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### Response Paper 1

Since the creation of Christianity and in the latter half of the first century, its followers, Christians have sought to formulate a unique identity for the religion. As the religion grew, various sects arose with their own interpretation of Christianity and its teachings. With a desire to generate unity within the belief system, early Christian leaders decided to establish a correct or orthodox approach towards Christianity, thus making other forms wrong or heretical. The deviation between what is orthodox and heretical within Christianity is best seen within the literature that each used. Both convey a similar story, however each has a distinct narrative.

The resurrection of Jesus is one the defining moments of the Christian faith. Both orthodox and heretical viewpoints communicate its importance. Notwithstanding, each have varying accounts of how it occurred, confirming the divide between them. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* represents orthodox beliefs. It illustrates how the apostles witnessed a reincarnated Jesus appear before them in The Gospel of Luke, Chapter 24, “ 36.....Jesus himself stood among them....38. And he said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why questions rise in your hearts? 39. See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have.’”<sup>1</sup>The orthodox bible portrays Jesus as the central

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<sup>1</sup> New Oxford Annotated Bible(*Revised Standard Version*) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 1283; p. 1284.

figure. The apostles are chosen to carry out Jesus's work under his direction, thus making them the absolute messengers of the faith. This version of Jesus's resurrection differs greatly from the heretical account.

*The Nag Hammadi Library in English* describes how Jesus came to Mary Magdalene and not the disciples in The Gospel of Mary Magdalene. It states "I saw the Lord in a vision and I said to him. 'Lord, I saw you today in a vision.' He answered and said to me, 'Blessed you, that you did not waiver at the sight of me. For where the mind is, there is treasure.'"<sup>2</sup> Both pieces of literature detail the same event, however each is recounted in a different way. The orthodox bible does not mention Mary Magdalene as a significant character responsible for the furtherance of Christianity. In heretical work, Mary Magdalene is the only one who sees Jesus. This makes her the central figure in propagating the Christian faith. Another difference is seen in the manner in which Mary Magdalene is depicted as a major figure in the resurrection of Jesus.

Mary Magdalene's role in the resurrection of Jesus is perceived differently by both orthodox and heretical viewpoints. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* explains how Mary Magdalene was one of the women that discovered the body of Jesus was missing from the tomb. She thus relayed this information to the apostles in The Gospel of Luke, Chapter 24. It states "Now it was Mary Mag'-dalene and Jo-an-'na, and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them told this to the apostles."<sup>3</sup> Mary Magdalene's function vastly differs in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* in which she is seen as the new leader of the apostles

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<sup>2</sup> James M. Robinson, editor, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 3d edition (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), pp. 525-527; pp. 222-224.

<sup>3</sup> New Oxford Annotated Bible (*Revised Standard Version*) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 1283; p. 1284.

following her vision of Jesus. It is implied that she is also his lover in The Gospel of Mary Magdalene. Her position is solidified by Peter who states “Sister, we know that the Savior loved you more than the rest of the women. Tell us the words of the Savior of which you remember.”<sup>4</sup> Mary Magdalene’s position in both pieces of literature tell a different story. In the orthodox bible Mary Magdalene is a supporter of Jesus and is not given a key role in the development of the Christian religion. In heretical literature Mary Magdalene is seen as the new leader of the apostles and the Christian faith, having this authority bestowed upon her by Jesus in her vision. Thus, the work of Jesus would be carried out through Magdalene. In addition, Magdalene is also noted as Jesus’s significant other, gaining her the trust of the apostles, consequently elevating her status.

At the end of the first century, the followers of Christianity were faced with the need to devise a distinctive identity of the religion. As the religion developed, so did numerous factions that embraced their own explanations and edifications of Christianity. Eager to create unification of the faith system, early Christian leaders made the decision to institute an approved and conventional system of Christianity, therefore classifying anything different as wrong and heretical. Christian literature demonstrates the divergence between what is viewed as orthodox and what is considered heretical. While the story of Jesus’s resurrection is the same in both, certain details are dissimilar that cast a different perspective of the events.

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<sup>4</sup> *James M. Robinson, editor, The Nag Hammadi Library in English, 3d edition (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), pp. 525-527; pp. 222-224.*