



A presuppositional analysis of key concepts of the worldview of the South African Communist Party

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ABSTRACT

Key terms: SACP, Worldview, Apologetics, Presuppositional, Communism, Socialism

Formed in 1921, the SACP has had an influence on South African politics totally disproportionate to their size. This was attained through its close alliance with the ANC in line with the commands given by Vladimir Lenin at the Third Communist International that communist parties must align with nationalist parties to achieve a two-stage revolution. The SACP used its influence on the ANC to guide it in a communist direction, and through its influence led South Africa in the same direction. For this reason, it is crucial to understand their worldview since this is the guiding force behind the National Democratic Revolution. James Anderson developed a tool for worldview analysis named TAKES (Theology, Anthropology, Knowledge, Ethics, Salvation). Understanding the SACP's views on each of these, as well as the ideological groundwork laid by Marx and Lenin for each, will allow for a better understanding of the party, the ANC, and communism in general. This will lay the groundwork for a holistic Christian response to it.

Cornelius van Til developed the Presuppositional Apologetic approach of engaging with non-biblical worldviews, that can be simplified in a two-step process. First, the apologist must assess the competing worldview honestly by using its own logic and principles. This will show that any worldview not based on Scripture will always be self-contradicting and logically incoherent. Second, the apologist must present the Biblical response to the different aspects of the worldview to show that one may find hope and a coherent understanding of the world. This process will be applied to the worldview of the SACP. To do this, its worldview will be divided into five aspects based on James Anderson's TAKES method – namely, Theology, Anthropology, Knowledge (epistemology), Ethics, and Salvation. Following this method, various logical and ethical problems of the SACP's worldview will be clear, as well as the Christian response to them.

OPSOMMING

Sleutel terme: SAKP, Wêreldbeskouing, Apologetiek, Voorveronderstellings, Kommunisme, Sosialisme

Sedert hul stigting in 1921 het die SAKP 'n disproporsionele invloed op Suid-Afrikaanse politiek gehad vir 'n party van hulle grootte. Dít is as gevolg van hulle nabye bondgenootskap met die ANC. Hulle het hierdie bondgenootskap nagejaag op grond van 'n bevel deur Vladimir Lenin tydens die Derde Kommunistiese Internasionaal, wat beveel het dat kommunistiese partye hulle met nasionalistiese partye moet saambind om 'n twee-fase revolusie na te jaag. Die SAKP het hulle invloed op die ANC gebruik om die party in 'n kommunistiese rigting te stuur, en deur die ANC dieselfde met Suid-Afrika as geheel te doen. Om hierdie rede is dit belangrik om hulle wêreldbeskouing te verstaan, aangesien dit die dryfkrag agter die Nasionale Demokratiese Revolusie is. James Anderson het 'n metode vir die analise van wêreldbeskouings ontwerp genaamd die TAKES-metode – dit staan in Engels vir *Theology, Anthropology, Knowledge, Ethics, Salvation* (Teologie, Antropologie, Kennis, Etiek en Reddingsleer). Die verstaan van die SAKP se siening in elk van hierdie elemente, asook die ideologiese grondwerk wat vir elk deur Marx en Lenin neergelê is, sal toelaat dat die party, die ANC, en kommunisme oor die algemeen beter verstaan word. Dit sal die grondslag lê vir 'n holistiese Christelike antwoord daarop.

Cornelius van Til het die Voorveronderstellingsapologetiek-metode ontwerp om met onbybelse wêreldbeskouings om te gaan. Dit kan tot 'n twee-stap proses vereenvoudig word. Eerstens moet die apologete die ander se wêreldbeskouing eerlik, volgens die beskouing se eie logika en beginsels, assesser. Dit sal wys dat enige wêreldbeskouing wat nie in die Skrif gebaseer is nie altyd self-weersprekend en onlogies is. Tweedens moet die apologete die Bybelse antwoord op die verskeie aspekte van die wêreldbeskouing uitlig en daardeur wys dat daar alleen in die Skrif hoop en 'n samehangende verstaan van die wêreld kan wees. Hierdie proses gaan op die wêreldbeskouing van die SAKP toegepas word. Om dit te doen sal die party se wêreldbeskouing in die vyf aspekte, gebaseer op James Anderson se TAKES-metode – naamlik Teologie, Antropologie, Kennis, Etiek, en Reddingsleer, opgedeel word. Deur hierdie metode te volg sal verskeie logiese en etiese probleme van die SAKP se wêreldbeskouing uitgelig word, asook die Christelike antwoord daarop.

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CHAPTER 1 RESEARCH PROPOSAL

1.1 Title

A presuppositional analysis of key concepts of the worldview of the South African Communist Party

1.2 Abstract

The South African Communist Party (SACP) has been one of the most important ideological influences in South Africa. This is not because of their size, for they are a small party, but because of their alliance with the African National Congress (ANC), which they used to guide the latter in a communist direction. The SACP holds to an orthodox interpretation of Marxist-Leninism. This study will use the TAKES method of worldview analysis to analyse and critique the party's worldview in five specific areas: Theology, Anthropology, Knowledge (Epistemology), Ethics and Salvation. The critique is based on a reformed presuppositional apologetic. This study will show that the worldview of the SACP is unbiblical, self-contradictory, and dangerous.

1.3 Key concepts

Presuppositional Apologetics: The apologetic method of Cornelius Van Til and his followers. Its core is presupposing the truth of the Christian worldview before engaging with an unbeliever. Grounded in this belief, the apologist aims to show an unbeliever that any competing worldview is not logically consistent, even by its own standards (Bahnsen, 2000:60). In presuppositional apologetics, part of the work of the apologist is to make his opponent aware of his or her own worldview – the presuppositions behind his or her beliefs that the person may not even be aware of – in order to show that it cannot account for reality (Frame, 2012). Another aspect of this type of apologetics is that the whole of the Christian worldview must be presented and defended, not merely individual aspects, for example, the resurrection. Only “Christian-theism as a unit” can make sense of reality (Van Til, 2008:28).

T.A.K.E.S.: A method of worldview analysis designed by James N. Anderson (2018). It is an acronym for Theology (T), Anthropology (A), Knowledge or epistemology (K), Ethics (E) and Salvation (S) – the five elements found in every worldview.

Theology: The word itself is derived from Greek and means “account of, or discourse about gods or God” (Wright, 1988:608). All theories have religious beliefs behind them (Clouser,

2005:2). Even a worldview that denies the existence of a god will have something that it identifies as the ultimate reality, which can in effect, be its "god" (Anderson, 2018). Another aspect that falls under theology is the view of religion. Even though a worldview may deny there is a personal god or gods, it may still have something to say on the matter of organised religion (Anderson, 2018).

Anthropology: The study of the nature of man. This includes how man was created, what the purpose of his existence is, what his worth is, the nature of the soul and body, relationships, genders, and the relationship between man and God (Colwell, 1988:28).

Knowledge/Epistemology: The study of the theory of knowledge, of how we know what we know (Geisler, 1999:215). But more than merely studying knowledge this term also entails the study of "closely related subjects such as truth, logic, reason, experience, intuition, and revelation" (Anderson, 2018).

Ethics: Ethics has to do with human conduct (Field, 1988:232). It is the application of a law, which may differ from person to person and worldview to worldview, in any given situation (Frame, 1987:74). It also includes what this law is based on. Ultimately, it is how a person decides what is right and wrong conduct in different contexts, and the foundation of that decision.

Salvation: In Christian theology, this refers to how people are saved from sin and its consequences (Marshall, 1988:610). In the context of worldview analysis, salvation entails all that a worldview "says or implies about the basic human problem and the solution to that problem" (Anderson, 2018).

Eschatology: Refers to a doctrine of "last things." This will involve a person's view and hope for the future. It includes a view of the afterlife (if any) and whether there is hope for a better future. It will also deal with the nature of history, namely whether it is cyclical or heading to an ultimate consummation (Travis, 1988:230).

Worldview: A well-defined definition on worldview is given by James Sire (2009:20): "A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions [...] that we hold [...] about the basic constitution of reality, and provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being."

Socialism: It is an extremely broad term and can be used for a varying array of political beliefs. But at its core, it can be defined as an ideology that is focused on attaining social equality and common ownership (Heywood, 2007:99, 458; Baradat 2012:162). For communists, socialism is the phase of economic progress between capitalism and pure communism "in which capitalism is still present, but in which the socialised sector is hegemonic" (SACP, 2012b).

Communism: An ideology most closely associated with the thought of Karl Marx. The goal of communism is a classless society with common ownership of wealth. As taught by Leninist theory, communism is implemented by a vanguard party. Once it is in control, the party, through the state, takes control of the economy, education and various other social institutions. It then collectivises all with the ultimate goal of creating a classless society (Heywood, 2007:35).

Ideology: An ideology is not synonymous with a worldview, though there are significant areas of overlap. An ideology is a set “of political beliefs involving programs of political action which draw on large-scale views about human nature and/or historical development” (Browning, 2002:252). It is not as all-encompassing as a worldview. Its focus is primarily political and is aimed at guiding the masses to take specific political action (Baradat, 2012:10). It is part of a worldview, falling primarily under Knowledge/Epistemology. For the SACP, its ideology is the National Democratic Revolution (NDR), which is designed to implement a Marxist-Leninist revolution in South Africa (Venter, 2012:32).

1.4 Orientation and background

1.4.1 The SACP and its worldview

The South African Communist Party (SACP) was founded in 1921 as an amalgamation of various socialist and communist organisations in South Africa (SACP, 1971). Its formation was inspired by the apparent success of the 1917 communist revolution in Russia (SACP, 1989). Initially, it was primarily a white party, but this changed very soon after its founding. The Third Communist International in 1928, still under the ideological influenced of Vladimir Lenin who died a few years before, ordered communist parties in the third world to ally themselves with nationalist parties fighting for independence. As a result, the SACP radically changed its racial makeup. It became predominantly black and went into a close alliance with the African National Congress (ANC). They planned to first pursue national liberation and after that to pursue a communist revolution (SACP, 1998).

The SACP is a small party in numbers, and until recently has not contested an election (Phakgadi, 2019). Yet, for such a small party, it has had a disproportionate effect on the ideology of the ANC. Many of the top leaders of the ANC were and are also SACP members, eg. the first four presidents of post-apartheid South Africa were all at one time also SACP members (Trewheala, 2017). The purpose of this close alliance was for the SACP to follow Lenin's orders and guide the ANC ideologically – making it a communist-leaning party. One of the clearest ways this can be seen today is in the implementation of the NDR. The NDR is a

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thoroughly socialist idea, it had its genesis at the Second Communist International. It is a policy of creating a socialist state through means of state power and class struggle. The SACP sees this as an ongoing revolution which will only be completed once communism, the highest state of human existence, is attained. This is done by increasing state control and the abolition of private property (Nzimande, 2006). The NDR has, in turn, become policy for the ruling ANC as well, meaning that it affects the lives of all South Africans. Understanding the underlying worldview behind the NDR, as found in the SACP, will help to make sense of South African politics.

Another reason for studying the SACP in this way is that since its formation the SACP has been one of the most consistently orthodox Marxist-Leninist parties in the world (Scholtz & Scholtz, 2008:123). The party is ideologically rigorous, making ideological training in Marxist-Leninism a prerequisite for membership (SACP, 2012a). For this reason, an analysis of the party will lead to a better understanding of not just the party, but also the ideology of Marxist-Leninism as a whole.

An initial analysis of the SACP's worldview according to the TAKES method shows the following:

- **Theology:** In contrast with the aggressive atheism espoused by Marx (who famously called religion "the opiate of the masses") and Lenin, the SACP has a far more pragmatic approach to religion. Most of their members claim to be religious and they even start party meetings with prayer (SACP, 2003). They view churches as useful institutions that can further revolutionary goals (SACP, 2007a). However, in their view, when and if the communist revolution is completed, there will be no more need for churches and they will fall away on their own accord (Mdlalose, 1986). Therefore, for all the talk of prayer and church, the SACP remains practically atheistic in its worldview.
- **Anthropology:** The most basic aspect of anthropology for the SACP is the division between classes. All of human history has been a history of one class oppressing another (SACP, 2012b). Each person falls into a class, and his class identity seems to be more important for the party than his individuality, meaning they are collectivists at heart. Oppression between people is not just confined to economic classes, there is also oppression based on race, gender, sexual orientation and religion (SACP, 2007a).
- **Epistemology:** The epistemology of the SACP is based on strict adherence to Marxist-Leninist thought. Every aspect of life must be studied through this lens. "The Party strives to spread the widest possible understanding of the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, particularly in its application to South African conditions" (SACP, 1989). This epistemological framework is the foundation of their entire worldview. Their views of

God, humanity, ethics and salvation are all based on Marxist-Leninist thought and Dialectical Materialism, the belief that all of human history is guided by the struggle between social classes (Baradat, 2012:183).

- Ethics: In speaking and thinking on ethics the party seeks to “always [link] them [ethical matters] to a progressive, transformational agenda in which the values of solidarity are foremost” (SACP, 2012b). What this means is that the measure of whether an action is ethical or not is whether it furthers the transformation of society in the manner that the party seeks. This ethical perspective even goes as far as the family – revolutionary and ideological decisions must be made there already (SACP, 2007a).
- Salvation: For the SACP, salvation is the ending of the class struggle through the victory of the proletariat under the leadership of the party. This will lead to “a fully classless, communist society” (SACP, 2012b). In this society, there will be communal ownership of all the means of production. In their view, this will take away the possibility for one class or person to oppress another, therefore taking away the suffering that comes with it. This will be the ultimate consummation of the historical dialectical process.

1.4.2 Presuppositional Apologetics and the TAKES method

Presuppositional apologetics is the school of apologetics first taught by Cornelius Van Til and then built on by his followers (Geisler, 1999:751). Van Til sought to apply Reformed theology consistently to every aspect of life and thought, including the field of apologetics, and this is the basis of the presuppositional approach. His main concern was that the method used to defend the Christian faith must be consistent with that faith. Because of this, he saw the importance of presupposing the truth of the Christian worldview before engaging in an apologetic encounter. This means that the apologist is never neutral in his argumentation (Edgar & Oliphint, 2011:454; Van Til, 2008:28-29).

One way to see what is entailed in a presuppositional apologetic is to contrast it with two of the competing schools of apologetics namely, Classical Apologetics and Evidential Apologetics.

Classical apologetics is based on the belief that “reason in the form of rational arguments and evidence plays an essential role in our showing Christianity to be true” (Craig, 2000:28). Geisler (2007:154) characterises classical apologetics as containing two steps. Firstly, a rational argument must be made for God apart from special revelation. The second step is to show the historical evidence to prove the basic truths of Christianity.

Evidential apologetics differs only slightly from classical apologetics in that it removes the first step of proving God rationally. Instead, this school of thought believes that the evidence itself can prove both the existence of a deity and that this deity is the God of the Bible (Habermas, 2000:92).

A presuppositionalist would find fault with both these ways of practicing apologetics. One of the main problems is that they do not account for what is called the noetic effects of sin – the fact that man's ability to reason was affected by the fall of man. "Those who deny God do so, not because they lack evidence, but because their hearts are rebellious" (Frame, 2000:211). Romans 1:19-20 makes it clear that all people already know God exists, they just suppress this truth. However, the presuppositionalist does not deny the use of classical arguments and evidence, even though this charge is sometimes levelled against them. He will gladly use them, but he is aware that these in themselves are not enough (Van Til, 2003:7).

William Edgar (2003:7) gives an excellent two-step summary of a presuppositional apologetic. Firstly, the apologist must show that using his opponent's own beliefs and presuppositions, the non-Christian worldview cannot stand. It will fall apart on its own accord and is self-contradictory (Bahnsen, 1995). Christian theism is the only rational and non-contradictory worldview. The second step would be to show his opponent "how meaning and value are established by the biblical worldview" (Van Til, 2003:7).

It is in this first step where the TAKES method is useful. To help a person with an unbiblical worldview to see that his or her worldview cannot stand, the apologist needs a model to breakdown the person's worldview in a way that is easy to understand and at the same time touches on the most important aspects. This study will show that TAKES is an effective method to do this.

Another aspect of the presuppositional approach is the fact that the apologist himself must be "epistemologically self-conscious". This means that he is aware of all his presuppositions and he knows that those presuppositions are in line with what God has revealed in his Word (Bahnsen, 1998:4). Having an easily accessible method of analysing any worldview, including one's own, will help in this. This is another thing the TAKES method offers.

This study will show that the TAKES method of worldview analysis is an effective way to analyse a variety of worldviews, not just religions. For the purposes of this study, it will be used to analyse political beliefs.

1.5 Problem statement

The problem that this study will focus on is, how key aspects of the worldview of the SACP can be analysed and assessed through the TAKES presuppositional apologetic method so that all elements, including spoken and unspoken assumptions, of their worldview are critiqued against divine revelation.

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1.6 Research questions

Out of the preceding problem statement, three research questions can be formulated:

1. What can be deduced from a historical analysis of the worldview of the SACP?
2. What are the underlying beliefs and starting points of the TAKES method according to reformed presuppositional apologetics?
3. How can Reformed presuppositional critiques be applied to the worldview of the SACP?

1.7 Research objectives

1. A historical analysis of the worldview of the SACP.
2. Explanation of the underlying beliefs and starting points of the TAKES method according to Reformed presuppositional apologetics.
3. Analysis and assessment of the worldview of the SACP according to the TAKES method.

1.8 Central theoretical statement

Presuppositional apologetics is a form of apologetics where the underlying and unspoken assumptions of a worldview are critiqued against divine revelation. TAKES is a method of analysing any worldview in a presuppositional manner. By use of the TAKES method, this study will argue that the world and life view of the SACP is not compatible with a Reformed Christian world and life view, and ultimately dangerous to those on whom it is implemented.

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1.9 Methodology

1.9.1 Research design

This will be a qualitative study, “which means that the research will be more epistemological, focusing on the dynamic and evolving nature of social reality rather than only on that which can be counted” (Venter, 2012:25).

The theological perspective of this study will be confessionally Reformed. It is the theology encapsulated in the Three Forms of Unity: The Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort. The apologetic approach will be presuppositional, as found in the thought of Cornelius Van Til and his followers (Geisler, 1999:751).

The study will begin by analysing the worldview of the SACP according to the TAKES method. Focus will be placed on the thought of Marx and Lenin (who laid the groundwork for the party's belief) and on how the party contextualised that thinking for the modern South African context. To do this and to make sure that the analysis is as objective as possible, the SACP's own writings and those of the writers they themselves claim to adhere to, will be consulted and referenced. Usage of and reference to secondary sources will be avoided as far as possible.

The SACP's worldview will be critiqued according to the TAKES method on each of the five points on the basis of a Reformed worldview.

1.9.2 Literature review

Anderson, James. 2018. *What It TAKES To Make A Worldview*.
<https://www.monergism.com/what-it-takes-make-worldview-0>. Accessed on: 26 February 2018 – This short article gives an overview of each of the elements in the TAKES analysis and will thus provide the basis of the methodology followed in this study.

Bahnsen, Greg L. 1998. *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings & Analysis*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing. – Bahnsen was a student of Van Til, and this work is a collection of Van Til's most important writings with explanations and analysis. It aids this study in providing the foundations of presuppositional apologetics.

Frame, John M. 2015. *Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief*. 2nd edition. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing – A more modern exposition of presuppositional apologetics and the reformed beliefs behind it. It aids my study in applying Van Til's methods in a more contemporary context.

Oliphint, K. Scott. 2013. *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles & Practices in Defense of Our Faith*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway – Similar to the former mentioned Frame book, also a helpful exposition and application.

SACP. 1998. *Our Marxism*. <http://www.sacp.org.za/10thcongress/marxism.pdf> Date of access: 18 October 2018 – This document is helpful to the study in that it defines the distinctives of Marxism-Leninism as practised and believed by the SACP.

SACP (South African Communist Party). 2012. *The South African Road to Socialism: 13th Congress Political Programme of the SACP 2012-2017*.

<http://www.sacp.org.za/main.php?ID=4940> Date of access: 25 October 2018 – This document gives the ideological and political direction of the SACP up until 2017. It is helpful to this study in showing the SACP's beliefs fleshed out through policy proposal.

Van Til, Cornelius. 2003. *Christian Apologetics*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company. – The introduction, written by William Edgar, aids this study in describing the two-step process used by Van Til in apologetics. These two steps are used in critiquing the worldview of the SACP.

1.9.3 Significance of the study

Though there is a substantial field of study on the SACP, very little modern research has been done on the party from a Christian perspective, making it a highly neglected field. A presuppositional analysis of the SACP has not yet been done. This study can make a valuable contribution to the fields of theology and politics.

Because of the party's ideological influence on the governing party, this study will also be able to add to the Christian understanding of the current political climate in South Africa – the impact that such a fundamentally un-Christian party can have on the running of the country. A principled, especially Christian methodology is necessary in the world of real-politic. As such this study contributes to political science. In the field of theology, this study can show the usefulness of the TAKES method in worldview analysis and how this can be used in apologetic contexts.

This study can also be significant in showing how the tools of presuppositional apologetics can be applied to political ideologies and broader worldviews, and not just to non-Christian religions.

1.10 Professional practice and ethical standard for the research

According to the Ethical Risk Levels used by the North-West University the present research should be classified at the minimal or low-risk level. The research will gather data by literature review already available in the public domain.

1.11 Chapters

1. Research Proposal
2. Worldview of the South African Communist Party

In this chapter the SACP's worldview will be analysed using the TAKES method, looking at the SACP's Theology, Anthropology, Epistemology, Ethics and Soteriology.

3. A Reformed Presuppositional Critique of the worldview of the SACP

In this chapter, a Reformed presuppositional critique will be applied to each of the areas in the SACP's worldview analysed in the previous chapter.

4. Conclusion

CHAPTER 2 WORLDVIEW OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY

2.1 Introduction

The following article is the first of two that aims to interrogate the worldview of the South African Communist Party (SACP) according to a presuppositional approach. The method that will be used is the TAKES worldview analysis designed by James N. Anderson (2018) which looks at five aspects of a worldview: Theology, Anthropology, Knowledge (Epistemology), Ethics and Salvation.

To understand the historical development of the SACP's worldview, the views of Marx and Lenin will be shown first, and then how the SACP built on these. The SACP is a very orthodox party, as will be explained, that did not stray far from Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy.

The second article will be a critique of the SACP's worldview following the same TAKES method.

Before applying TAKES to the SACP, a brief definition of each of the five terms used in the method will be useful.

Theology – The word itself is derived from Greek and means “account of, or discourse about gods or God” (Wright, 1988:608). All theories have religious beliefs behind them (Clouser, 2005:2). Even a worldview that denies the existence of a god will have something that it identifies as the ultimate reality, which can in effect, be its “god” (Anderson, 2018). When this study looks at a worldview's theology, it will study what it has to say concerning ultimate reality. Another aspect of theology will look at the ideology's view of religion, even though it may deny there is a personal god or gods, it may still have something to say on this matter (Anderson, 2018).

Anthropology - The study of the nature of man. This include how man was created, what the purpose of his existence is, what his worth is, the nature of the soul and body, relationships, genders, and the relationship between man and God (Colwell, 1988:28).

Knowledge/Epistemology – The study of the theory of knowledge, of how we know what we know (Geisler, 1999:215). But more than merely studying knowledge this term also entails the study of “closely related subjects such as truth, logic, reason, experience, intuition, and revelation” (Anderson, 2018).

Ethics – Ethics has to do with human conduct (Field, 1988:232). It is the application of a law, which may differ from person to person and worldview to worldview, in any given situation (Frame,

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1987:74). It also includes what this law is based on. Ultimately, it is how a person decides what is right and wrong conduct in different contexts, and the foundation of that decision.

Salvation – In Christian theology, this refers to how people are saved from sin and its consequences (Marshall, 1988:610). In the context of worldview analysis, salvation entails all that a worldview “says or implies about the basic human problem and the solution to that problem” (Anderson, 2018).

Commented [TM7]: This whole section appears as is under 1.3 (Key Concepts) therefore is unnecessary.

2.2 Theology

2.2.1 Marx and Lenin

Any study of a Marxist-Leninist view of theology and religion is bound to contain Marx's famous dictum: “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people” (Marx, 1843).

Marx himself was an avowed atheist (Fetscher, 1991b:311), though he was born into an ethnic Jewish family. He saw any religious belief as an illusion; something that oppressed people cling to in order to assuage the pain they feel in the face of the material suffering they face. For Marx, this made religion a problem. If religion numbed the pain people felt because of unequal social and economic relationships, people would be more hesitant to fight against these. For Marx “it meant nothing more than cowardly submission, when what the working class needed was courage and self-respect” (Kiernan, 1991a:70).

When it comes to Clouser's (2005:23) definition of religious belief, namely a belief in something that has its own “unconditionally non-dependent reality,” Marx was a materialist. Roy Bhaskar (1991:325) gives a helpful Marxist definition of materialism:

In its broadest sense, materialism contends that whatever exists just is, or at least depends upon, matter. (In its more general form it claims that all reality is essentially material; in its more specific form, that human reality is).

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The materialism [in most forms of Marxism] consists not in any metaphysical doctrine about the world's consisting only of matter, but in the idea that to understand human beings and their history it is essential to begin with their material conditions of production. This is not to deny the validity of philosophical, political, artistic, or even at the limit, religious activities, but only to insist that these activities are moulded by, and only intelligible in terms of, the prevailing forms of material production

Putting these two descriptions together, one can see what the ultimate reality is for Marx: It is material and matter, specifically, material production. For Marx, nothing is more foundational to reality than economic activity as seen in material production.

Lenin has much the same view of religion as Marx. He also felt that once the economy was made less unequal and people became more educated, religious faith would disappear of its own accord (Pipes, 1997:339). But, unlike Marx, Lenin had to implement his theoretical views in a practical way. Marx never had control of a country, yet Lenin did.

Theoretically, Lenin agreed with Marx and Engels that it is not possible to “abolish religion by compulsion” (Kiernan, 1991b:414). And, during the early stages of the Russian Revolution, while the Communist Party did not yet have full control, he did not do much against the religious beliefs of the Russian people. But once the Civil War ended in 1922, “he launched what he hoped would be the decisive offensive against the church” (Pipes, 1997:339). Churches were plundered, clergy had their livelihoods taken away, many were imprisoned and killed. Religious education was outlawed, and atheism was actively propagated in all schools. All members of the Communist Party were forced to take part in “atheistic activities” and were banned from taking part in any religious ceremony (Pipes, 1997:339-340).

This aggressive anti-religious campaign is a logical outflow of Lenin's interpretation of Marx. If religion is truly something that numbs the pain of oppression and stops the lower classes from fulfilling what is necessary to attain freedom, it is in their best interest to free them from this opiate. It may be true that religion will fall away with time, but while it is still active, it merely hinders the progress of the revolution and it would be best to eradicate it.

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Commented [PS9R8]: I believe that after Lenin gained power, he used that power to abolish religion as far as he can. Perhaps he knew that it would not be possible to abolish it fully, but he did what he could.

2.2.2 The SACP

Regarding its view on theology the SACP has moved away dramatically from the militant atheism espoused by Marx and Lenin. Their view on religion and belief in a god or higher power (of any sort) is much more pragmatic. In many ways they have a *laissez-faire* approach to any belief in a higher power that an individual or group may have (SACP, 1998). But ultimately, there is a contradiction between their worldview and their practice in this regard, as this study will show. Two statements make the party's view on religion clear.

The first is found in a document titled *Our Communism* (1998):

The SACP is not defined by being either a Party of atheists or believers. This is a matter of principle, and not opportunism. Our class approach to reality (a bias towards the poor), our struggle for a

society based on social need and not on private profit, our condemnation of selfishness, and personal greed, and our refusal to give way to demoralisation (in other words, our espousing of hope) are closer to the core values of all of the world's major religions than the ethos of globalisation, imperialism and the Johannesburg Stock Market. Dogmatic errors from the side of Marxists, and the class abuse of institutionalised religion by many reactionary forces, have historically contributed to a dichotomy between socialists and believers that should never have happened.

The second is in a written submission regarding the editorial policies of the SABC:

the SACP reaffirms its support and respect for the freedom of religion of all South Africans. As a matter of fact, the overwhelming majority of SACP members are religious and many of our meetings open and close with religious prayers (SACP, 2003).

Together, these statements provide a clear picture of the party's views on this matter. However, a few things stand out that need to be addressed. Firstly, officially, the party is agnostic; secondly, the party sees its ethics and the work it does as almost identical to the major world religions; thirdly, it supports freedom of religion; and finally, it opens and closes its meetings with prayers.

The SACP's support for freedom of religion is a marked change from the active persecution of religion that was practised by Lenin. The question may then be asked, how can the party give intellectual justification for such a dramatic shift?

Joe Slovo attempted to explain this in a speech given in 1994. According to him, Christianity and socialism are almost one and the same. He quotes Trevor Huddleston: "To be a Christian is to be a socialist" (Slovo, 1994:45).

The areas where Christianity and socialism converges in Slovo's (1994:46-48) view are:

- 1) The values of community and co-operation as opposed to "an unbridled free market, the frenzy of the stock market or of privatisation and self-enrichment from the labour of others".
- 2) Human equality – the fact that all people are made in the image of God (even though one can debate whether there is a god or not, the idea remains revolutionary).
- 3) The value of "sharing, of redistribution, on the basis of need not the basis of individual wealth and power." In Slovo's view this is an expression of Marx's ideal of "from everyone according to their ability, to everyone according to their need".
- 4) Christianity and socialism both provide a "liberatory hope." Both provide a hope to people who are oppressed that there may still be a better future. This hope can then spur them on to take action in pursuit of that future.

If this is the case, religion is no longer the opiate of the masses – a way for the oppressed to be kept happy and content in their lowly position. Religion (and Christianity specifically) can be a force for revolutionary good. It can provide the impetus that many need to pursue the party's goals. This was in fact the case with many revolutionaries. Slovo (1994:43) believed that many joined the SACP out of the same motives that they would have entered the ministry with. He cites Chris Hani as an example: "Hani, in the early part of this life, did aspire to priesthood, but what drove him then was precisely the same aspiration that drove him towards socialism."

Slovo believes that problems and divisions between Christianity and socialism arose in the time after Marx. His followers failed:

to draw a distinction between the practice of institutionalised religion and the moral potential of Christian teachings, we saw religion as nothing more than an instrument of capitalism [...] The right not to believe was transformed into state policy leading to persecution and discrimination against believers (Slovo, 1994:49).

The militant atheism on the part of socialists is partly a result of a misunderstanding of religion and partly a result of the historical situation they found themselves in. The church as an institution was part of the system of oppression and enforced it (Slovo, 1994:49).

Here one can see how the SACP is able to support freedom of religion and have prayers at their meetings. The atheism and suppression of religion can almost be viewed as a misunderstanding. There is no need to persecute the church, in fact, it can be used as an ally in the road to revolution.

But, interestingly, as the church does this, it makes itself more and more irrelevant. Ultimately leading to its obsolescence. Thoko Mdlalose made this point in an article written in 1986. He uses Marx's view of the religion as "the sigh of the oppressed creature" as a starting point. Religion only thrives because humankind is oppressed and suffering. He states that "the main objective base for religion to thrive is national and class oppression and conflict" (Mdlalose, 1986:19). Thus, as the oppressed class continues its struggle for liberation, aided by the church, religion becomes less and less relevant. Until, one day, there is no more need for religion of any kind (Mdlalose, 1986:26).

When all of this is taken together, one can see that the SACP's view of religion, and Christianity specifically, is either logically inconsistent or completely cynical. If, as they claim, religion is there only as a moral force and a salve against the pain of oppression, why open meetings in prayer? Is it merely a formality? If God is not truly ultimate, but only a way to explain what humankind does not yet understand, why pray to him? If the only reality is the material world, why bother with prayers to a higher power?

2.4.1 Marx and Lenin

Marx hoped that a socialist society “might evolve peacefully in certain liberal societies” (Baradat, 2012:197). Lenin, however was convinced that, specifically in Russia with its distinctive socio-economic and cultural character, a revolution will never occur on its own, and that it needed to be guided and will by necessity be violent (Baradat, 2012:197).

One of Lenin's principal additions to Marxist thought, was the idea of a vanguard party. While Marx did mention such a party in his writings, its role was greatly diminished (Johnstone, 1991b:360; Baradat, 2012:198). Lenin's most famous work is a 1902 book entitled, *What Is to Be Done?*. In this book, he argues that the working classes cannot develop a class-consciousness that can lead to revolution by itself, “it would have to be brought to them from without” (Lenin, 2005a). The working class need intellectuals to develop this consciousness, because only they “are well educated and informed and stand at a distance from the immediate production process” (Fetscher, 1991a:80). This allows them to see the truth of oppression more clearly than the workers. For this class-consciousness to move from the intellectuals to the oppressed, a vanguard party was needed, “the cadre party of professional revolutionaries” (Fetscher, 1991a:80).

Lenin (2005a) outlines the difference between the role of the party and that of the workers as follows:

Such workers, average people of the masses, are capable of displaying enormous energy and self-sacrifice in strikes and in street, battles with the police and the troops, and are capable (in fact, are alone capable) of determining the outcome of our entire movement – but the struggle against the political police requires special qualities; it requires professional revolutionaries. And we must see to it, not only that the masses “advance” concrete demands, but that the masses of the workers “advance” an increasing number of such professional revolutionaries.

From this, one can see the role of the party in epistemology. The party and the professional revolutionaries within it, know the truth better than the worker, and because of this, the party is able to say what is true and what is false. The party knows the lot of the worker better than the worker himself does. Because the party represents the workers, any disagreement with the party is disagreement with the workers as a whole.

2.4.2 The SACP

As one analyses the epistemology of the SACP, it will be seen that there has been very little change from what was taught by Marx and Lenin. The party proudly bases its understanding of

the world on what has been taught by them. It has been shown before that the SACP has been known as the most orthodox Marxist-Leninist communist party in the world (Scholtz & Scholtz, 2008b:123). This has been a role that the party embraces. As will be shown, the fundamental basis of all knowledge is Marxist-Leninism as espoused by the party. In its constitution, the SACP (2012a) states the following: "In leading the working class towards national and social emancipation, the SACP is guided by those principles of Marxism-Leninism whose universal validity has been proven by historical experience." The ideology is paramount, which is the basis of all official actions.

The pre-eminence of ideology can be seen in the pledge that all members of the party must take:

I accept the aims and objectives of the SACP and agree to abide by its Constitution and loyally to carry out the decisions of the Party. I shall strive to live up to the ideals of Communism and shall selflessly serve the workers and the poor and the country, always placing the interests of the Party and the workers and the poor above personal interests (SACP, 2012a).

From this one can deduce a number of foundations of epistemology for the SACP. Firstly, the party is the supreme authority, which is in line with Lenin's teaching of a vanguard party. Marxist-Leninism is important, but more important is the way in which the party contextualises Marxist-Leninism to the South African context.

The work of "selflessly [serving] the workers and the poor of the country" must also be done in accordance with ideological orthodoxy. The SACP believes that, because the dominant class has the power to communicate its ideas more easily, "the workers and the poor can (and actually have) supported ideas, including very reactionary and anti-working class ideas, that are not in accordance with their material reality" (SACP, 2007a). What this means is that the working class cannot always be trusted to act in its best interests. They need to be ideologically educated, and this is the work of the party.

When the party campaigns for early childhood education, the foundation of this charge is that the education presented should be ideologically in line with "working class ideals" (SACP, 2007b). And, as we have seen, the Party is best placed to understand what these ideals are, not the working class themselves. In another publication it states that "Education as an ideological state apparatus and a site of ideological struggles" (SACP, 2007a). The reason for education is to instil ideological orthodoxy from a young age.

In its constitution the SACP gives a list of what is expected of its members. The first duties are as follows: "Study Marxism-Leninism and endeavour to raise his/her level of understanding" and "Read, engage with and popularise SACP publications" (SACP, 2012a). Again, we can see the

pre-eminence of ideology. Every member must be a student of Marxist-Leninism as interpreted by the SACP as well as a proselytiser of its teachings.

2.3 Anthropology

2.3.1 Marx and Lenin

2.3.1.1 Human origin and worth

When one looks at the atheistic worldview of orthodox communism, one can deduce their view of the origins of humankind. Humans were not created by any supernatural being, they are merely a product of Darwinian evolution. Both Engels and Marx were explicit in their admiration of Darwin's theories. Marx even wanted to dedicate the first volume of his Magnum Opus, *Das Kapital* to Darwin (Mazrui, 1968:81).

As for the differentiating element between humans and animals, Marx and Engels wrote the following:

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life (Engels and Marx, 2000).

From this we can see that ultimately, what makes humans unique is material production, with consciousness relegated to a secondary place. This is a purely materialistic view of mankind.

Another aspect to anthropology in Marx's thought is that one's primary identity is rooted in one's economic grouping. This is most clearly found in the opening chapter of the Communist Manifesto:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations. The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of

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feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones. Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinct feature: it has simplified class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other — Bourgeoisie and Proletariat (Engels and Marx, 2000).

For Marx and Engels, religion, language, and national identity were all subservient to class identity. “Class is the primary category through which personal identity is defined (Smith, 2010:557).

Another implication of this is that Marxist-Leninists have a binary view of humanity. One is either an oppressor or oppressed. Lenin (2005b) again stated this eloquently as follows:

The old society was based on the principle: rob or be robbed; work for others or make others work for you; be a slave-owner or a slave. Naturally, people brought up in such a society assimilate with their mother's milk, one might say, the psychology, the habit, the concept which says: you are either a slave-owner or a slave, or else, a small owner, a petty employee, a petty official, or an intellectual -- in short, a man who is concerned only with himself, and does not care a rap for anybody else.

What he means by “the old society” is pre-revolutionary Russia. But this principle can be applied to the rest of humankind as well. (The implications of this view will be explained further in the section on “Ethics” in this paper.)

2.3.1.2 National identity

In the early 1920's, as the Bolshevik control over Russia was being consolidated, Lenin was at the forefront of adding another layer of oppression to the communist worldview. For Marx and Engels, national identity was, much like religion, a tool that was used by the bourgeoisie to divide and oppress the working class. For the most part, they viewed (with a few minor exceptions¹), national identity with dismissiveness. According to them, “the working men have no country” (Smith, 2010:558; Engels and Marx, 1848).

Lenin, along with other Marxists, developed Marx's ideas to fit his own unique context. Just as nationalism was used by the ruling classes as a tool for oppression, it can also be used by communists in the struggle for revolution. Consequently, he drew out the distinction between oppressed and oppressor to encompass entire nations. There were oppressor nations, like Great Britain and Russia who in turn oppressed other nations, such as Ireland and Poland. Lenin

¹ The major exception to this is mentioned by Smith (2010: 558), namely the Polish national movement in opposition to the Russian empire.

believed that in supporting national liberation movements in oppressed nations, communists could gain allies in fighting against stronger imperialist states. These allies might even include bourgeois elements (Smith, 2010:558).

These ideas were brought to practical application during the Third Communist International in the early 1920s, in which Lenin showed great interest in the South African situation (Davidson and Filatova, 2013:81). Here he commanded Communist parties in colonised countries to ally themselves with national and anti-colonial movements. It was believed that this was the only way to achieve revolution, since communists made up only a small proportion of the population in these countries (Johnstone, 1991a:237). According to Lenin (2004):

a national movement is one which expresses the objective needs of the whole country and aims its heaviest blows at the central forces of the enemy opposing the country's development. A national movement is one which has the sympathy of the vast majority of the population.

Once national liberation was achieved, the communists could then proceed with their revolution.

It is in this milieu that not only the SACP's anthropology is shaped, but also its strategy and tactics, as this article will show.

2.3.1.3 Gender identity

Another aspect of humanity in which one can see the Marxist anthropology is in its view of women. Most influential in this regard is Engels' work, *The Origin of the Family* (Barret, 1991:161). In his view, and in that of Lenin following him, "the home was just like a capitalist factory except that housewives were unwaged" (Himmelweit, 1991:135).

The implications of this view are stark. Having a child has no inherent value, for Marxists, motherhood is not a joy, it is an oppressive force. Raising a child is not an economic endeavour, the woman receives no pay and therefore, she is oppressed by it. Even if the husband does provide financially for the woman and her child, she is still oppressed because she does not generate that wealth herself.

2.3.2 The SACP

The SACP (then called the Communist Party of South Africa) was founded in 1921. Initially it was made up of white workers and intellectuals, though not segregated. Its goal was to represent and

organise all workers in the country. Initially, most of its focus was on white workers, but after the Rand Revolt of 1922, the party decided to focus on organising a labour movement among the black workers (Lerumo, 2018; SACP, 1998).

When delegates of the party went to Moscow to attend the Communist International (Comintern), there were some disagreements. In these, one can see more clearly the view of human identity espoused by the SACP. The representative of the party, Sidney Bunting, pushed against the orders of the Comintern that the party must ally itself to a nationalist movement and support national liberation before they pursue a communist revolution. He agreed with the Comintern's ultimate goal for black Africans, namely "land for the Africans, equal rights and abolition of racial laws and land." However, he felt that a "class struggle is more capable of accomplishing the same tasks," not a nationalist struggle (Lerumo, 2018). Bunting's concerns were shot down and the party was ordered to join in an alliance with the ANC (SACP, 1998).

At the SACP's 10th Congress in 1998, the party described what happened during that time as follows:

In 1928/29, partly as the result of an internal debate, and principally as a result of a Communist International resolution, the CPSA² changed its strategic perspective to a national liberation struggle in alliance with the still relatively undeveloped ANC. The CPSA began to advance the slogan of majority rule, calling for a Black Republic. The struggle for socialism, the Party now began to argue, was a struggle that had to be waged in the broader context of a national liberation struggle against a form of colonial oppression [...] in time, the most common version of the relationship between the struggles was to be the "two-stage thesis" – first there would be a national democratic revolution, and a subsequent socialist stage would follow (SACP, 1998).

Here one can clearly see that race and nationalism were added to the list of oppressed and oppressor. A person's identity was no longer only focused on their class, but also their race. However, most important still was where they fell in with regard to oppressor or oppressed.

As time progressed, more forms of oppression were added. This addition of more forms of oppression can be seen in the way the party words its 13th Congress Political Programme. Where the Communist Manifesto said that "[t]he history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles," the SACP (2012b) says that "[t]he history of human societies has been one [...] many variants of brutal patriarchal, colonial, racial, class and other oppressions."

The idea of human identity primarily based on a person's place in oppressive hierarchies is most clearly seen in the party's view of wives and mothers. The role of motherhood is referred to as

² Initially, the party was named the Communist Party of South Africa, or CPSA.

“informal, unpaid reproductive labour” (SACP, 1998). A mother is oppressed because she is not paid to bear and raise children. Because there is no economic benefit to her in that relationship, it is oppressive. Jenny Schreiner (2017:88) quotes Lenin in this regard:

One of the conditions for the social emancipation of women, and consequently one of the principles for solving this question was, in Lenin's view, the wide use of female labour in social production. He said that “to effect her complete emancipation and make her the equal of the man, it is necessary for the national economy to be socialised and for women to participate in common productive labour. Then women will occupy the same position as men.”

These varying forms of oppression cannot be isolated. This leads to the party criticising black economic empowerment (BEE) for merely dealing with race, and not keeping in mind the toll of class oppression and patriarchy (SACP, 2012b).

From the preceding exposition, a summary of the SACP anthropology can be made: Humans are the product of natural evolution, each individual is made up of a competing list of oppressions, the most important element of his or her identity is in which area he or she is most oppressed. The list of ways in which a person can be oppressed is not limited, but the party's current foci are race, class and gender.

For example, a black man may be oppressed because of his race, but if he is married and his wife raises the children, he is also her oppressor. If he is a heterosexual Christian man, he is also part of the group that oppresses homosexuals and minority religions.

2.4 Knowledge

In a study of this size, the subject of epistemology will be limited, but can be expanded on at a later stage. For the purpose of this study, the subject of ultimate authority in knowledge will be analysed.³ In this regard, the SACP builds on the work specifically of Lenin and his contribution to Marxism.

³ This means that a crucial area of epistemology in the Marxist-Leninist worldview, namely dialectical materialism, will not be studied.

2.5 Theology

2.2.1 Marx and Lenin

Any study of a Marxist-Leninist view of theology and religion is bound to contain Marx's famous dictum: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people" (Marx, 1843).

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Regarding its view on theology the SACP has moved away dramatically from the militant atheism espoused by Marx and Lenin. Their view on religion and belief in a god or higher power (of any sort) is much more pragmatic. In many ways they have a *laissez-faire* approach to any belief in a higher power that an individual or group may have (SACP, 1998). But ultimately, there is a contradiction between their worldview and their practice in this regard, as this study will show. Two statements make the party’s view on religion clear.

The first is found in a document titled *Our Communism* (1998):

The SACP is not defined by being either a Party of atheists or believers. This is a matter of principle, and not opportunism. Our class approach to reality (a bias towards the poor), our struggle for a society based on social need and not on private profit, our condemnation of selfishness, and personal greed, and our refusal to give way to demoralisation (in other words, our espousing of hope) are closer to the core values of all of the world’s major religions than the ethos of globalisation, imperialism and the Johannesburg Stock Market. Dogmatic errors from the side of Marxists, and the class abuse of institutionalised religion by many reactionary forces, have historically contributed to a dichotomy between socialists and believers that should never have happened.

The second is in a written submission regarding the editorial policies of the SABC:

the SACP reaffirms its support and respect for the freedom of religion of all South Africans. As a matter of fact, the overwhelming majority of SACP members are religious and many of our meetings open and close with religious prayers (SACP, 2003).

Together, these statements provide a clear picture of the party's views on this matter. However, a few things stand out that need to be addressed. Firstly, officially, the party is agnostic; secondly, the party sees its ethics and the work it does as almost identical to the major world religions; thirdly, it supports freedom of religion; and finally, it opens and closes its meetings with prayers.

The SACP's support for freedom of religion is a marked change from the active persecution of religion that was practised by Lenin. The question may then be asked, how can the party give intellectual justification for such a dramatic shift?

Joe Slovo attempted to explain this in a speech given in 1994. According to him, Christianity and socialism are almost one and the same. He quotes Trevor Huddleston: "To be a Christian is to be a socialist" (Slovo, 1994:45).

The areas where Christianity and socialism converges in Slovo's (1994:46-48) view are:

- 5) The values of community and co-operation as opposed to "an unbridled free market, the frenzy of the stock market or of privatisation and self-enrichment from the labour of others".
- 6) Human equality – the fact that all people are made in the image of God (even though one can debate whether there is a god or not, the idea remains revolutionary).
- 7) The value of "sharing, of redistribution, on the basis of need not the basis of individual wealth and power." In Slovo's view this is an expression of Marx's ideal of "from everyone according to their ability, to everyone according to their need".
- 8) Christianity and socialism both provide a "liberatory hope." Both provide a hope to people who are oppressed that there may still be a better future. This hope can then spur them on to take action in pursuit of that future.

If this is the case, religion is no longer the opiate of the masses – a way for the oppressed to be kept happy and content in their lowly position. Religion (and Christianity specifically) can be a force for revolutionary good. It can provide the impetus that many need to pursue the party's goals. This was in fact the case with many revolutionaries. Slovo (1994:43) believed that many joined the SACP out of the same motives that they would have entered the ministry with. He cites Chris Hani as an example: "Hani, in the early part of this life, did aspire to priesthood, but what drove him then was precisely the same aspiration that drove him towards socialism."

Slovo believes that problems and divisions between Christianity and socialism arose in the time after Marx. His followers failed:

to draw a distinction between the practice of institutionalised religion and the moral potential of Christian teachings, we saw religion as nothing more than an instrument of capitalism [...] The right not to believe was transformed into state policy leading to persecution and discrimination against believers (Slovo, 1994:49).

The militant atheism on the part of socialists is partly a result of a misunderstanding of religion and partly a result of the historical situation they found themselves in. The church as an institution was part of the system of oppression and enforced it (Slovo, 1994:49).

Here one can see how the SACP is able to support freedom of religion and have prayers at their meetings. The atheism and suppression of religion can almost be viewed as a misunderstanding. There is no need to persecute the church, in fact, it can be used as an ally in the road to revolution.

But, interestingly, as the church does this, it makes itself more and more irrelevant. Ultimately leading to its obsolescence. Thoko Mdlalose made this point in an article written in 1986. He uses Marx's view of the religion as "the sigh of the oppressed creature" as a starting point. Religion only thrives because humankind is oppressed and suffering. He states that "the main objective base for religion to thrive is national and class oppression and conflict" (Mdlalose, 1986:19). Thus, as the oppressed class continues its struggle for liberation, aided by the church, religion becomes less and less relevant. Until, one day, there is no more need for religion of any kind (Mdlalose, 1986:26).

When all of this is taken together, one can see that the SACP's view of religion, and Christianity specifically, is either logically inconsistent or completely cynical. If, as they claim, religion is there only as a moral force and a salve against the pain of oppression, why open meetings in prayer? Is it merely a formality? If God is not truly ultimate, but only a way to explain what humankind does not yet understand, why pray to him? If the only reality is the material world, why bother with prayers to a higher power?

2.4.1 Marx and Lenin

Marx hoped that a socialist society "might evolve peacefully in certain liberal societies" (Baradat, 2012:197). Lenin, however was convinced that, specifically in Russia with its distinctive socio-economic and cultural character, a revolution will never occur on its own, and that it needed to be guided and will by necessity be violent (Baradat, 2012:197).

One of Lenin's principal additions to Marxist thought, was the idea of a vanguard party. While Marx did mention such a party in his writings, its role was greatly diminished (Johnstone, 1991b:360; Baradat, 2012:198). Lenin's most famous work is a 1902 book entitled, *What Is to Be Done?*. In this book, he argues that the working classes cannot develop a class-consciousness that can lead to revolution by itself, "it would have to be brought to them from without" (Lenin, 2005a). The working class need intellectuals to develop this consciousness, because only they "are well educated and informed and stand at a distance from the immediate production process" (Fetscher, 1991a:80). This allows them to see the truth of oppression more clearly than the workers. For this class-consciousness to move from the intellectuals to the oppressed, a vanguard party was needed, "the cadre party of professional revolutionaries" (Fetscher, 1991a:80).

Lenin (2005a) outlines the difference between the role of the party and that of the workers as follows:

Such workers, average people of the masses, are capable of displaying enormous energy and self-sacrifice in strikes and in street, battles with the police and the troops, and are capable (in fact, are alone capable) of determining the outcome of our entire movement – but the struggle against the political police requires special qualities; it requires professional revolutionaries. And we must see to it, not only that the masses "advance" concrete demands, but that the masses of the workers "advance" an increasing number of such professional revolutionaries.

From this, one can see the role of the party in epistemology. The party and the professional revolutionaries within it, know the truth better than the worker, and because of this, the party is able to say what is true and what is false. The party knows the lot of the worker better than the worker himself does. Because the party represents the workers, any disagreement with the party is disagreement with the workers as a whole.

2.4.2 The SACP

As one analyses the epistemology of the SACP, it will be seen that there has been very little change from what was taught by Marx and Lenin. The party proudly bases its understanding of the world on what has been taught by them. It has been shown before that the SACP has been known as the most orthodox Marxist-Leninist communist party in the world (Scholtz & Scholtz, 2008b:123). This has been a role that the party embraces. As will be shown, the fundamental basis of all knowledge is Marxist-Leninism as espoused by the party. In its constitution, the SACP (2012a) states the following: "In leading the working class towards national and social emancipation, the SACP is guided by those principles of Marxism-Leninism whose universal

validity has been proven by historical experience.” The ideology is paramount, which is the basis of all official actions.

The pre-eminence of ideology can be seen in the pledge that all members of the party must take:

I accept the aims and objectives of the SACP and agree to abide by its Constitution and loyally to carry out the decisions of the Party. I shall strive to live up to the ideals of Communism and shall selflessly serve the workers and the poor and the country, always placing the interests of the Party and the workers and the poor above personal interests (SACP, 2012a).

From this one can deduce a number of foundations of epistemology for the SACP. Firstly, the party is the supreme authority, which is in line with Lenin’s teaching of a vanguard party. Marxist-Leninism is important, but more important is the way in which the party contextualises Marxist-Leninism to the South African context.

The work of “selflessly [serving] the workers and the poor of the country” must also be done in accordance with ideological orthodoxy. The SACP believes that, because the dominant class has the power to communicate its ideas more easily, “the workers and the poor can (and actually have) supported ideas, including very reactionary and anti-working class ideas, that are not in accordance with their material reality” (SACP, 2007a). What this means is that the working class cannot always be trusted to act in its best interests. They need to be ideologically educated, and this is the work of the party.

When the party campaigns for early childhood education, the foundation of this charge is that the education presented should be ideologically in line with “working class ideals” (SACP, 2007b). And, as we have seen, the Party is best placed to understand what these ideals are, not the working class themselves. In another publication it states that “Education as an ideological state apparatus and a site of ideological struggles” (SACP, 2007a). The reason for education is to instil ideological orthodoxy from a young age.

In its constitution the SACP gives a list of what is expected of its members. The first duties are as follows: “Study Marxism-Leninism and endeavour to raise his/her level of understanding” and “Read, engage with and popularise SACP publications” (SACP, 2012a). Again, we can see the pre-eminence of ideology. Every member must be a student of Marxist-Leninism as interpreted by the SACP as well as a proselytiser of its teachings.

2.6 Ethics

2.5.1 Marx and Lenin

As one comes to the Marxist view of ethics or morals one is immediately confronted with a contradiction. This is stipulated clearly by Steven Lukes (1991:341):

On the one hand, it is claimed that morality is a form of Ideology, that any given morality arises out of a particular stage of the development of productive forces and relations and is relative to a particular mode of production and particular class interests, that there are no eternal moral truths, that the very form of morality and general ideas such as freedom and justice cannot 'completely vanish except with the total disappearance of class antagonisms' (Communist Manifesto), that Marxism is opposed to all moralizing and that the Marxist critique of both capitalism and political economy is not moral but scientific. On the other hand, Marxist writings are full of moral judgments, implicit and explicit.

In other words, Marxists reject morality as by definition it is based on the prevailing class conflict, but at the same time, they use a set of ethics to critique the prevailing class conflict. The aim of this section is not to solve this contradiction, but to rather delve deeper and see on what the Marxists base their belief that a certain action or system is moral or immoral.

Lenin is again very clear on this and he provides the foundation that the SACP builds on. The clearest expression of his view on ethics and morality can be found in a speech he gave in 1920 entitled, "The Tasks of the Youth Leagues." In it, he explicitly rejects any ethic based on God's commandments. He believes that this ethic was used by the clergy, landowners and bourgeoisie as a pretence to oppress workers and peasants.

We reject any morality based on extra-human and extra-class concepts. We say that this is deception, dupery, stultification of the workers and peasants in the interests of the landowners and capitalists (Lenin, 2005b).

This means that ethics cannot be based on any sort of supernatural revelation. For Lenin, there is no God and no revelation to base ethics on.

On what is ethics then based for Lenin? In the same speech, he elucidates it clearly:

We say that our morality is entirely subordinated to the interests of the proletariat's class struggle. Our morality stems from the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat [...] to us there is no such thing as a morality that stands outside human society; that is a fraud. To us morality is subordinated to the interests of the proletariat's class struggle (Lenin, 2005b).

What this ultimately means is that the only way to determine whether an action is moral or not, is to measure it according to the needs of the class. As was seen in the section on epistemology, the arbiter of class interest is the party. Therefore, the party is the arbiter of morality. What the party says and does is moral by definition.

In an article written by the Polish scholar, Kazys Gecys (1955) he gives an example of what this looked like in the Soviet Union:

The needs of the class struggle of the proletariat determine morality; hence whatever fosters the revolutionary overthrow of "capitalism", and the violent dispossession of those who own property is, morally, a good act; whatever hinders the revolution, such as a refusal to take orders from the revolutionary leader, and the refusal to think in the way one is supposed to think, is, morally, a bad act. There is no limit to hatred, violence, social turmoil, chicanery duplicity, devilry, unscrupulousness, etc. On the contrary, such acts are presented as the principal Communist virtues.

Implied in all of this, as was seen in the section on anthropology, is that the individual is unimportant, and only the collective good (as determined by the party).

Another implication is that which is ethical, or not, will change depending on the stage of the revolution. More violence may be necessary while the revolution is being established and the old order dispossessed of its property and power. As things change, methods may become less oppressive (Gecys, 1955). Ultimately, for both Marx and Lenin, there was a belief that when all class contradictions have been abolished and forgotten, humankind will achieve "a really human morality." Much like religion, morality and ethics are formed by the social and economic circumstances that people find themselves in. Once these have been purged of all oppression, the "morality of emancipation" will be the guiding force for all people (Lukes, 1991:342; Gecy, 1955).

2.5.2 The SACP

The SACP takes this view and builds on it. In its own words, all ethics are connected to a "progressive, transformational agenda in which the values of solidarity are foremost" (SACP, 2012b). For them, the ultimate goal of the transformation of society in a classless communist society is the basis of their ethics. Therefore, when party members serve in government, they are expected "to conduct themselves as exemplary communists" (SACP, 2012b). This means that every decision made, or action taken should be taken with this ideology in mind.

What does this entail? The party claims that their values and morals are in line with most of the major religions in the world. This was seen in a previous section, but it is helpful to look at another quote from the party:

Our class approach to reality (a bias towards the poor), our struggle for a society based on social need and not on private profit, our condemnation of selfishness, and personal greed, and our refusal to give way to demoralisation (in other words, our espousing of hope) are closer to the core values of all of the world's major religions than the ethos of globalisation, imperialism and the Johannesburg Stock Market (SACP, 1998).

But the ethics of the party can also be contrasted with the ethics of religion.

Christians see social life primarily in moral categories i.e. good and evil, love and hate, poor and rich, generosity and greed, etc. We don't reject moral values, but we regard them as an unsound framework for scientific analysis and an unreliable guide to effective action for changing the world (Mdlalose, 1986:19).

What can be seen here is that ethics for the party primarily concerns interpersonal ethics. The only sins that matter are sins against other people. No mention is made of a sin that may be made against any sort of theistic higher power.

Ethics is also primarily class-based, as opposed to focus on the individual. An action can be judged ethically on whether it advances the cause of the oppressed class. This is seen in a recent paper by Jeremy Cronin on the issue of land redistribution, *Towards a Marxist approach to land*. In it he writes about those black South Africans who have been beneficiaries of land redistribution in the past. They were given the option of either getting ownership of the land or monetary compensation, the majority chose the monetary option. Cronin (2018:39) says of this:

This is perfectly legal and completely understandable. Many communities and families have now rebuilt their lives in other localities, often in more urban settings. There is also the appreciation that going back to farming on land that has, perhaps, not been worked for many years is a daunting task without additional financial and other support. However, taking monetary compensation, while ensuring that some justice is done, means that restitution has not been a major path to the radical transformation of existing racialised patterns of land ownership and land use in both rural and urban South Africa.

What this means is that, while individuals, families and even whole communities are helped by getting financial compensation, it is not actually that desirable. What ultimately matters, is that the white domination in the area of landownership must be ended. It is the bigger picture that matters. The class struggle matters more than the welfare of communities, families and individuals. It seems as though the party would prefer people to endure more hardship if that would mean the racial and class imbalances are addressed.

One can draw a similar conclusion from the party's support for the Soviet Union before its dissolution. Scholtz and Scholtz (2008a:95-96) lists a number of morally reprehensible actions that the Soviet Union took that were either condoned or ignored by the SACP. Or else when they were condemned it came far too late. These include, the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact (a Soviet non-aggression treaty with the Nazis that included plans for invading and dividing up Poland), the Holodomor (a Soviet-manufactured famine in Ukraine that killed up to 12 million people); Stalin's Great Purge; the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary and 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Joe Slovo (1991:2) himself described the party's stance on international politics as "blind adherence to the Soviet Communist Party." Yusuf M. Dadoo, then chairman of the SACP, said in 1972 that "one's attitude to the Soviet Union is the principal criterion, the touchstone of the sincerity and honesty of every leader of the working-class movement and every democrat" (Scholtz and Scholtz, 2008a:95).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the party had to reckon with what was done under the banner of communism by that regime. Various paths were taken to justify, excuse or apologise for the SACP's consistent support of a regime that was regarded as oppressive, but which also ultimately failed to attain the full potential of a communist state.

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In the 1998 document titled *Our Marxism*, the party looked back at these events in this way:

In the context of unceasing capitalist hostility and destabilisation efforts directed against the first workers' state by imperialist powers, the CPSA's basic position was correct. Later, it was the Soviet Union and its bloc in the key decades of the 1960s and 70s, when our liberation movement had suffered a serious strategic defeat, that offered unquestioning support to our own struggle (SACP, 1998).

Officially, it stands by its support of the Soviet Union. The reason was that it was amidst a war with capitalist countries, and as the only communist state at that time, it had to be supported. The party balances its stance out as follows:

we need to note that our own fundamentally correct solidarity with the Soviet Union, often lacked serious balance or nuance. We failed to appreciate, until very late, the horrendous levels of criminal abuse that occurred during the Stalin years, and we failed to be critical of the bureaucratic distortions in the post-Stalin period. We also failed to appreciate, until very late in the day, the levels of internal crisis in the former Soviet Union and Soviet bloc (SACP, 1998).

It does acknowledge that it was wrong in its uncritical support. But, when it gives reasons for this being wrong, one can get a clear picture of the basis of their ethics. The party believes that because it did not condemn Soviet atrocities earlier, for much of the 1990s "the SACP has had to devote considerable energies and time to collectively debating and developing a consistent

socialist understanding of these questions" (SACP, 1998). The major problem it sees is not moral, but ideological. No mention is made of human suffering, the real problem is the energies that had to be wasted in debating what happened in the past and having it fit in with a socialist understanding. This is confirmed by what the party sees as its role in the future: "The challenge to rescue socialism from the events of 1989-91 and to renew socialist confidence and optimism remains an important priority of the SACP" (SACP, 1998). Socialism is the thing that needs to be guarded and saved from what happened. Ultimately that is most important. Human suffering is not ignored, but the progress of socialism is more important.

Putting all of this together one can show clearly what the party's ethics are, and how this is in fact unsound and dangerous. Ultimately, an individual, or family, or community's welfare is not as important as the class struggle. This means that the SACP will support murderous regimes and violence if it is done in the name of furthering the road to socialism. All that matters is the class struggle. For this reason, individual actions to improve one's lot in life or that of one's community (for example taking money as compensation instead of land) are wrong.

2.7 Salvation

2.6.1 Marx and Lenin

The preceding section on Theology, Anthropology, Knowledge and Ethics in the worldview of the SACP allows for a clear picture as to their view on Salvation. This covers the aspect of the worldview in which the way of salvation for humankind is shown. How can humankind improve its situation? Is it even possible? What is the ultimate goal that is aimed at?

In an earlier draft of the *Communist Manifesto*, Engels (2000) asked and answered some of these questions. His answers provide a helpful summary.

What is the aim of the Communists? Answer: To organise society in such a way that every member of it can develop and use all his capabilities and powers in complete freedom and without thereby infringing the basic conditions of this society.

How do you wish to achieve this aim? Answer: By the elimination of private property and its replacement by community of property.

From this, one can see that for a Marxist the ultimate salvation for mankind is one in which every person can be totally free to pursue his own goals while at the same time not infringing on the rights of others. The only way for this to be achieved is with the elimination of all private property. Instead, property will be owned by the collective. This will be true communism, and true human freedom.

The means of attaining this goal is revolution. Each era in human civilisation was preceded by a revolution, which was “a cataclysmic leap from one of these [eras] to the next.” This history will continue until the ultimate and final communist revolution when all class differences would be set aside (Kiernan, 1991c:425).

Venter and Bain (2015) expand on this:

For Marxist scholars, revolution is a necessary predestined locomotive of history; it is the law of nature, and so indeed all history is the story of revolution. Revolution, thus, will of necessity occur; although as becomes clear from the works of Lenin and Mao, a revolutionary must strategize, keep secrets and operate undercover to promote certain desirable outcomes. The revolutionary process is not necessarily an open process; it must be a strategized one, reliant on move and countermove. Thus, the process of revolution is not necessarily a process that will be completed rapidly.

So, a communist revolution is the goal of all Marxists, but the road to revolution may differ between different schools of Marxism and change with changing circumstances.

From the outset, Marx and Engels believed that a revolution like this will only be possible when the proletariat develop their own class consciousness. They will see their true state of oppression and rise together against it. Marx believed that “the proletarian revolution would eventually erupt automatically” (Baradat, 2012:197).

As was shown earlier, Lenin built on Marx’s thought in this regard, while at the same time differing from him. He still believed that the proletariat were the key to a successful revolution, but they cannot be trusted to lead this themselves. They needed a vanguard party to lead them.

Another crucial aspect of Lenin’s contribution is his idea of a two-stage revolution (Bottomore, 1991:89). In the first phase, the “socialist” phase, the party (representing the proletariat) will seize power away from the bourgeoisie. In this phase, all institutions of power, including the state will be taken over by the dictatorship of the proletariat and be used for the betterment of the collective.

This will be a violent time, since those who are normally in power will not easily give up what they have. As time progresses, the state will eventually wither away, it will no longer be needed, and a state of true communism will be arrived at (Lenin, 2005c; Sweezy, 1991:445; Miliband, 1991:467).

For both Marx and Lenin, there was a real hope that a utopia will be reached. They both believed that if the external economic forces that facilitated oppression were done away with, humans flourishing was a certainty. That is why Lenin could speak of the state withering away, coercive power will no longer be needed to maintain law, order and equality – people will do it out of their own freed natures.

Commented [TM14]: Assuming that the highlighted phrase refers to the time when “the state will be taken over”, two sentences back, consider swapping places with with the sentence that immediately precedes the highlighted one. If my assumption is incorrect, notice that the highlighted phrase points to the time when the “state of true communism” would have been achieved – which makes no sense.

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2.6.2 The SACP

In accordance with general Marxist doctrine, the SACP's view of the ultimate salvation of humankind has also developed with time.

As was seen earlier, the SACP was guided by the Leninist principle of a vanguard party. The party officially also agreed with Lenin that a socialist revolution will not necessarily take place naturally, it must be guided and planned for⁴:

The struggle for socialism is a vast, historical struggle to shift the balance of class forces towards working people and other popular forces. This struggle has not been, and will not be, a simple evolutionary development, guaranteed by history. Taking place on the terrain of a world dominated by capitalism, it is marked by unevenness, by moments of stagnation, by advances, ruptures, by reverses, and, no doubt, by decisive moments (SACP, 1998).

The party's first role was to influence the ANC and direct it towards a more communist worldview. This was achieved through various means, but primarily through a system of dual membership. Many of the leading members of the ANC were also SACP members, and this meant that the ANC morphed from a relatively conservative nationalist party into a party embracing socialism. In this regard, the SACP was successful in implementing Lenin's plans (Lerumo, 2018).

With the success of the nationalist revolution at the end of apartheid, the party then moved on to the second stage. This is called the National Democratic Revolution (NDR), and is still theoretically the guiding ideological principle of both the SACP and ANC.

The NDR is the transitional stage between the national revolution and the ultimate goal of a socialist revolution. The party still believes in the ultimate withering away of the state (Nzimande, 2006), but in this transitional phase, they believe that the state's power must be used to further the progress towards communism.

⁴ Interestingly, although officially the party followed the Leninist belief of the necessity of a vanguard party, in other comments some of its leaders gave credence to Marx's belief that a socialist society will eventually emerge even without a vanguard leading it. Joe Slovo, the party's general secretary from 1984 to 1991 said:

We have a vision of society whose time will undoubtedly come; a socialist society in which one person does not live off the labour of another. And that time will come not because our Party exists but because our working people - the most wretched of our society - will in the end ensure the creation of both a political and economic democracy in our country. That is the essence of what we stand for. (Slovo, 1991)

In "The South African Road to Socialism: 13th Congress Political Programme of the SACP 2012 – 2017" and "Political Report of the SACP's 11th Congress Central Committee as tabled before the 12th Congress" the party lays out clearly what this will mean in practice:

It is a transitional economy in which capitalism is still present, but in which the socialised sector is hegemonic. A socialised sector will include democratic state-owned entities, but also other forms of public property, and a vibrant cooperative sector. Socialism will progressively roll back the capitalist market, decommodifying basic human needs. A socialism of the 21st century will also place a premium on ensuring sustainable livelihoods and communities for its people and the sustainable use of natural resources. Socialism is not some "second" stage after the completion of the NDR. As far as the SACP is concerned, advancing, deepening and defending the NDR will require an increasingly decisive advance towards socialism. Which is why we say: "Socialism is the future, build it now!" (SACP, 2012b)

The SACP is a vanguard party of socialism, and not a narrowly electoralist formation; Our approach to elections will be guided in this phase of the struggle by our overall strategic commitment to advancing, deepening and defending the national democratic revolution - the South African road to socialism; and Our strategic objective in regard to state power is to secure not party political but working class hegemony over the state (SACP, 2012b).

To be all of this, the NDR has to be a revolutionary struggle to transform the underlying, systemic features of our society that continue to reproduce race, gendered and class oppression. Which is to say: The NDR in our present conjuncture has, in essence, to be a struggle to transform the dependent-development accumulation path of our economy, and the chronic underdevelopment that this accumulation path still daily reproduces (SACP, 2012b).

Only working class hegemony and activism on the ground and in the state will ensure that the developmental state fulfils its developmental role...To do the above we need a bold state, underpinned by united working class activism and power that unapologetically takes its rightful leadership responsibility to drive the developmental transformation for both the public and private workplaces! (SACP, 2012b)

[I]t is important for us as communists, in the midst of the struggles to deepen, consolidate and advance the national democratic revolution, that we never for once lose sight of our goal to achieve a socialist South Africa (SACP, 2007a).

From these preceding quotes, the SACP's view of what salvation will look like and who will be the saviour becomes clear. For them, the ultimate goal, the ultimate end, is a communist society. They agree with Marx and those who follow him that if the material means of oppression are removed, human thriving is guaranteed.

As for who the saviour is, it is the vanguard party. Fully consistent with Lenin's views, the party is the guiding force behind the salvation of humankind, it must lead the workers toward their own salvation. What the party needs however is power, and it has this in the form of the state. Although the state will not always exist, while it is in power, the party must use it to advance its ideology and ideological programs. The state will be used to better the lives of the poor; at the same time it must be used to lessen the power of the old ruling class. While working within the state, all communists must keep the goal of a socialist South Africa in mind they must not get bogged down in the present, they must always look to the ultimate goal.

When all these steps are followed, salvation is assured.

2.8 Conclusion

From the preceding, a short summary of the worldview of the SACP using the TAKES method can be seen as follows:

The SACP sees economic and material forces as the ultimate basis for reality; mankind is divided into separate group identities, that of oppressor and oppressed, the oppressed cannot be trusted to work for their own good, the vanguard party must do this; Marxist-Leninism, as interpreted by the SACP is the ground for true knowledge; the needs of the collective, as determined by the party is also the grounds for ethics; true salvation will only be found once the party completes its revolutionary goals, then all oppression will be ended.

What this shows is that in trying to build a worldview based on that of the SACP, a person will be forced to put unparalleled trust in the party and its ideology. The basis of knowledge, grounds of ethics and hope of salvation are all found only within its ideology.

Using this breakdown of the worldview of the SACP allows a Christian apologist to critique each aspect in turn, which will be done in the next article.

CHAPTER 3 A REFORMED PRESUPPOSITIONAL CRITIQUE OF THE WORLDVIEW OF THE SACP

3.1 Introduction

The following article aims to give a Reformed presuppositional critique of the South African Communist Party's (SACP) worldview. The TAKES method of worldview analysis is used (Anderson, 2018), because it speaks to the most important aspects of a worldview, namely those of Theology, Anthropology, Knowledge (Epistemology), Ethics and Salvation. The twofold approach of the presuppositional method is used while considering these five aspects.

In his introduction to a new edition of Van Til's book, *Christian Apologetics*, William Edgar gives a helpful summary of the presuppositional method, breaking it down in two steps.

The heart of Van Til's apologetic approach is twofold. These are not meant to be sequential steps, but complementary moves. First, the apologist must get over onto the ground of the unbeliever for argument's sake and show him that his claims cannot succeed. This does not mean conceding ground, but, rather, patient exploration, as though a particular form of unbelief were true, in order to show how impossible it is. With confidence, the apologist will know that there is no sufficient basis for meaning and value (or "predication" as Van Til liked to put it) in his friend's view. Gently, but firmly, he will "remove the iron mask," or "take the roof off" the house of unbelief, to show how dark it is without the Lord... Second, the apologist should invite the unbeliever over onto Christian ground, for argument's sake, and show him how meaning and value are established by the biblical worldview. This is the equivalent of saying, with the psalmist, "O taste and see how good the Lord is." In so many ways, this means preaching the gospel. (Van Til, 2003:7)

Following this twofold approach, this article will first evaluate each of the five aspects of the SACP's worldview to determine whether it is logically coherent and consistent. The internal contradictions within and between each of the five areas will be investigated. This can be done because "the natural man is never fully consistent" in his worldview, and the apologist should "seek to make men ever more epistemologically self-conscious" (Bahnsen, 1998:411, 416). Accordingly, the Christian apologist can and should show that any worldview not based on God's revelation will never be consistent. By showing the contradictions inherent in a non-Christian worldview, the apologist seeks to prove how weak and incoherent these worldviews truly are – in this case, that of the SACP.

In the second place, this article seeks to provide the biblical alternative to what the SACP believes and show how this is more logically consistent and more in line with human flourishing. The

apologist's job is not only to point out the untenability of other worldviews, it is also to offer hope. This article assumes that the only sure source of hope is found in a consistent Christian worldview.

3.2 Summary of the SACP's worldview

By studying official proclamations, speeches of leaders and articles in SACP journals, the following conclusions can be made regarding the different aspects of the SACP's worldview:

3.2.1 Theology

The party moved away from the militant atheism of its ideological forebears Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin. It instead saw religion as a useful tool for furthering revolutionary goals and actively encouraged its propagation (SACP, 1998; SACP, 2003). This is, however, not based on a belief in a supernatural deity of any sort, but merely pragmatic. The atheistic basis of its views can be seen in the belief that religion will fall away as the revolution progresses (Mdlalose, 1986:26).

3.2.2 Anthropology

The party maintains a binary view of humanity which is that there are only two types of people: the oppressed and oppressors. Instead of only focusing on economic class like Marx and Lenin however, it added (and continues to add) more areas of oppression. This included national, racial and gender oppression (SACP, 1998; Schreiner 2017:88). One person may in him- or herself be a mixture of oppressor and oppressed. Another aspect in its anthropology is its collectivism: a person's group identity (class, race, gender, etc.) is paramount, not them as individuals (SACP, 2012b).

3.2.3 Knowledge

With regards to epistemology, the SACP is clear and consistent. The basis of all truth is found in Marxist-Leninist ideology as interpreted by the party itself (SACP, 2012a).

3.2.4 Ethics

Ethics are based on the party's revolutionary agenda (SACP, 2012b). An action is ethical if it serves to advance the revolution as planned by the party. Individual or community well-being is not the basis of ethics. The advancement of the class-based struggle is what matters, even if this may harm people in the present (Cronin, 2018:39).

3.2.5 Salvation

As to ultimate salvation – the party looks forward to and strives to achieve a fully Communist society where all possible material and economic means of oppression are removed. This salvation can only be attained through the work of the party that will lead the country to this goal. Currently, the primary tool the party uses for this is the National Democratic Revolution (SACP, 2007a).

3.3 Theology

3.3.1 SACP internal consistency

The SACP moved away from the militant atheism of their ideological forebears, Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin. While Marx (1843) saw religion as a delusion that helps numb the pain of the oppressed (“the opium of the people”), and Lenin violently tried to eradicate it after initially trying to co-opt churches in his revolutionary goals (Pipes, 1997:339-340), the SACP is more pragmatic in their approach. At times, they speak very highly of certain aspects of religion, they try to work with churches and they even open their meetings with prayer (SACP, 2003).

But in one crucial aspect they still have the same view of religion as Marx – it is an instrument to be used and then discarded. Just as the oppressors used religion to facilitate oppression in the past, the party believes that religion, and specifically organised religion, can and should be used for revolutionary goals. Eventually, as people are freed from oppression, the need for religion and the church that goes with it will fall away (Mdlalose, 1986:26). This means that the party does not see any metaphysical reality in religion. It is a human coping mechanism, that will fall away as life gets closer to their vision of the ideal future.

Moving on from organised religion to the party’s belief in a god or gods, it is helpful to use Roy Clouser’s (2005:23) definition of a religious belief - it is a belief in something that has its own “unconditional non-dependent reality.” The question then becomes: “What is the ultimate reality for the SACP, the thing that is not dependant on anything else?”

When analysed using this definition, the ultimate reality for the SACP is materialism. The party has not repudiated the materialistic worldview of Marx and Lenin. As the other aspects of their worldview are analysed, it is clear that the material reality is the beginning and end of what should be accomplished, making it clear that they see ultimate reality in the same way as their two forerunners. Nothing is more foundational to reality than economic activity as seen in material production (McLellan, 1993:361; SACP, 1998).

However, if religion is temporary, why go through with the farce of praying? Why pretend to speak to a deity if you do not believe in it? It seems as if the reason for this is that religion is useful for the party. The party quotes Marx's criticism of the wealthy using religion as a front to oppress people, but it seems they behave similarly to what they accuse others of by misusing religion for their advantage – as a mask to draw in religious people.

This can be seen when they speak of Jesus as well. He is regarded as a model socialist. He is useful to them in some ways, so they emphasize those ways – communal living, human equality,⁵ “liberatory hope” (Slovo, 1994:46-48).⁶ However, no mention is made of his claims to deity or propitious death, he was merely a human revolutionary figure who should be imitated in the way he dealt with inequality.

It can be argued that the contradictions in the party's beliefs in this matter shows both pragmatism and cynicism. The church is useful for its potential to further the revolution. The party has been happy to work with the church to further its goals (Slovo, 1994: 49; Mdlalose, 1986: 26). It means that they are basically using the church in the same way that Marx accused the oppressors of using it – to get the working class on its side and with its program.

The fact that they see religion as a force that will wither away, gives lie to the lip service they give to religion. Ultimately, they retain the materialistic worldview of orthodox Communism. In this view, there is no place for any supernatural actions working in on the world. Roy Bhaskar (1991, 325) gives a helpful Marxist definition of materialism:

In its broadest sense, materialism contends that whatever exists just is, or at least depends upon, matter. (In its more general form it claims that all reality is essentially material; in its more specific form, that human reality is).

David McLellan (1993: 361) adds an important clarification to this definition:

The materialism [in most forms of Marxism] consists not in any metaphysical doctrine about the world's consisting only of matter, but in the idea that to understand human beings and their history it is essential to begin with their material conditions of production. This is not to deny the validity of philosophical, political, artistic, or even at the limit, religious activities, but only to insist that these activities are moulded by, and only intelligible in terms of, the prevailing forms of material production.

⁵ It will be shown that there is no real human equality in a Marxist worldview, even though they claim to seek it here.

⁶ Van Til pointed out the danger that the church faced in this regard, that of being co-opted by non-Christians to further seemingly desirable goals:

Throughout the history of the church one of the greatest dangers, if not the greatest danger, threatening it has been the idea that there are high and noble forms of non-Christian thought that can stand ready to join a common expedition against secularism and materialism (quoted in Bahnsen, 1998:291).

Taking these two descriptions together, one can see what the ultimate reality in a Marxist worldview is: it is material and matter, specifically, material production. For Communists, nothing is more foundational to reality than economic activity as seen in material production.

The problem with a materialistic worldview is that it is merely assumed, it is not achieved through any logical argument. John Frame (1994:130) described it well:

These [Marxist] scholars offer no proof that their methodology is superior to that of historic Christian methods of Bible study. Instead, we are told dogmatically that man cannot believe in miraculous occurrences in the age of radios and airplanes. How the radio and the airplane refute, e.g., Jesus' feeding of the five thousand is rather unclear. The critics' own belief in their methods is not based on proof in any normal sense. It is a presupposition.

What this means is that the ultimate basis of reality for a Communist worldview is not based on any rational reason. It is an unquestioned assumption. Part of the role of the apologist would be to question this assumption and show how weak it is. This is what is meant by making people "epistemologically self-conscious" (Bahsen, 1998:416).

3.3.2 A Christian response

In opposition to this, the Christian worldview believes that the ultimate basis for reality is God revealed in the Christian Scriptures. God is above and distinct from all created reality. This attribute of God is called his aseity, he is totally independent of anything else; he does not need anything else (Frame, 2015: 34). This God is also a personal God, that enters in a relationship with his creation. What this means is that humanity is not at the mercy of merely impersonal forces of economic logic, as they would be in a materialistic view. God, in his wisdom guides all human history according to a preordained plan. He has the "desire and ability to deal with his people in highly personal and bountiful ways" (Yarbrough, 2004:19). As John Frame (2015:36) puts it: "If personality is absolute, there is One who cares about what we do, who approves or disproves our conduct. And that person has some purpose for evil, too, mysterious as it might seem to us."

God has bound himself to humanity by creating us in his image. This means that "[t]he God who is in need of nothing is also the God who is 'with us' to move and act in the world, including to *reveal himself*, in order to carry out his perfect plan" (Oliphint, 2013:59).

Moving on to Marx's (1843) accusation of religion as an "opiate," or coping mechanism for the injustices of the world. There is some truth to this statement, as there is in any misrepresentation, and "some religious groups are no more than opiates providing transient highs based on individual

feelings rather than on verifiable, ultimate truths" (Keith, 2017:23). The Christian faith does provide comfort to its adherents amid the suffering that is part of life, just like an opiate may. However, unlike an opiate, it does not merely numb the pain, it deals with its root causes.⁷ The first question of the Reformed creed, the Heidelberg Catechism, addresses this issue directly:

Q. What is your only comfort in life and death?

A. That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood and has set me free from all the power of the devil. He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation. Therefore, by His Holy Spirit He also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for Him.

Instead of being an opiate, true faith is a comfort brought to Christians by Him who is in Christ their heavenly Father (Mat.6:8-9). This brings one back to the personality of God. For Christians, ultimate reality is not some impersonal material force or economic rule, but the Creator of everything that exists and every law that can be discovered. He is a just and caring God (Frame, 2015:40). He provides comfort to his people, not necessarily by removing the pain, but by being with them amidst it all and by assuring them that He is in control of the future (Van Til, 2008:42). God also does not merely comfort from a distance. He enters the suffering of this world through the incarnation of his Son, Jesus Christ (Oliphint, 2013:62). Christ experienced every form of oppression and suffering therefore, he can truly sympathise with those who suffer (Heb. 4:15).

3.4 Anthropology

3.4.1 SACP's internal consistency

As with its view on religion, the Marxist-Leninism of the SACP changed its teaching on human identity in a way that suits its agenda best at a particular time or place. Initially, in the early stages of Communist thought, the focus was economic – a person is identified primarily by their economic class (Smith, 2010:557). The Communist Manifesto shows this clearly:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at

⁷ This will be seen more clearly in the section on Salvation.

large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations. The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones. Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses however, this distinct feature: it has simplified class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other — Bourgeoisie and Proletariat (Engels and Marx, 2000).

As it became clear that the hoped-for proletarian revolution would not take place, Lenin and others edited Marx's views. For Marx, national identity was of minimal importance, but Lenin saw this as a possible tool to further his revolutionary goals. For him, entire nations could be classed as oppressor or oppressed. He sought to create alliances between Communists and nationalist movements – even if these nationalist movements may contain bourgeois elements (who were the traditional enemy of the workers in Communist thought). His plan was first to fight for national revolution, and then use that as a basis for a Communist revolution (Smith, 2010:558). This command was then transmitted to the SACP, which they obeyed by allying with the ANC (SACP, 1998).

But with time, more and more levels of oppression were added, both within the SACP and other Communist movements (Trueman, 2018). The SACP showed this change in 2012 by adding to the opening lines of the Communist Manifesto, "The history of human societies has been one [...] of many variants of brutal patriarchal, colonial, racial, class and other oppressions." (SACP, 2012b). Clearly, economic and class oppression was no longer their only or even primary focus.

But crucially, through all these pragmatic changes to its worldview, the binary of human identity remains, one is either oppressor or oppressed – there is no in-between (Lenin, 2005b). As will be shown, this leads to problems when the differing areas of oppression are expanded without limit.

In all of this, an individual is of little value according to a Communist worldview. A person or a group is of no importance as compared to the "collective good."⁸ If this is the case, all manner of violence and shame can be done to an individual if it is determined that it would be best for the greater good (or better said – the accomplishment of the Communist ideal).

⁸ This will be shown more clearly in the section on Ethics, point 6.

This view of man is, however, not logical or coherent. Questions such as the following may indicate the untenability and unsustainability of the view:

- Is it not individuals who form a group? How then can they be of no significance?
- How many people must be part of a group for that group to have value?
- Is there a power other than the members of the group that determines what is in their favour and on which this power's authority rests?
- What must be done to a person who does not fall into any oppressed group?⁹ If the only hope for such a person is to join in the struggle by being part of the vanguard party, who has the authority to decide on the struggle or the aim of the vanguard party? Is it not again a small number of "leaders" who decide what should happen according to their own views?
- Is man not much more than just an economic being?

The idea of human identity primarily based on a person's place in oppressive hierarchies is for instance seen in the party's view of wives and mothers. The role of motherhood is referred to as "informal, unpaid reproductive labour" (SACP, 1998). They see a mother as being oppressed because she is not paid to bear and raise children. Because there is no economic benefit to her in that relationship, it is oppressive. Jenny Schreiner (2017:88) quotes Lenin in this regard:

One of the conditions for the social emancipation of women, and consequently one of the principles for solving this question was, in Lenin's view, the wide use of female labour in social production. He said that "to effect her complete emancipation and make her the equal of the man, it is necessary for the national economy to be socialised and for women to participate in common productive labour. Then women will occupy the same position as men.

Here one can see that the party (or more specifically, its leadership) decides what is best for individuals. It does not matter that a mother may experience joy and fulfilment in dedicating her life to raising her children. According to those in authority, she is oppressed.

These varying forms of oppression cannot be isolated. This leads to the party criticising black economic empowerment for merely dealing with race, and not taking the toll of class oppression and patriarchy into consideration (SACP, 2012b).

From the preceding exposition, a summary of the SACP anthropology can be made: Each person is reduced to a list of competing oppressions. The most important element of his or her identity is in which area he or she is most oppressed. The list of ways in which a person can be oppressed is not limited, but the party's current foci are race, class and gender (SACP, 2012b).

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The fact that these categories do not make any logical sense can be seen from the following: A black man may be defined by the SACP as oppressed because of his race, but if he is married and his wife raises the children, he is also her oppressor. If he is a heterosexual Christian man, he is also part of the group who oppresses homosexuals and minority religions, even if he does not actively take part in this oppression.

From this one can see that there is no way out of the contradiction inherent in every person. Every person is an oppressor in one way and oppressed in another. If all of history is class warfare, how can one choose sides? Which area of one's identity is paramount? If a black man is oppressed for his blackness while at the same time being an oppressor for his masculinity, how much is he acceptable to the party and to what extent does he deserve rejection?

3.4.2 A Christian response

Opposing this very conflicted and pained view of humanity, Christianity offers a more realistic and hopeful view of mankind. And in the end, shows true equality.

The first thing that must be said of mankind is that they were created in God's image. "He is therefore like God in everything in which a creature can be like God. He is like God in that he too is a personality [...]. [W]hen man was created, he had true knowledge, true righteousness, and true holiness." (Van Til, 2008:34) This is a person's primary identity, "it is this image of God that is the presupposition behind everything else we are" (Oliphint, 2013:93).

In stark opposition to the collectivism of a Communist worldview; each person matters as an individual. His or her class, race or gender add or subtract nothing to their worth. To use a cliché, each person is unique and special, each has his or her own "dignity and significance" (Allison, 2018:122). Each person has inherent value because each person is created in the image of God, even if this image is marred by sin (Berkhof, 1958:182-183).

To an extent, a Christian may agree with the idea quoted in the Communist Manifesto that the history of humanity is a history of strife. This goes back to the days of Cain and Able, where the first murder was committed between the first brothers. But the reason for this strife is not merely economic (even though at times that may be the reason for it on the surface). It goes much deeper than mere actions or systems. The real reason for this is the sin that is part of every human's heart. This is explained through the doctrine of the Fall of man. In their misunderstanding of human nature, the SACP falls into the trap of all Utopian worldviews. Nancy Pearcey (2008:130) describes it as follows:

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Utopians who deny Creation also deny the Fall, totally rejecting the idea that human nature is corrupt and prone to evil. Instead they redefine all social problems as temporary disorders that can be resolved through education and social engineering.

Understanding man's fallenness is as important as understanding his creation (Van Til, 2008:36). Mankind's fall affects both the image of God in them and the rest of creation. As for the image of God in mankind, it was not taken away, but it was defaced. When man was created, he had true knowledge, but his decision to sin has taken that away. Man has instead chosen to follow a lie. He turned his back on God and has forgotten that he is merely a creature (Van Til, 2008:36). Man has rejected both the truth and God. This doctrine finds one of its clearest expressions in Romans 1: 18-25:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So, they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

But, since mankind was created to be lords over creation, his fall affected the rest of creation. All of creation suffered, and as a result mankind suffered even more. It was not only other people that may hurt him; all of creation was tainted, thorns and thistles sprung up (Gen. 2:17-19), making life much harder (Van Til, 2008:35; Oliphint, 2013:95).

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From these two principles – man's creation in God's image and his fall into sin – one can see that a Christian view of mankind is one that sees people as truly equal. All people are precious because they are created in the image of God, which is true of "the just and the unjust." A person who is part of an "oppressive class" is not of less value than the "oppressed." This equality goes the other way as well, all of mankind is responsible for suffering and injustice. No person is without fault, all mankind has fallen in sin, therefore all mankind is at fault for the injustices that are prevalent in the world. This does not allow a Christian to just sit back and accept the world for the unjust one it is, as will be shown in the section on Ethics (point 6). Scripture does deal with what believers must do in the face of injustice.

3.5 Knowledge

3.5.1 SACP's internal consistency

In the issue of epistemology, the linchpin of the SACP's worldview shows itself. Even though there are various aspects of epistemology, this study focuses on what the party sees as the ultimate authority in determining true knowledge. For the SACP, this is Marxist-Leninism as interpreted by the party itself. All members are expected to live and think in accordance with this.

Marxism today is a very fragmented ideology, according to Carl Truman (2018): "If there is one group in the world which can match Christians in its ability to fragment indefinitely and anathematize those who claim its label while deviating on fine points of dogma, it is the Marxists." However, the SACP is seen by some as the most orthodox Marxist-Leninist party currently active, more closely adhering to the original ideology than other parties (Scholtz & Scholtz, 2008b:123). While the party's interpretation of Marxist-Leninism may be orthodox, the crucial aspect of the SACP epistemology is their interpretation - not necessarily the ideology as promulgated by Marx and Lenin.

The following is part of a pledge that every party member must take:

I accept the aims and objectives of the SACP and agree to abide by its Constitution and loyalty to carry out the decisions of the Party. I shall strive to live up to the ideals of Communism and shall selflessly serve the workers and the poor and the country, always placing the interests of the Party and the workers and the poor above personal interests (SACP, 2012a).

This view of the party as supreme epistemological authority is based on Lenin's idea of a vanguard party. This entails a group of dedicated professional revolutionaries who are well educated and can objectively see what needs to be done in the cause of revolution (Lenin, 2005a; Fetscher, 1991a:80). The workers and the oppressed cannot be trusted to see what their lot truly is. The party states explicitly, "the workers and the poor can (and actually have) supported ideas, including very reactionary and anti-working class ideas, that are not in accordance with their material reality" (SACP, 2007a). What this comes down to is that the party (in actuality its leadership-elite) knows best and demands obedience.

It is clear, this is a very demanding and even oppressive approach towards the party's members. It can even be regarded as cultic, since a characteristic of every cult is a demand by the leadership of total obedience and control of its members' thinking (Stoker & De Bruyn, 1995:564; Deikman, 1994:89). This is tied to its anthropology, where the individual is not of importance, but the collective is. However, "the collective" cannot decide for itself what is in its own best interests, only the party (that is, the leadership) can do this. It is hard not to see an immensely

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condescending view of the people they claim to fight for. The leadership of the party are privy to a special knowledge, has all authority and are untainted by the ideas of the oppressive class.

In this one can see how the various aspects of a worldview are connected. The ideas of the members of the vanguard party are worth more than the ideas of an ordinary working-class person. Not all people are equal. The party's leadership knows best, and they claim to follow the ever important Marx and Lenin – but only as they see fit. While not going into the specific moral failings of these two men,¹⁰ or the SACP leadership, it is clear that none of them are perfect or omniscient, but all are fallen in sin (just like the rest of humanity). It cannot be wise to entrust one's foundation for all knowledge on what they say or decide, with a pledge to "carry out the decisions of the party", whatever these decisions may be according to the leadership-elite.

The party's devotion to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism and the extremes they would go to defend it, is seen most clearly in its handling of the fall of the Soviet Union and the corresponding revelation of atrocities that were committed under the name of Communism. According to the leadership of the party, the real tragedy of the millions killed by the Communist regime in the Soviet Union is that they had to spend energy in defending the ideology, instead of furthering the revolution (SACP, 1998).¹¹ Almost all suffering experienced under Communists is tolerated, since they claim that all of this is done in the interest of the greater good (Schmitz, 2019).

Part of the problem with having a manmade ideology as the basis of all knowledge, is that it will change as time and circumstances change. It was shown earlier how Lenin and the SACP changed aspects of the ideology of Marx (its emphasis only on class) to suit the practical needs of the time. The ideology that people must dedicate their lives to, is not eternal but changing. Therefore, it cannot be a solid foundation on which to build knowledge. What eventually happens is that the leadership of the party may change core issues in its worldview in order to further what

¹⁰ To name a few examples: Marx fathered an illegitimate son by the family maid and sent the son away to be raised by a poor family (Jones, 2017:324). This maid was also never paid for her work. This contradiction between Marx's ideology of working-class salvation and his actions towards the working class in his household are shown by Paul Johnson (1988:79):

In all his [Marx's] researches into the iniquities of British capitalism, he came across many instances of low-paid workers, but he never succeeded in unearthing one who was paid literally no wages at all. Yet such a worker did exist, in his own household. When Marx took his family on their formal Sunday walks, bringing up the rear, carrying the picnic basket and other impedimenta, was a stumpy female figure. This was Helen Demuth [the life-long family maid]. She got her keep but was paid nothing [...] She was a ferociously hard worker, not only cleaning and scrubbing, but managing the family budget [...] Marx never paid her a penny.

Lenin encouraged violence, murder and bank robbery to further his revolutionary goals (Service, 2000:177). While he was in power, he was also immensely cruel. Richard Pipes (1997: 507) described him as follows:

Towards outsiders, people not belonging to his order of the elect – and that included 99.7 percent of his compatriots – Lenin showed no human feelings whatever, sending them to their death by tens of thousands, often to serve as an example to others.

¹¹ This will be explained further under Ethics.

it sees as most important or most beneficial at the time. Ordinary members are forced to entrust their thinking to the party and thus become ideological slaves of the party.¹²

3.5.2 A Christian response

The starting point for Christian epistemology is God himself. This implies acknowledging that God is the source of all truth. Only God has all truth. While man can attain truth, it is only with God's help. He is the one who gives insight. If we want to attain real truth, "we must seek to think his thoughts after him" (Frame, 2015:48).

If mankind wants to attain true knowledge, he needs God to give it to him and God does indeed do this through revelation. According to the Belgic Confession (art. 2) there are two sources of God's revelation: Nature and Scripture (Berkhof, 1958:36-37).

By nature, man knows that a personal God exists and that he is accountable to him. But, instead of submitting to this knowledge, sinful man suppresses it and follows his own desires (Rom. 1:19-21). This knowledge that God gives through creation is enough to leave all mankind without excuse. All people know instinctively that they are guilty, that they do not live a fully moral life. In the words of Romans 2: 15 "They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them." Because this knowledge is painful, mankind suppresses it, they try to deny the truth they know and attempt "to assert their own autonomy: to make themselves, or something other than the biblical God, the final standard of truth and right." (Frame, 2015: 48) In order to avoid the pain of their consciences accusing them, they turn to anything that may assuage it. Because of this, mankind needs more than the general revelation found in Creation.

The second source of revelation is found in Scripture. The knowledge found in creation is not sufficient for sinful mankind to find the answers he needs for all this life and the next. The only way for mankind to know what is true about God and the way to be reconciled to him is through his Word. In his Word, God shows the way to salvation and true freedom (Berkhof, 1958:37; Buice, 2019). God is the source of all truth, and if anyone wants to have access to that source, he needs Scripture. It is also important to note that the Bible is not only authoritative on religious matters, as some would claim, it is authoritative on all that it speaks of, and it deals with all of life

¹² This is another example of cult-like behaviour (Stoker & De Bruyn, 1995:564; Deikman, 1994:89).

and creation, because it is from the Creator of all things himself (2 Tim. 3:16; Van Til, 2008:29; Percy, 2008:93-95).

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After acknowledging that God does indeed provide mankind with sufficient knowledge through the revelation of nature and Scripture, the apologist must also acknowledge another crucial factor in Christian epistemology, namely, the noetic effects of sin (Van Til, 1925:342, 619). What this means is that sin did not only scar man morally, but his mind and thinking processes were affected as well. He no longer thinks the way he should think. While he is not fully irrational, all his thinking is tainted, and therefore unaided human knowledge cannot be trusted (Van Til, 1925:311), and definitely cannot be blindly depended upon as demanded by the SACP.

Unlike the SACP's view, true knowledge and understanding is not limited to a select group of special people whose thinking should be trusted above all else. The Christian worldview is vast and all-encompassing; no one can know all of it. But everything that a person needs to know to be saved and live a life that is pleasing to God, can be known by anyone who reads or hears Scripture. This is the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture. Greg Bahnsen (1979) defines it as follows:

Scriptural perspicuity meant that its literature was not so technical or peculiar that some kind of "expert" was required to mediate its message to common men whether that mediator was an expert in the opinions of the Roman magisterium, allegorical fancies, historical subtleties, existential insight, demythologization, or what have you. The Reformers were convinced that freeing the Bible from authoritative interveners need not spell the end to finding any distance, specifiable, definite message in the Scripture, for it was God Himself who communicated His own special word therein without obscuring His intent.

Again, from this one can see true equality. Though there are teachers of Scripture who train others to use it well, these people do not have special access or authority over Scriptural interpretation. As William Tyndale, the first man to translate the Bible from Greek and Hebrew into vernacular English said to a Catholic leader who wanted to keep the Bible out of the common language, "If God spare my life ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plow, shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost" (quoted from Piper, 2006). Christians believe that the poor and uneducated can be trusted to have a solid epistemology, unlike Communists who believe only the party and its cadres can be trusted.

3.6 Ethics

3.6.1 SACP's internal consistency

The SACP's ethics are guided by its epistemology and anthropology as interpreted by the party. This was the same for Lenin (2005b), who explained the reasons for it as follows:

We say that our morality is entirely subordinated to the interests of the proletariat's class struggle. Our morality stems from the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat [...to us there is no such thing as a morality that stands outside human society; that is a fraud. To us morality is subordinated to the interests of the proletariat's class struggle.

From this, two things are evident. Firstly, this is fully in line with the collectivist view of humanity, where individual wellbeing is not the thing sought for, but rather the so-called collective good. Secondly, when the party is the decider of what is in the best interest of the proletariat, any action is moral or immoral based on the decision of the leaders of the party.¹³ This may change with time, depending on the stage of the revolution. This meant that all manner of violence, torture or imprisonment will always be ethical if the leadership-elite decides that it is necessary, up until the few with authority in the party decides that the revolution is complete (Lukes, 1991:342; Gecy, 1955).

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During the Cold War and apartheid, the SACP stood by its support of the Soviet Union even amid the atrocities it committed. It was justified in doing this because it was "the first workers state" and it supported the ANC and SACP in its struggle efforts (SACP, 1998). Because the Soviet Union was a Communist state (fighting against capitalist hegemony), its moral failings can and should be excused – actually, it should not even be considered as moral failings.

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In the late 1990's the SACP realised that it should have instead condemned some of these atrocities. Yet, they did not do so out of concern for the suffering of the people who lived under Communist regimes. Rather, the party believes that because it did not condemn Soviet atrocities earlier, for much of the 1990s "the SACP has had to devote considerable energies and time to collectively debating and developing a consistent socialist understanding of these questions" (SACP, 1998). The major problem it sees is not moral, it is ideological. There seems to be no real concern for human suffering, because in this worldview human suffering is subordinated to the larger goal of class warfare (Lenin, 2005b; Gecys, 1955). The real problem is the energy that had to be wasted in debating what happened in the past and having it fit in with a socialist

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¹³ This is another aspect of the party that is typical of cults. According to Deikman (1994:78): "When a leader's actions conflict with the group's principles, standards, or values, followers may twist words and meanings to reduce cognitive dissonance and maintain the fantasy."

understanding. This is confirmed by what the party sees as its role in the future: "The challenge to rescue socialism from the events of 1989-91 [the collapse of the Soviet Union] and to renew socialist confidence and optimism remains an important priority of the SACP." (SACP, 1998) Socialist ideology is the thing that needs to be guarded and saved from what happened. It is most important, more so than immediate human suffering.

Because the collective good (as determined by the party) is the basis of ethics, individuals and communities are discouraged from doing things that may help them improve their lot in life if this is not in line with the party's idea of what is needed. Jeremy Cronin showed this in his view on the issue of land restitution. He encouraged black people to opt to take land instead of monetary compensation. Even though he acknowledged that families and communities have improved their lives by taking monetary compensation for land instead of the land itself, it would be better for them to instead take the land to further "the radical transformation of existing racialised patterns of land ownership" (Cronin, 2018:39). Even if a community or family may be helped by something, it is not good itself. It would be better to focus on the larger racial and class balance that must be addressed. As with the party's handling of Soviet atrocities, it shows that it does not care for individual welfare, only that of what the leadership considers to be the collective good. Also, it cannot be stressed enough that only the party can decide what is the collective good. Basically, as was seen in the Soviet Union, individuals are at the mercy of the Communist ideology as interpreted by the leadership of the party.

This Communist ethic has led to more suffering than any other ideology or dictatorship wherever and whenever it has been applied.

- Soviet Union, terror and forced starvation
- China: Mao Zedong's "Great Leap Forward" launched in 1959 led to the deaths of at least 45 million people (up to 3 million of these were executions, the rest died as a result of the famine Mao's policies caused). This makes Mao "one of the greatest mass-murderers in history" (Dikötter, 2010; Somin, 2016).

- Cuba: While not as lethal as the Soviet Union and China,

[i]n the earliest days of the revolution, summary executions established a culture of fear that quickly eliminated most resistance. In the decades that followed, inhumane prison conditions often leading to death, unspeakable torture and privation were enough to keep Cubans cowed. (O'Grady, 2005)

All the while, the face and leader of the revolution, Fidel Castro, lived in opulence – at his death, his personal wealth was estimated to be \$900 million (Flamer, 2016).

- Venezuela: the most recent example. Nicholas Maduro and his forerunner, Hugo Chavez have taken this country from being the richest in South America to social and financial ruin

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(Fisher, 2017). They were and are praised for faithfully implementing socialism by Communists worldwide, including the SACP and ANC (Fabricius, 2019; Stephens, 2019).

Starvation and violent political repression are rampant.

Other examples can be found in Cambodia (BBC, 2018), Ethiopia (Puddington, 1986), Vietnam (Menand, 2018)¹⁴, and many other countries.

Ilya Somin (2017) helpfully summarised Communism's impact on the countries it has been implemented in:

In each of these cases, communist rulers were well-aware that their policies were causing mass death, and in each they persisted nonetheless, often because they considered the extermination of "Kulak" peasants a feature rather than a bug.

While collectivization was the single biggest killer, communist regimes also engaged in other forms of mass murder on an epic scale. Millions died in slave labor camps, such as the USSR's Gulag system and its equivalents elsewhere. Many others were killed in more conventional mass executions, such as those of Stalin's Great Purge, and the "Killing Fields" of Cambodia.

The injustices of communism were not limited to mass murder alone. Even those fortunate enough to survive still were subjected to severe repression, including violations of freedom, of speech, freedom of religion, loss of property rights, and the criminalization of ordinary economic activity. No previous tyranny sought such complete control over nearly every aspect of people's lives.

Although the communists promised a utopian society in which the working class would enjoy unprecedented prosperity, in reality they engendered massive poverty. Wherever communist and noncommunist states existed in close proximity, it was the communists who used walls and the threat of death to keep their people from fleeing to societies with greater opportunity.

In the face of all this factual evidence, it is evident that the SACP's devotion to Communism is not primarily guided by care for the people they claim to represent. If it were, they would not follow such a destructive ideology. Their primary concern is furthering the ideology, even at the cost of suffering.

3.6.2 A Christian response

Whereas for the Communist the so-called collective good is ultimate, Christianity bases its interpersonal ethic on the value of every individual. It is predicated in the fact that all men are

¹⁴ I refer here to the forced collectivisation and resulting starvation that the Communist regime implemented after their victory against the Americans and South Vietnam, not to the war.

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created in the image of God, which means that every individual, not a nebulous “collective”, must be regarded as worthy.

An important summation of a Christian view of ethics is found in Jesus’ words in Matthew 22: 37-40:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

A Christian view of ethics can therefore be divided into two parts: love for God, and love for our fellow man. This is what mankind was created for (Reeves, 2012:65).

The love for one’s neighbour stresses the contrast between a Christian and Communist ethic. In Christian ethic, even though a person may be part of the so-called oppressor class of whatever kind, they do not lose their inherent value as someone created in God’s image. Whereas a Communist ethic may allow for oppressive atrocities to be committed against those who they decided to be oppressors because of their group identity, which is not the case for a Christian. However, if a crime is committed, God has given the authorities power to punish, but this punishment is based on actions, not identity. This power to punish is given to the state, not to revolutionary parties, and with the purpose to punish the evildoer for his evil acts, not his beliefs or identity (Frame, 1989: 224). Romans 13:1-6 makes this clear:

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore, one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.

It must be emphasized that the state is only authorised to punish wrongful acts. Whereas a Communist ethic may view a person as a criminal for being part of the oppressive class (even if he does nothing overtly criminal), this is not allowed for in the Christian worldview. One’s so-called class identity does not determine whether one is right or wrong.

Christian ethics also handles mankind’s responsibility to his Creator. God has created mankind, which gives him an absolute right to demand what He wants from them (Oliphint, 2013:93). Since He made man in his image, he made them to reflect and represent him in the rest of creation in a

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responsible way. God's standard for humanity is absolute perfection (Van Til, 2008: 87). This perfection goes beyond merely the good deeds committed and evil deeds avoided, it goes much deeper. True good deeds for a Christian will have "three necessary ingredients: (1) a heart purified by faith, (2) obedience to God's Word, and (3) the right end, the glory of God" (Frame, 2008: 28).

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The next logical question links with the epistemology (knowledge) section, "How can we know exactly what God wants, what he sees as right and wrong?" Scripture talks of two ways. In the first place, because of being God's image, mankind knows intuitively what is right and wrong. They are born as moral beings and with a conscience. However, because they know that they cannot attain to this standard, mankind suppresses this knowledge and hardens their consciences against God's standard (Frame, 2015: 50). Because of this, mankind needs God's special revelation in Scripture. In Scripture God has given mankind access to his unchanging source of ethics in his Word. Man cannot be trusted to create his own standards for right and wrong, he is too tainted by sin. God has given mankind what they need in his Word, if they are willing to submit to and obey it (Frame, 2015: 40; Van Til, 2008: 74). Furthermore, returning to a point made under the section on knowledge, a Christian ethic is not based on what is expedient at the time determined by a group of party leaders. Because God and his Word are eternal, it can be trusted to always be true. It will not change at the whims of leaders and expediency (Ascol, 2018).

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3.7 Salvation

3.7.2 SACP's internal consistency

Taking the final part of the TAKES method and applying it to the SACP's worldview, their view on salvation, a good starting point can be found in an earlier draft of the Communist Manifesto. In it Friederich Engels (2000) gave a helpful summary of the Marxist ultimate aim and salvation hope:

What is the aim of the Communists? Answer: To organise society in such a way that every member of it can develop and use all his capabilities and powers in complete freedom and without thereby infringing the basic conditions of this society.

How do you wish to achieve this aim? Answer: By the elimination of private property and its replacement by community of property.

The first answer Engels gives is that Communists want complete freedom for the individual. However, this "freedom" does not correspond in any way to their modus operandi of the party. Firstly, within the party itself it demands full obedience from their members and not allowing individual thinking. Secondly, according to them, the party must take control of the state. They must then use the coercive power of the state to further revolutionary goals, even to the direct

disadvantage and survival of the individual or even whole communities. The SACP sees its role as using state power to further the National Democratic Revolution (NDR), which is the second stage of the revolution (the first being the ending of apartheid). The NDR is the official plan to use the instruments of the government of South Africa to further the Communist revolutionb(SACP, 2012b).

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An important question in this regard is who can define what “freedom” is? Who can say that the revolution is complete? Who can decide when the party has used the powers of the state enough? The answer is always the same – the party does. The leadership of the SACP decides all of this. As was shown earlier in the section 5, “Knowledge”, individuals cannot be trusted to see what they really need according to the authoritarian leadership of the SACP. That is the responsibility of the vanguard party. In the same way, individuals cannot be trusted to define their freedom. The party will decide for them. But clearly, this is no freedom. This takes all agency away from individuals and puts all authority in the hands of a small elitist leadership group. They will tell people when they are free. In the words of Matthew Schmitz (2019): “Men do not participate in a shared end as citizens. They are simply forced to submit.”¹⁵

Until the time of Communist freedom is at hand, the party must be trusted with more and more power to accomplish this. They will take over more aspects of the state, while at the same time making sure that the state increases its reach. So, one is expected to trust that the party will use its increased power in a trustworthy way, hoping that they would be the exception to Lord Acton’s famous dictum: “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” (Oxford dictionary of quotations, 2014:1) All hope is placed in the party elite. They are the true saviours. This should be done in the face of all previous Communist regimes proving themselves to be an oppressive dictatorship, harming those who they rule to the benefit of a small elite – as can be seen in the USSR, the Eastern Bloc, China and Cuba, among others¹⁶ (Brooker, 2000:81, 83, 160).

¹⁵ This seems to be a clear illustration of what was said in the George Orwell (1977: 5) novel *1984*. In the novel, the party sought to control all speech and even ideas. It succeeded in making people believe utterly absurd and contradictory statements, the most famous of these was “War is Peace. Freedom is Slavery. Ignorance is Strength”.

¹⁶ As to the critique of this fact that these regimes did not practise real Communism, Jordan Peterson (2017) makes the following statement: “When someone says that wasn’t real Communism, here is what it means: I am so narcissistic and arrogant and so convinced of the rightness of my ideology and my moral purity, that if I was the dictator of a Communist state, the utopia would have come in as promised.” Basically, in the face of all historical proof, one must be extremely self-righteous to still pursue this ideology, especially as a leader.

3.7.2 A Christian response

From a Christian perspective, the problems with the SACP's view on salvation are innumerable, but two problems stand out. Firstly, it only focuses on external factors – they believe that once external economic injustices are removed, people will cease to be oppressed. But this does not take into account the corruption in each person's heart. As was shown in the discussion on the Fall of man (see Anthropology, section 4), mankind's problem is not primarily external, it is the sin within each person's heart.

Secondly, and related to the first, one is forced to place all hope in the leadership of the party. One must trust that they will not abuse their authority and even trust them to decide when one is truly free. But these leaders are all humans with their own sinful desires and have all the means and justification to oppress. All men are fallen in sin. It is useless to put any trust in man to save.

What answers can a Christian worldview provide to these problems mankind is facing? Christianity is clear that there is indeed a problem of injustice in the world, but for a Christian the problem is more serious than even mankind's oppression at the hands of others. The problem is that humanity is in rebellion against its Creator and enslave themselves to their own or others' desires (Ciampa, 2000:505). Because the ultimate reality of the universe is an absolute personality, they are accountable to him for what they do, since they are in a relationship with him. Humanity's sin against him and their fellow human beings awakens his righteous anger (Morris, 1988:732). Therefore, it is safe to say that for the Christian worldview, man's ultimate problem is God's wrath on him because of his sin.

Furthermore, man is totally incapable of saving himself. Other worldviews attempt to create its own saviour (in the case of the SACP, this is the vanguard party). Christianity alone adequately acknowledges man's inability to save himself. If mankind is the problem, how can they also be the solution (Frame, 2015:51)? Only a holistic biblical worldview can provide the requisite understanding of human nature and God's solution to its problems (Pearcy, 2008:131)?

God took the initiative in man's salvation by providing a way for sins to be punished, which is in compliance with his justice. He did this by sending his Son to take the curse of sin and be punished in man's place. In that way both his righteousness and wrath are fulfilled. After his Son died, he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. He then sent his Holy Spirit to indwell believers. The Holy Spirit then works in believers to live righteous and fight the sin and unrighteousness even in their own lives (Platt, 2017:14; Van Til, 2008:40).

Even after an individual is saved, he is not completely free from the effects of sin. He still lives in a fallen world, and although he battles sin, he is not yet completely free from it in his own life.

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Therefore, the Christian worldview lays emphasis on hope of the future. This is not a pie in the sky or opium for the people, but a wonderful certainty of a perfect life with our God and Saviour (Pearcy, 2008:364). Christ promised to renew all things. There will be a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 21), where God will be with his people and where there will no longer be any sin or suffering (Van Til, 2008:42). There will be peace, not just between people, but between God and people. (Buys, 2013:77)

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The question could then be asked: "If Christians put their faith in a new world and future salvation, will this not dissuade them from pursuing justice and alleviating suffering in this world?" Scripture deals with this head-on. Micah 6:8 states, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" A Christian puts his hope in a future and eternal salvation that is yet to come, but while he waits for this, he and the church must be a force for good in this world. A truly holistic Reformed Christian worldview will mean that its adherents will pursue the earthly good and justice for others as well – this can be seen in its treatment of the poor (Buys, 2013:90), migrants (Platt, 2017:234; Medeiros, 2013:180), abused women (Langberg, 2013:146), children (Tchividjan, 2013:172), and of orphans (Platt, 2017:108).

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The major difference between this and the revolutionary focus of the SACP is that the Christian does not demand absolute power and trust from others to do this, but in fact, frees up individuals to be the persons that God created and called them to be (Pearcy, 2008:87), not what a select group of party leaders decides for them.

Conclusion

C.S. Lewis (1970: 324) said the following, which seems to apply to the SACP and Marxist-Leninists in general:

Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It would be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience. They may be more likely to go to Heaven yet at the same time likelier to make a Hell of earth. Their very kindness stings with intolerable insult. To be 'cured' against one's will and cured of states which we may not regard as disease is to be put on a level of those who have not yet reached the age of reason or those who never will; to be classed with infants, imbeciles, and domestic animals.

It is not possible to see the motives of every member of the SACP, but undoubtedly many of them pursue their revolutionary goals because they believe that is what would be best for society. However, even if one takes a very sympathetic view concerning the motives of Marx, Lenin and the SACP, the danger in their worldview remains. In order to pursue their goals, they need those who they claim to serve to give them their undivided trust, almost unlimited power, and if deemed necessary their very lives. And since the party is the one who decides who is right and wrong, oppressed and oppressor, they have a mandate to oppress – do whatever they wish to those they describe as being the oppressors. The examples of the Soviet Union, Maoist China and the Khmer Rouge show clearly what this will lead to.

Despite the authoritarian nature of their worldview, the SACP has been extremely successful fulfilling Lenin's goal of working with a nationalist party (the ANC) to further a Communist revolution. It decided the ideological direction of the ANC, and its NDR is still being implemented (Trewhela, 2017; Nzimande, 2006).

Understanding the thinking and beliefs behind the worldview of the SACP and through them the NDR will be crucial if Christians want to offer effective counter arguments to it. And because of the dangers inherent in a Communist worldview, it is crucial for Christians to do this.

CHAPTER 4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Summary of the findings

Chapter one described the purpose of this research as how key aspects of the SACP's worldview can be analysed and assessed through the TAKES presuppositional apologetic method so that all elements, including spoken and unspoken assumptions of their worldview are critiqued and measured against divine revelation. To achieve this, a historical analysis of the SACP's worldview as well as an explanation of the underlying beliefs and starting points of the TAKES method, according to Reformed presuppositional apologetics, were set as research objectives, to meet a third research objective, which is to analyse and make an assessment of the worldview of the SACP according to the TAKES method. The research objectives were achieved in the two articles found in chapters two and three of this study.

4.1.1 A historical analysis of the SACP's worldview

In the first article, the first research objective was addressed through answering the research question "What can be deduced from a historical analysis of the SACP's worldview?" When following the historical development of the SACP's thought, it became clear that the party remains true to the foundation laid by Marx and Lenin. They are strict in their adherence to the teaching of their ideological forebears and seem to attempt to apply their teachings to the current South African context. The consequences of these beliefs, if they are implemented, will be just as destructive as they were in the past. If one follows the historical record of Marxist-Leninism, it has time and again led to untold suffering for the people they claim to serve and there is no reason to think that this will not be the case in South Africa. It is a dangerous ideology that must be opposed. Christians need to play an active role in this opposition, not only for evangelistic purposes but also for the societal good.

However, when one engages in this battle of ideas, there is a danger that politics can become the focus more than God and his teachings. One of the best ways to withstand this, is to work from a consistent and explicit biblical foundation. For this, one needs an understanding of what a Christian worldview would be. The TAKES method of worldview analysis has proved to be an excellent tool to do this. It is simple to use, easy to understand and it covers the most crucial aspects of any worldview. It would be an extremely useful tool in the arsenal of any apologist.

4.1.2 Analysis and assessment of the SACP's worldview according to the TAKES method

In the second article, the other two research objectives were addressed by first answering the research question about the underlying beliefs and starting points of the TAKES method according to reformed presuppositional apologetics, and then applying those about the application of Reformed presuppositional critiques to the SACP's worldview. This could best be done by especially the Anthropology and Knowledge (epistemology) aspects of the TAKES analysis.

Because Marxist-Leninists have a binary view of mankind (only oppressed and oppressor), and because the only way for the oppressed to be freed is through revolution, any revolution will entail taking away power and wealth from the so-called "oppressor." The party is in charge of deciding who the oppressors are. The problem is that a case can be made that all people in one way or another "oppress" others. For example, a poor white man who struggles to survive financially is seen as an oppressor merely by the colour of his skin and his gender. In a Marxist-Leninist worldview he is regarded as an enemy and cannot expect much pity from revolutionaries. One can most clearly see how their ideological forebear, Lenin, implemented this in his almost genocidal treatment of the Kulaks, most of who were not "rich" in any sense of the word, they merely possessed a little more than the average peasant. For this, he demanded their extermination (Service, 2002:365).

Secondly, group identity is paramount. Very little attention is given to individual worth. Therefore, if a person, or a family, or even an entire community suffer because of communist practises, this is of little concern as long as the "oppressed" are helped by furthering the "revolution." This is why the SACP shows very little concern for the millions killed under communism – the "revolution" was furthered, which is more important, and they believe that this is ultimately for the good of the oppressed.

A Christian answer to this is found with a Christian view of anthropology – the simple fact that each person is made in the image of God. Even avowed atheists like Douglass Murray admit that justifying the sanctity of life – the life of the individual – is hard in a secular worldview (Murray, 2019). The fact that all people – whether you can be called oppressed and oppressor in this or that sense, or by some communist definition – are made in the image of God, gives each person innate sanctity and worth. For that reason, allowing for the suffering of individuals, communities or classes for a party defined idea of the "greater good" will be inconsistent with the above – actually inconsistent with that which is truly "good".

When it comes to epistemology, the worldview of the SACP is defined by the absolute devotion demanded by the party to Marxist-Leninism as defined by the party itself. All of the important terms such as “oppressed,” “oppressor,” and “revolution” are defined by the ideology and party leadership. The people who the party claims to serve have no say over what they need – the party knows best. Even if people will suffer now, they just need to trust the party for a better future.

The Christian answer to this is twofold: Christians are under no illusion that mankind lives in a fallen world. Scripture makes clear that this current world order will never be perfect, so any worldview that tries to attain a perfect system where there will be no oppression and suffering is bound to fail – especially if it is done by force and accompanying oppression. This is not to say that Christians do nothing to change unjust systems or help alleviate suffering. It merely means that they would be realistic in what to expect in a fallen world. For that reason, a system that offers a perfect world without divine intervention should always be perceived with suspicion.

Secondly, if it is known that all of mankind is fallen, and all systems are run by sinful people – even if governments are necessary to ensure safe living and working conditions of people (Rom. 12) – one cannot put one’s faith in government structure based on utopian ideology as is demanded by the SACP. These leaders are as sinful as the rest of mankind therefore, it is certain that they will abuse absolute authority when they are in control. The faith demanded by the SACP will lead to disillusionment, despair and poverty as can be seen from most examples of Marxist countries in the world.

4.2 A personal word in conclusion

My interest in this study is the culmination of my two bachelor’s degrees – one in International Relations (with an Honours in Political Studies) and one in Theology.

Initially, my focus would have been on the EFF, however Prof. Jan Venter suggested that I rather focus on the SACP, because of their stronger ideological grounding, a suggestion I am thankful for. The party has an extensive library on their beliefs: policy documents, conference documents, speeches and journal articles. All these writings made their beliefs clear. There has also been a remarkable consistency to their beliefs over the century of their existence. Coupled with this, because they are such an orthodox Marxist-Leninist party, it allowed me to use the writings of Marx and Lenin as well, giving the study more of a historical grounding.

As for the presuppositional apologetic aspect of my study, this arose out of my work as an evangelist for Campus Crusade for Christ, where I used this method in various conversations on

faith. This showed me the need to understand competing worldviews, show the inherent contradiction in them, and from there share the Christian answer. I wanted to do this with the Marxist-Leninism of the SACP.

Initially, my intention was mainly apologetic, to give a Christian response to this worldview. However, as I progressed with my study, I was struck by just how destructive Marxist-Leninism is and also how it has seeped into the governing ANC through its alliance with the SACP. Countries that implemented this worldview have experienced untold suffering because of it.

My study has convinced me even more of the danger of a Marxist-Leninist ideology. It is anti-Christian, but also deeply oppressive and bound to lead to destruction. I believe that Christians would be fully justified to work with unbelievers to battle destructive ideologies like this.

4.3 Recommendations

The tragedy of Communism is that no matter how many historical examples there are of the suffering it causes, it still remains extremely popular therefore, Christians must stand ready with answers to its ideas. Unfortunately, the words “Communist” and “Marxist” are thrown around quite easily at anything that is merely left-leaning. When this is done, the words lose their meaning and straw men are created. A proper understanding of Marxist beliefs can guard against this. Getting definitions right is crucial in the battle of ideas. Using this analysis may help Christians to do this.

Since the times of Marx and Lenin, Communism has grown and infected various other movements and worldviews. This can be most clearly seen in Critical Race Theory and the so-called “woke” movement, which, although not explicitly Communist is based on Communist foundations (Lindsay, 2020), the same is true of elements of the Black Lives Matter movement¹⁷ (Ford, 2020). Since these movements build on Marxism, a proper understanding of this worldview will help Christians confront problematic elements within these organisations in a fair and intellectually honest way. A proper understanding of the differences between a Communist and a Christian worldview will also guard against Communist infiltration of the church as was seen with liberation theology.

¹⁷ Though these are important leaders within the BLM movement, it does not necessarily imply everyone involved in the movement are Marxists. Also, a distinction must be made between Black Lives Matter as an organisation (which is referred to here) and “black lives matter” as a sentiment or idea.

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