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Department of Religious Studies being established at University of Montana

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A Department of Religious Studies is being established in the College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Montana, it has been announced by UM President Robert T. Pantzer.

Pantzer said two highly qualified educators, Dr. Ray L. Hart and Dr. Robert W. Funk, senior members of the Graduate Department of Religion at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn., will join the University of Montana faculty to begin the program of the new department with the Fall Quarter 1969.

Dr. Hart, who will become Professor and Chairman of the department, has been an associate professor of philosophical and systematic theology and director of graduate studies in religion at Vanderbilt. Dr. Funk, also appointed to a professorship on the Missoula campus, has been professor of New Testament and Hellenistic Studies and chairman of the Graduate Department of Religion at Vanderbilt.

Concerning the qualifications of these two men, Dr. Robert Coonrod, Dean of the UM College of Arts and Sciences, said, "They are two of the leading scholars in the field of religious studies. Their assignment to develop the program in religious studies here assures us of a department of national standing. Also this program will be of major consequence for inter-departmental development of humanistic studies at the University."

The establishment of the new department is the result of more than a year's study by the administration and committees of the UM faculty. Dr. Henry Bugbee, chairman of the special faculty committee formed to advise the administration on religious studies,
said, "The departmental program now being planned is comparable to programs in religious studies which have been developed by an increasing number of leading public and private universities across the country in recent years. The scholarly study of religions has been making rapid strides as an academic discipline in its own right, meeting an increasingly evident need on the part of today's students to become informed about religious traditions and their complexities."

Bugbee said that the following were among the leading scholars and educators consulted in the course of deciding on the new program and how it should be staffed: Dr. Robert Michaelsen, chairman of the Department of Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara; Dr. John Dillenberger, president, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California; Dr. Julian Hartt, director of graduate studies, Department of Religious Studies, Yale University; David R. Hauser, executive director, Society for Religion in Higher Education, New Haven, Conn.; Dr. Paul Ramsey and Dr. George Thomas, professors of religion, Princeton University; Dr. Robert Rankin, Danforth Foundation, St. Louis, Missouri; Dr. James M. Robinson, professor, Claremont Graduate School and University Center, Claremont, California; Dr. Nathan Scott, professor of theology and literature, University of Chicago, and Dr. Claude Welch, chairman, Department of Religious Thought, University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Hart brings to the University of Montana the editorial office of the "Journal of the American Academy of Religion," of which he is editor-in-chief-elect. Dr. Hart received his doctorate from Yale University in 1959. He also holds a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Southern Methodist University and a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Texas. Before joining the graduate faculty in religion at Vanderbilt, Dr. Hart held faculty positions at Yale and Drew Universities.

Dr. Hart and his wife, Fern, are parents of two sons.

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Dr. Funk brings to the University of Montana the editorial office of the "Journal for Theology and the Church," of which he is editor and chairman of the editorial board. Dr. Funk received his doctorate from Vanderbilt in 1953. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree, a Bachelor of Divinity degree and a Master of Arts degree from Butler University. He has held faculty positions at Butler, Texas Christian, Harvard, Emory, and Drew Universities, before joining the Vanderbilt faculty in 1966.

Dr. Funk and his wife, Inabelle, have two daughters.

Dr. Hart and Dr. Funk have each published a book and numerous articles in the field of religious studies.

The new Department of Religious Studies will replace the Affiliated School of Religion, which was established at the University of Montana in 1924, and has been supported since that time by various religious denominations.

Pantzer commended the present and past educational programs developed through the Affiliated School of Religion at UM. He said, "Those who have supported the school and its board of trustees deserve our warmest thanks for their support and guidance over the past 45 years."