

**Studies in Religion Lunch--Monday, September 18  
12:30 Kuenzle Michigan Union**

**Audience 25 local pastors, religious counselors and business people who are members of the Committee for the Visiting Professor of Religious Thought**

**Guests will begin lunch at 12:00, you will arrive at 12:30 and be introduced by David Freedman.**

**Talk Points**

**Very pleased to be here today and to tell you how much all of us appreciate this program that:**

has brought so many distinguished scholars to the University  
is helping us convey to students and the community the continuing importance of spiritual values and religious thought in our scholarship as well as in our daily lives  
and that brings campus and community together to achieve our common goals.

**Importance of Scholars**

Since 1983, the scholars you have brought to the campus have made an important contribution to our scholarship and teaching.

For example, Hans King, provoked a lively and significant debate on serious theological and moral issues that still is having an impact in the classroom and in faculty research. Of course, our students and faculty, local pastors and interested laymen can read Father King's work easily enough. But to truly understand the man and his work, there is simply no substitute for direct personal interaction with a thinker of his breadth and magnitude.

Equally compelling and thought provoking were Harvey Cox and Gustavo Gutierrez. Both raised deeply significant questions about social and personal moral choice that too often are obscured in our day to day lives.

The nearly dozen scholars who have visited under your program since you restructured it, have each called forth discussion and interaction with scholars, students and community that greatly enriched their intellectual life.

Probably even more importantly, these lecturers enriches our moral life and understanding and remind us that any purely intellectual enterprise is sterile without a grounding in humane values and commitments.

For this same reason, I have long recognized that the University's Program on Studies in Religion has a critical role to play in educating our students and campus community and in providing a focal point for dialog and interaction about the most fundamental questions of life.

I confess am especially intrigued by the themes of your lecture series. "Our Roots in the Future: Current Theological Topics" and now coming up "The Future: Keeping the Vision Alive"

### **Future and Values**

As many of you know, I am a burned out theoretical physicist--was that a lifetime ago--and as a result, I am something of a futurist. In my new job, I am spending a lot of time still thinking about the future

what kind of world we face in the 21st century

what the University needs to do to prepare students to live in an era I can only dimly imagine

what kind of research and service we need to help society solve its current problems and prepare for a new age that will clearly be very different from the one we know now.

But in a sense, the most important question is not so much what will be  
But what ought to be.

And to answer that question, we need help. For these answers we must turn to our theologians, our pastors and our philosophers.

For as much as the future will be different, some things will remain the same--- Our questions about our fate, our search for transcendent purpose and meaning for our lives...

The breathtaking advances of science and technology, the exponential growth of knowledge we are experiencing today, can sometimes blind us to the fundamental moral imperatives that will teach us how to live our lives well and to use our learning for the good of man.

Increasingly, I am convinced that we in education must join with others in our society do more to educate our students about moral questions and values.

Too many of our students come to adulthood lacking an understanding or appreciation for higher commitments and moral purposes. Without spiritual understanding and growth, their personal lives can be too often consumed in materialism and they can also lack the character and understanding so desperately needed by society.

For this reason, I think that the program of visiting theologians is deeply important educationally for both our campus and our community.

**This interaction of campus and community is yet another reason the Visiting Professors Program is so valuable.**

It brings us together as a community. In this as in so many areas, the University and the city of Ann Arbor have so much to gain by finding more ways to cooperate for the benefit of all of our people. Really, we are indivisible. I know there have been times in our history together when relations have been strained or distant.

But today, we have more at stake in collaboration than ever before because increasingly we are interdependent economically, culturally and socially.

The University wants to be a better neighbor. And programs like this one, help us to develop the partnership we need to achieve our common purposes.

**Conclusion.**

The Visiting Professors of Religious Thought Program came about through the initiative, enthusiasm, and collaboration of many individuals in the University and Ann Arbor community. I know that in the past the President's Office has been a supporter, and you can depend my continued interest and support.

Speaking personally and on behalf of the University I thank you for your efforts. They are critically important and I hope they will continue for many years to come.

Thank you.