aug2005.pdf .

[11]. Land Reform Policy Committee, *Proposals for the Development of a Flexible Engagement Strategy on Dealing with the Church as a Substantial Landowner* (Directorate: Tenure Reform, Department of Land Affairs, 1999), available at http://64.233.167.104/search?q=cache:urpaVfgMIE8J:land.pwv.gov.za/tenurereform/cpamodel1

[12]. Frank Kantor, *CPSA and Land: Consultative Conference* (2004), available at www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0000995/P1111-CPSA*Land*Consultation_June2004.pdf .

[13]. Greg Van Rensburg, *The Methodist Church's Response to the Land Issue* (n.d.), available at http://66.102.7.104/search?q=cache:QJ4ZWpEW-pAJ:www.methodist.co.za/news_list2.asp%3Fid%

[14]. Crystal Jannecke and Ricado Jacobs, *Progress Report on Research Commissioned by the Moravian Church, The Historical Acquisition of Rural Church Land and an Inventory of Moravian Rural Church Land* (Cape Town: Surplus People's Project, 1999); and Surplus People's Project,

An Inventory and Description of the Historical Acquisition of Moravian Church Land (Cape Town: Surplus People's Project, 2000).

[15]. Thoko Didiza, *Speech by Agriculture and Land Affairs Minister Thoko Didiza at the Launch of the Church Land Program in Pietermaritzburg, 10 July* (2000), available at www.info.gov.za/ speeches/2000/000725410p1001.htm .

[16]. Hertel, *Many Faces*, p. 5.

[17]. Reformed Ecumenical Council, "Land Reform in South Africa: A Report to the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church," *REC Focus* 2 (2002), available at http://community.gospelcom.net/Brix?pageID=3726 .

[18]. Alliance of Land and Agrarian Reform Movements, *Big Changes in Store for Land Reform? Statement issued by the Alliance of Land and Agrarian Reform Movements* (2005), available at www.uwc.ac.za/plaas/publications/ alarm%20statement.htm .

[19]. Fana Peete, "Farmer Faces Expropriation in North West," *Independent Online* (2005), available at www.int.iol.co.za/index.php? set*id=1&click*id=13&art_id=vn20050923070614978C107135 .

[20]. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, *Land Reform in South Africa. National Assembly. For Oral Reply. Date: 24 August 2005. Question Number 13*, available at www.dfa.gov.za/docs/2005pq/pqd-p13.htm .

[21]. Sam Moyo, "The Land and Agrarian Question in Zimbabwe," (paper presented at the conference, "The Agrarian Constraint and Poverty Reduction: Macroeconomic Lessons for Africa," Addis Ababa, 17-18 December 2004), available at www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0001097/P1211-Moyo_Dec2004.pdf .

[22]. John Lambert, "African Reasons for Purchasing Land in Natal in the Late 19th, Early 20th Centuries," *Kleio* 31 (1999): pp. 33-54.

[23]. Black Sash, "Holgat -- Hopes Raised and Dashed," *Sash* 33 (1990): pp. 16-17, available at http://disa.nu.ac.za/articledisplaypage.asp?file-name=BSMay90&articletitle=Holgat%3A+hopes+raised+and+d .

[24]. Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992); John W. Meyer, John Boli, George M. Thomas, and Francisco O. Ramirez, "World Society and the Nation-State," *American Journal of Sociology* 103 (1997): pp. 44-181.

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Citation: Dawid Venter. Review of Wilkinson, Patrick. *Church Clothes: Land, Mission and the End of Apartheid in South Africa.* H-SAfrica, H-Net Reviews. January, 2006.

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