Identity and difference are interwoven in significant ways with religion. Hence theological reflection has, I believe, important resources to contribute to the debate around non-racialism. The following are some elliptic suggestions and aphoristic prophetic predictions on the way in which this might occur.

1. Black theology/African theology

Black theology in South Africa, as in America, arises out of and speaks into situations of black oppression at the hands of white racism, both individual and structural. As long as the legacy of his racism remains in South Africa, Black theology will continue to speak with a loud voice. I venture to suggest, however, that its own elision of Coloured difference in the trope of Blackness will undermine its optimistic vision of black solidarity. If it continues to insist on the universal of blackness to signify "the oppressed it runs the danger of itself becoming hegemonically coercive. Furthermore, as black power is consolidated in the public sphere, and begins to emerge in the private, he language of "blackness" will no longer so easily be equated with oppression and domination. Given these two factors, I predict that Black theology will gradually be replaced by a new form of African theology, or perhaps by a post-colonial theology. These two latter possibilities hold out the most hope, I believe, for creative and prophetic reconstructions.

2. Sameness and difference

We will need to find new ways of speaking our sameness and our difference. Chromatic language will increasingly be seen to be inadequate. The terms Black, White, Coloured and Indian will be replaced, perhaps by the hybridised hyphens of Euro-African, Native African, Mestizo-African and Indian-African. Out of this could flow rich theological constructions of difference and community.

3. Non-racialism and the politics of difference

We will need to find ways to hold together the universal vision of non-racialism with a politics of difference. Here Daniel Boyarin's argument against Paul's universalist "There is no longer Jew or Greek" is one of many important theological and philosophical resources that we might draw from in this task. Boyarin's argument in the name of Jewish difference against what he describes as Paul's platonic universalism, is similar to the arguments that need to be made against the implicit platonism (or idealism) of the notion non-racialism. He argues that Paul's universalist vision "seems to conduce to coercive politico-cultural systems that engage in more or less violent projects of the absorption of cultural specificities into the dominant one" (1994: 228). It was against this non-racialism that Black theology protested. But it was against black theology's own coercive universalism that Coloured thinkers are now protesting. Boyarin's work is even more apposite, however, for he goes on to argue that "uncritical devotion to ethnic particularity has equally negative effects" (228). He poses the question which I think lies at the heart of the debate: "How can I ethically construct a particular identity which is extremely precious to me without failing into ethnocentrism or racism of one kind or another?" (229).

His tentative solution is a form of dialectic, that would "utilize each of these as antithesis to the other,
correcting in the Christian" system its tendencies toward a coercive universalism and in the "Jewish" system its tendencies toward contemptuous neglect for human solidarity" (229). He also argues for a kind of "diaspora" identity politics as a form of resistance, both to the domination of the universal, and to the danger of the particular having power over another. His point, if transposed onto the terrain of South Africa, is that, for instance, Black identity theology in a diaspora situation is always liberating and resistant, but when it attains power, it becomes another mode of domination needing the corrective of universalism and the resistance of other diaspora voices.

Boyarids poignant call expresses the pathos of my own argument: "Somewhere in this dialectic a synthesis must be found, one that will allow for stubborn hanging on to ethnic, cultural specificity but in a context of deeply felt and enacted human solidarity" (257)

4. Inter-religious dialogue

Models from the sphere of inter-religious dialogue might prove most useful in finding this synthesis. Inter-religious dialogue has had to develop creative ways of synthesising value laden religious particularities and differences with the quest for a form of "unitive pluralism". It is an as yet unexplored hunch that these models may prove fruitful in translation into this context.

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