

## **The Function of Confessions of Faith in the Gospel of John**

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### **1. Introduction**

In the Gospel of John, episodes often appear in which people confess their faith in Jesus. Some examples include an official and his household in 4:46–53, multiple listeners in 8:30, and a man born blind in 9:35–38. In the Synoptic Gospels, however, while we often see that people are amazed at Jesus’s teachings and miracles, we rarely see confessions of faith in Jesus occur through these events.<sup>1</sup> Of course, the Synoptic Gospels do include some scenes in which Jesus’s disciples confess their faith in him: Matthew 16, for example, describes Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Son of the living God, where Jesus has given him the authority to forgive sins and hold the “keys of the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, such confessions are more prolific in the Gospel of John.<sup>3</sup> This raises multiple questions. First, what meaning do these people’s confessions of faith have in the Gospel of

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1 From the perspective of “who Jesus is,” it is rather peculiar that many do not explicitly confess their faith in Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, given that even the demons confess their “faith” in ways that expose Jesus’s identity (Luke 4:34, 41).

2 The English translation used in this article is from NRSV.

3 The scarcity of confession in the Synoptic Gospels may indicate a view that the importance of such confessions is limited to key figures like the disciples.

John? Are there any differences among the confessing characters or any unique emphasis given to their confessions in the narrative structure? Prior researchers have not focused much on *who* makes the confessions. Thus, this article addresses this gap in research by exploring the nature of the confessions of faith in the Gospel of John as well as their confessors. Here, the term “confession of faith” indicates a statement about who Jesus is rather than a formulation such as the creeds that would be developed later on. Thus, we do not deal with those parts of the text where there is no reference to the specific nature of Jesus, such as in 2:11 or 2:22, that is, verses referring to disciples’ faith in Jesus but not revealing who Jesus is.

I will here use a narrative-critical method for my analysis. I will not consider confessions as historical matters, but will instead focus on their functions in the Gospel narrative. Meanwhile, an analysis of all the confessions in the Gospel of John would be too vast for an article; I therefore limit the scope of my analysis to confessions that use a “title” for Jesus (e.g., “Lamb of God,” “Messiah”). That is, I will exclude other styles of confession, including confession-like utterances without using titles, such as the Samaritan woman’s words, “He told me everything I have ever done” (4:39), Peter’s affirmation of “You have the words of eternal life” (6:68), and the disciples’ response to Jesus’s farewell discourse: “we believe that you came from God” (16:30). I will also exclude the narrator’s commentary, such as “many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing” (2:23) for the same reason.

In confessing faith in Jesus, the characters speak of who Jesus is. In doing so, each character uses a title for Jesus. Scholarly research on these titles so far has predominantly focused on their Christological interpretations. Namely, scholars have studied the meaning of each title and its ideological background in understanding Jesus or the Christ. While there have been many studies on the content of faith in the Gospels, there are so far no studies on confessions of faith from the confessors’ perspectives. The same is true for the Gospel of John.

Regarding faith, Croteau analyzes the verb πιστεύω and states that we cannot

understand the adequacy (or inadequacy) of titles for confessing faith from the use of this verb alone.<sup>4</sup> Thus, focusing on the verb πιστεύω is generally insufficient, and a consideration of the wider context is necessary. While Croteau analyses the verb πιστεύω in the whole of the Gospel (including chapters 14 and 20), his research primarily focused on chapters 1–12 and neglected much of its latter half. Meanwhile, Manjaly analyzes a progression in the confessions of faith in the Gospel of John that gradually reveals Jesus’s identity.<sup>5</sup> However, he ends with Martha’s confession in John 11 and does not mention Mary Magdalene’s or Thomas’s confession in chapter 20. We will analyze Mary Magdalene’s and Thomas’s confession to complete our observation. Finally, Bowen notes that “evangelism is a process . . . . people come to Christian faith gradually, through a series of influences.”<sup>6</sup> He makes the point that questions and doubts about Jesus are the beginning of the process of faith. Still, he only uses examples in five places (chapters 4, 7, 1, 3, and 9), and the order in which he discusses them does not follow the narrative order of the Gospel, which ignores the flow of its overarching narrative. As these narratives provide important context, the order in which such episodes appear is essential.

This article first examines scenes of confessions of faith in the Gospel of John and analyzes the characteristics of each scene, especially in terms of the titles that they confess. It will also employ literary criticism techniques to grasp each scene’s relevance within the context of the wider narrative. Thus, I will examine how the Gospel’s overarching plot relates to the confessions of faith and how they are developed. From these analyses, I will clarify the function of these confessions. Through this process, I will illustrate and confirm the content of the confessions

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4 A. Croteau, “Analyzing Professions of Faith in the Fourth Gospel: Is Everyone Who Believes Saved?” *Perichoresis* 22:2 (2024), 30–45.

5 S. Manjaly, “Progressive Nature of the Confessions of Faith in the Fourth Gospel,” *Vidyajyoti* 81 (2017), 257–275.

6 J. Bowen, “Coming to Faith in the Gospel of John,” *Anvil* 19 (2002), 277–283.

are developed through the narrative's plot. Further, by comparing the confessions of each character with Peter's confession of faith, I will unpack the Gospel of John's evaluation of Peter as a figure.

## **2. The Text**

In the Gospel of John, the confessions of faith in Jesus occur on multiple occasions. I will examine each of them in the order in which they appear in the narrative.<sup>7</sup> First, I will deal with each scene individually before discussing the relationship between these scenes to understand their meaning within the context of the whole Gospel.

### **2.1 Individual titles given by characters**

#### **2.1.1 John the Baptist and Jesus's first disciples**

First, John the Baptist describes Jesus as the "Lamb of God" (1:29). This scene includes the implication that John the Baptist baptized Jesus (1:31), stating that his baptizing was Jesus "might be revealed to Israel." However, John the Baptist did not follow Jesus or become his disciple.<sup>8</sup> The Baptist also states that Jesus is the "Son of God" (1:34). From these expressions, it is clear both the "Lamb of God" and "Son of God" refer to Jesus, identifying him as an offering to God and at the same time the Son of God: the Son of God *is* the offering to God. This is an enigmatic statement, and readers of this Gospel expect that its content will be revealed along with the story of this Gospel.

The Baptist's words led two disciples of the Baptist to follow Jesus "the

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7 This paper will mainly focus on what each characters confess, thus Jesus's response to each confession will not be analyzed.

8 In John, the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist is not clearly narrated as it is in the Synoptic Gospels (Mk 1:9 par.).

next day” after hearing that Jesus is the Lamb of God (1:36–37).<sup>9</sup> These two disciples first call Jesus “Rabbi” (1:38). After spending a little time with Jesus, they Andrew confess that he is the “Messiah” (1:41). The author here adds a note that the Messiah is “the anointed one.” However, there is no specific explanation of what “Messiah” or “anointed one” means, indicating that these titles were assumed to be self-evident to the reader.<sup>10</sup> Andrew, one of the two disciples, voices the confession of both himself and his companion to Simon, his brother (1:41).<sup>11</sup> Andrew then brings Simon to Jesus, demonstrating that Andrew’s confession had a significant impact on Simon.<sup>12</sup>

Philip is the only disciple in the Gospel to whom Jesus directly approached with the invitation to become a disciple (1:43). Philip then confesses his faith to Nathanael in which he recognizes that Jesus is “him about whom Moses . . . and also the prophets wrote” (1:45). It is reasonable to assume that this also refers to the “Messiah” or the “expected one” of Jewish tradition, although this is unclear since there are no specific Old Testament passages cited here.

When Jesus revealed Nathanael’s identity to him, Nathanael addressed Jesus

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9 Beasley-Murray sees the Baptist’s words as a command to the two disciples to “follow Jesus.” G. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Dallas: Word, 1989), 26.

10 Although the term “anointed one” should be considered as an interpretation of “Messiah,” what “anointed” means is unclear on its own. To understand this, readers would need knowledge of the Hebrew Bible or the Jewish custom of anointing used in the inauguration of kings in ancient Israel (2 Sam. 10:1 et al.). Regarding “called Christ,” de Boer translates “Christ” as “the Anointed One” and considers it a half-proper noun (M. C. de Boer, *John 1–6* (London et al.: t&t Clark, 2025), 552).

11 Only Andrew opens this confession (1:41), but because he employs the first-person plural form (εὐρήκαμεν), his words should be taken as a statement of the collective faith of both disciples.

12 Dietzfelbinger believes that Peter came to believe that Jesus was the Messiah by being with Jesus, but there is no implication of this in the text. C. Dietzfelbinger, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, zweite, verbesserte Aufl. (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2004), 1:56.

as “Rabbi,” “the Son of God,” and “the King of Israel” (1:49). As these three titles are given in parallel, it is reasonable to interpret “Rabbi” as a general honorific title such as “Teacher.” Here, the use of “Son of God” should not be understood as the “God the Son” of later Christian theology. Still, in the Jewish tradition, “King of Israel” was regarded as the Son of God (Ps. 2:7).<sup>13</sup> In other words, Nathanael confessing that Jesus is the “King of Israel” is paired ontologically with the title “the King of Israel,” Nathanael’s confession of Jesus being “Son of God” is fully corresponding the contemporary Jewish understanding of the Messiah. Nevertheless, the meaning of Nathanael’s confession, whether Jesus should be understood as human being or divine one, is not clear in the chapter 1; it will be expected to be revealed through the narrative of the Gospel of John. Anyway, Nathanael’s confession is the first of all the characters in this Gospel that is given to Jesus directly.

Scholars have traditionally discussed these sayings focusing almost exclusively on Christological titles without paying due attention to the speakers of these titles. However, by viewing these as acts of confession of faith by the characters, we can understand their function in the narrative, not merely the presentation of a title:

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13 This title is consistent with the traditional Jewish idea, in which the Messiah is understood as “the anointed one,” God’s chosen king. Brown (R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* [New York: Doubleday, 1966], 1:87) and Haenchen (E. Haenchen, *John: A Commentary on the Gospel of John* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 1:166) support this interpretation. On the other hand, Beasley-Murray thinks it was based on the wisdom tradition, wherein wisdom from God is granted to a kingly figure (Beasley-Murray, *John*, 27). Ridderbos supposes that “Son of God” and “King of Israel” have the same meaning (H. Ridderbos, H. *The Gospel of John. A Theological Commentary*. trans. John Vriend. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 91). Meeks argues that the titles “prophet” and “king” are related to each other in the Gospel of John, and that both titles relate to the Moses tradition (W. A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses traditions and the Johannine Christology*, NovT Supp.14, Leiden: Brill, 1967). This argument is based on the historical background of the Moses tradition in the Jewish context and extra-biblical documents, and he does not focus enough on the plot or context of John’s Gospel. I therefore will not closely depend on it.

these confessions to others move the others who hear the confessions.<sup>14</sup> This means that not only Jesus but also people who confess their own faith can lead others.

### **2.1.2 Nicodemus**

Nicodemus, a Jewish leader, comes to Jesus at night and calls him a “Rabbi” and a “teacher” (διδάσκαλος; 3:2). As noted above, the title “Rabbi” already appeared earlier: Andrew and his companion call Jesus “Rabbi” (1:38) and Nathanael uses this title in his conversation with Jesus (1:49). “Rabbi” is a common title for Jesus in the Gospel of John: it occurs 15 times in total throughout the four Gospels, and nine of these occur in John. It is interesting to note here that in Matthew 23:8, Jesus prohibits his disciples from being called “Rabbi.” Indeed, this title is rare in Matthew; among the characters, only Judas Iscariot uses it twice to Jesus (26:25, 49). Luke never uses the title. Mark uses it three times, once by Judas Iscariot (14:45) and twice by Peter (9:5; 11:21). On the contrary, in John, the disciples often call Jesus “Rabbi” (e.g., 1:38, 49; 4:31; 9:2; 11:8). Other characters also use this title: Nicodemus (3:2), the disciples of John the Baptist (3:26), and the crowds (6:25). From this wider context of its usage in John, “Rabbi” appears to have been a mere form of address for Jesus, and it seems that there is no special meaning given to this title. Thus, “Rabbi” cannot be regarded as a confessional title on its own and should be excluded from the consideration of this article.<sup>15</sup>

The word “teacher” is meanwhile used seven times in the Gospel of John,

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14 Bennema sees Andrew and Philip as characters who take people with them to Jesus based on his analysis of the characterization of these two figures in the Gospel of John, including this passage. C. Bennema, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2009), 101–109. Brant also mentions this point: “The pattern of those encountering Jesus going to others to report, for good or ill, dominates the Gospel from the onset.” J. A. Brant, *John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 52.

15 Croteau classifies “Rabbi” as an “inadequate belief.” Croteau, “Analyzing Professions,” 41.

almost the same occurrence in number as “Rabbi.”<sup>16</sup> Although the Synoptic Gospels favor this title, John uses it less often.<sup>17</sup> Two of the usages are translations of “Rabbi” (1:38; 20:16). Nicodemus’s usage in 3:2 should also be included in this category, for he called Jesus “Rabbi” and adds, “you are a teacher,” indicating these titles were used in the same way.<sup>18</sup> Jesus responds to Nicodemus and calls him a “teacher of Israel” (3:10) in return. This mutual acknowledgement indicates that Nicodemus’s use of “teacher” was not a confession to Jesus. In John 11:28, Martha conveys Jesus’s invitation to Mary, calling Jesus “the teacher.” It seems strange that Martha calls Jesus “Lord” (11:21, 27) to his face, but uses the title “teacher” when talking to Mary.<sup>19</sup> This implies that Martha understands the true nature of Jesus, and Mary still does not. Thus, the use of “teacher” here shows that Mary is not understand Jesus as “Lord” but “teacher” in general meaning. Therefore, this title is not a confession.

In John 13:13–14, Jesus uses the titles “Teacher” and “Lord” for himself and confirms that they are appropriate. Nevertheless, these titles are spoken by Jesus, so from these verses, we cannot say that these are a confession of other characters in the Gospel.<sup>20</sup> Finally, Jesus orders the disciples to imitate him in washing the feet of others as their teacher, just as Jesus did so as the disciples’ teacher (John

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16 John 1:38; 3:2, 10; 8:4; 11:28; 13:13-14; 20:16. I here exclude 8:4, as 7:53–8:11 should be regarded as a later addition.

17 Matthew, Mark, and Luke use it 12, 12, and 17 times, respectively.

18 The attributed phrase “who has come from God” may add the distinct meaning to this “teacher,” though it only shows the origin of Jesus and cannot be regarded as a Jesus’s title.

19 The interpretation that these verses employ ‘Lord’ merely as an honorific title for a respected guest is inadequate, as Martha’s statement about her brother’s fate (11:21) and her subsequent messianic confession (11:27) clearly indicate that the title carries soteriological significance.

20 As we have already analyzed, Nicodemus’s address to Jesus (3:10) is not regarded as a confession. Although Jesus says here “You [disciples] call me Teacher and Lord,” there are no reference that his disciples call Jesus “Teacher” so far.

13:14–15). This also does not imply that using the title “teacher” is itself a confession of faith. Based on these considerations, then, I will exclude uses of the titles “Rabbi” and “teacher” from the rest of my analysis and discussion.

### **2.1.3 Samaritan people**

In Chapter 4, the people of Samaria comes to believe in Jesus through a Samaritan woman. This woman, the protagonist of this episode, first regards Jesus as a “prophet” (4:19) because Jesus knows her personal history (4:29, 39). She tells her neighbors of her experience and asks, “he cannot be the Messiah, can he?” (4:29).<sup>21</sup> Her neighbors believe in Jesus and confess their faith in him as “the Savior of the world” (4:42).

Here, as in Chapter 1, we find a chain of confessions: the Samaritan woman makes her own confession and leads people in her Samaritan town to faith in Jesus by making a confession (4:42). This follows the same pattern in Chapter 1, when Andrew brings Simon to faith and Philip brings Nathanael. Still, there are some differences, both in the people to whom the message is delivered and the use of expressions in the confessions. Instead of “Messiah,” which the Samaritan woman uses, the people of Samaria use the title “Savior of the world.”<sup>22</sup> However, the meaning of the latter title is unclear on its own. It may be possible that “Messiah” here is used in the strictly Jewish sense of “a savior of the Jewish people,” while “world” (*κόσμος*) is meant to indicate the broader scope of this salvation.<sup>23</sup>

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21 In 4:25, the coming of “the Messiah, who is called Christ” is mentioned. The “Messiah” here indicates an unspecified individual (Brown, *John*, 1:167).

22 “That is a notable confession, worthy to be placed alongside the declarations about Jesus in chap. 1” (Beasley-Murray, *John*, 64).

23 However, “world” in the Gospel of John is generally used to refer to the forces (mainly Jewish leadership) opposed to Jesus (e.g., 1:5), and this “world” may not necessarily refer to the “whole world” as in the general Greek concept. C. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:627.

#### 2.1.4 Crowd vs. disciples

The miracle of feeding the five thousand caused the people to identify Jesus as “the prophet that is to come into the world” (6:14). They intended to make Jesus a king “by force” (6:15). Their understanding of Jesus as a king or a prophet echoes Chapters 1 and 4, in which characters declare Jesus the “King of Israel” (1:49) or the “Messiah” based on Jewish thought (4:25). Jesus’s fleeing from the people here (6:15) can be interpreted as his withdrawal from these wrong perceptions.<sup>24</sup>

After many disciples leave Jesus because they are unable to understand his words (6:66), Jesus asks the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” (6:67). In response, Peter confesses, “you are the Holy One of God” (6:69).<sup>25</sup> This title, “Holy One of God” (ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ) is unique in the Gospel of John, appearing only in this episode.<sup>26</sup> It is used once in the Gospels of Mark (1:24) and Luke (4:34) and is thus a fairly rare title. The adjective ἅγιος, translated as “Holy One,” is rarely used in this noun form in the canonical Gospels.<sup>27</sup> In Mark 1:24 and Luke 4:34, it is the unclean spirit who utters this expression. Interestingly, Jesus does not confirm Peter’s confession but instead identifies the presence of a betrayer among the twelve (6:70).<sup>28</sup>

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24 Meeks rightly argues that Jesus escapes from the crowd to avoid becoming a prophet-king. Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 99.

25 This confession begins with “We have come to believe and know that...,” which shows the confession is attributed to the disciple group, and Peter confesses it as a representative of the disciples. Then, the words of Peter “you are the Holy One of God” indicate the misunderstanding of the disciple group, and Peter should be regarded as a leader of that misunderstanding group. This Peter’s position emphasizes his misapprehension of Jesus.

26 For a comprehensive study of the “Holy One of God,” see W. Domeris, *The Holy One of God: A Study in John 6:69* (Dissertation, Durham University, 1983).

27 See Matt. 27:52 (believers being resurrected at the time of Jesus’s death); Luke 1:35 (Jesus in the Annunciation).

28 See Brown, 1:298.

### **2.1.5 Crowd with conflict**

Chapter 7 begins with Jesus's brothers' disbelief (7:5) before discussing Jesus's activities at the Festival of Booths. Upon hearing Jesus's words, the festival crowd recognizes him as "the prophet" and "the Messiah" (7:40–41). Earlier, these titles were used to express people's general perception of Jesus (1:41; 4:19, 25). Here, however, this perception generates conflict (*σχίσμα*) among the crowd (7:43). In Chapters 1 and 4, the confession of faith broadened the perception of Jesus among the people, but here it instead creates conflict within the crowd.

It is not clear who this "crowd" is, but the context suggests the people of Jerusalem (7:25). Earlier, it was mentioned that some gathered at the festival wanted to find Jesus (7:11), presumably to seize him, while others opposed this and said Jesus was a good man (7:12). The "crowd" therefore seems to be a mixture of these people. However, the people in favor of Jesus did not "speak openly" of their support for him (7:13), presumably to avoid conflict with those "complaining about him" (7:12). This seems to imply that the confession of faith in Jesus is the cause of the division among the people.

### **2.1.6 A man born blind**

In the narrative following the miracle of Jesus healing the man who was born blind, the confession of the healed man appears on several occasions. This person first recognizes Jesus as a "prophet" (9:17), a common perception in the narrative up to this point. However, during his discussion with the Pharisees, he states that Jesus "came from God" (9:33), and then, after meeting Jesus again, he comes to believe in and worship Jesus as the "Son of Man" (9:35–38). This confession is made directly to Jesus, who responds favorably (9:39).

Chapter 9 is a notable episode in the Gospel of John, for it describes a change in the contents of a single person's confession of faith. At the point of healing, he knows only Jesus's name and does not attribute any titles to him (9:11). Then, when questioned by the Pharisees, he calls Jesus as "prophet" (9:17). Finally, as

the inquiry intensifies, he recognizes Jesus as being “from God” (9:33), and at his second encounter with Jesus, he comes to believe Jesus as the “Son of Man” (9:35). During this process, the person is also interrogated and rejected by the Pharisees (9:34). The contrast between this person and the Pharisees, who have not changed their hostile attitude toward Jesus, is emphasized. Like in Chapter 7, when someone makes a confession of faith, a confrontation thus explicitly arises. Despite the confrontation, however, one who confess one’s faith in Jesus meet him and is accepted by him, which illustrates the ultimate outcome of one’s confession of faith in Jesus.

### **2.1.7 Martha**

Following Lazarus’ death, his sister Martha converses with Jesus. In the dialog, Martha states that Jesus is “the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world” (11:27). The first two titles in this confession are the same as those of Chapter 1. The last, “the one coming into the world,” is original to this episode. Notably, just before this confession, Jesus states, “I am the resurrection and the life” and affirms that those who believe in him “will never die” (11:25–26). He then asks her, “Do you believe this?” (11:26), at which point Martha confesses her own faith (11:27). In her statement, the first-person perspective is retained, but only in 11:27 is a personal pronoun used (*ἐγὼ πιστεύω*). As the personal pronoun in Greek is used for emphasis, its usage here indicates that this is a summary of Martha’s personal faith. Thus, the emphasis is on the fact that this is a summary of Martha’s personal faith.

However, Martha’s words do not directly respond to Jesus’s question in 11:26, in which he asks whether she believes his statement about life and death, and Martha confesses only her faith in Jesus. Here, Martha’s response seems not directly correspond to Jesus’s question; it should be regarded Martha’s response

includes all that Jesus has said so far.<sup>29</sup> In other words, although some of the titles Martha confesses are the same as those used in previous chapters, their meaning has evolved.<sup>30</sup> In this respect, Martha's confession includes the content of the titles so far. Various titles have been attributed to Jesus by different characters so far in this Gospel; in this scene, the Evangelist demonstrates that a believer should understand all of the titles and confess one's faith in Jesus.<sup>31</sup>

### **2.1.8 Resurrection Scene**

The Gospel of John's resurrection narrative narrates Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved (hereafter "the Beloved Disciple") visiting the tomb (20:3–10). Peter enters the tomb but says nothing; the narrator merely describes the interior (20:6–7). The Beloved Disciple, on the other hand, "saw and believed" (20:8). However, as I have stated at the beginning of this paper, I will not treat this narrator's commentary because it is not a verbal confession from the character, nor does it include any title in it.

Mary Magdalene meets the resurrected Jesus at the tomb, and the word she utters is "Rabbouni" (20:16), which, unlike the uses of "Rabbi" in the Gospel so far, can be considered a confession of faith. Furthermore, in Jesus's empty tomb scene (20:1–2, 11–18), Mary Magdalene always uses the title "the Lord/ my Lord" in Greek to refer to Jesus (20:2, 13, 15, 18). Among these occurrences, "Rabbouni" is Aramaic: thus, there must be some special implication. Like "Rabbi," the narrator explains "Rabbouni" as "Teacher" (20:16). Then what is the difference between "Rabbi" and "Rabbouni"? "Rabbouni" specifically means "*my* teacher."

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29 It is possible to interpret this as Martha being stuck in her old perceptions despite what Jesus said.

30 This point would be missed by analyzing only the titles themselves.

31 The important point here is that multiple titles are confessed at once compared to the case of the blind man in Chapter 9, where the titles are changing in the process of the story.

In other words, Mary does not simply address him as a “teacher,” but instead “O my Teacher,” emphasizing the personal aspect of this relationship and thus functioning as a confession of faith.<sup>32</sup>

When Mary Magdalene reports her encounter with Jesus to the disciples, Mary says “I have seen the Lord” (20:18). This episode resembles the confessions of first disciples in Chapter 1: who met with Jesus announces others about Jesus with title (1:29, 36, 41, 45). For Mary Magdalene, Jesus is consistently “the Lord” from the beginning to the ending of the resurrection scene. Then she invites the disciples to her faith in Jesus using the title “Lord.” She is also one of the disciples who invites others in Chapter 1, but there is one difference from the first disciples: she confesses the resurrected Jesus. Then, what the title “Lord” contains is expanded here: this “Lord” is a resurrected one. Mary Magdalene is a distinct character who invites others to the resurrected Jesus.

Throughout John’s resurrection narrative, Jesus appears repeatedly to his disciples. At one appearance of the risen Jesus, Thomas makes a confession of faith. Prompted by Jesus to touch his hands and side, Thomas addresses Jesus as “My Lord and my God” (20:28). This is the only place in the Gospel of John where someone directly calls Jesus “God” rather than “Son of God.” The repetitive use of “my” in Thomas’s confession emphasizes its personal nature, as with Mary Magdalene’s. Thus, both confessions in Chapter 20 are highly personalized, distinguishing them from those in the previous chapters, which are used by groups of people or in a more abstract sense.

## 2.2 The Confessional Narrative

In Section 2.1, I identified characters’ confessions of faith in each scene

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32 Although “Rabbi” originally includes the meaning “my teacher,” in John 1:38 “Rabbi” is translated as “teacher,” not including the meaning of “my.” Thus, Keener seems to say that “Rabbouni” is “a more personalized and perhaps intimate form than in 1:38, 49 [Rabbi]” (Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1190).

alongside the titles they use. Here, I will analyze the relationship between confessions of faith and the overarching plot of the Gospel of John, following the narrative using literary criticism. By plot, I mean (following Culpepper) “the evangelist’s interpretation of the story.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, the focus is on how the Evangelist moves the narrative using confessions of faith, not merely the facts of the story.

First, John the Baptist foretells the arrival of a person superior to himself (1:26–27). He then meets Jesus and describes him as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29). Jesus is also called the “Son of God” (1:34).<sup>34</sup> If the Lamb of God is a sacrifice offered to God, the narrator implies this sacrificial lamb with the “Son of God,” for this would mean that the Son of God is himself a sacrifice to God. Moreover, if we note the order of titles, Jesus is first described as the “Lamb,” as a being to be offered. The fact that Jesus is a sacrifice is thus emphasized.

The first two disciples initially call Jesus “Rabbi” (1:38). The narrator here notes that this title “means teacher,” indicating that by this appellation, the disciples at first placed Jesus within a distinctive Jewish role.<sup>35</sup> After abiding with Jesus one night, these disciples claim that he is the “Messiah.” Here, we see a significant change in the disciples’ understanding of Jesus. This “Messiah” is the “Anointed,” as noted in 1:41, and is not far from the traditional Jewish understanding of God’s chosen king.

Philip meanwhile describes Jesus as the one foretold by Moses and the prophets (1:45). Furthermore, Nathanael calls Jesus not only “Rabbi,” but also the “Son of God,” and “King of Israel” (1:49). This sums up the disciples’ understanding of Jesus up to this point. Thus, in Chapter 1, the confessions by the disciples remain

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33 A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 86.

34 NRSVue translate this “Son of God” as “Chosen One.”

35 In the Gospel of John, “Rabbi” is used only in episodes from the public ministry of Jesus (1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8).

within the scope of traditional Jewish frameworks. However, Jesus foretells that they will see the greater thing than these (1:51), although no details are given here.

The Samaritan woman in Chapter 4 follows the same process as the disciples in Chapter 1. She first considers Jesus a “prophet” (4:19). Then, she recalls the messianic prophecies in the Old Testament and confirms that she believes “that Messiah is coming” (3:25). When she tells her neighbors, they go to meet Jesus and come to believe that he is “the Savior of the world” (4:42).<sup>36</sup> They thus move past traditional Jewish Messianic beliefs to describe Jesus as a “Savior” (σωτήρ) of the “world” (κόσμος), indicating that Jesus’s arrival has a broader implication than being the Jewish Messiah.

Chapter 6 repeats a similar process. The people who receive food from Jesus regard him as a prophet (6:14). They then try to make Jesus a “King of Israel” (1:49), which reflects a narrower understanding of his identity than the “Savior of the world” recognized by the Samaritan people in Chapter 4. Meanwhile, the peculiar expression “the Holy One of God,” as we see in 2.1.6, indicates that the disciples also do not fully understand Jesus. This creates a deliberate irony: those who are closer to Jesus, such as the disciples and the Jewish people, do not understand him correctly, whereas the Samaritans, who are distrusted outsiders (4:9), understand him better.

The Jewish crowd in Chapter 7 also recognize Jesus as a “prophet” and “Messiah.” The former title appears in 4:19 and 6:14, wherein it reflects a narrow understanding of the role. Meanwhile, “Messiah” has been given a positive meaning earlier in 1:41 (by Andrew) and in 4:29 (by the Samaritan woman). Thus, these two titles are juxtaposed: “prophet” is presented as still incomplete, whereas “Messiah” is treated positively. Chapter 7 introduces a new element to this dynamic: differing perceptions of Jesus create conflict (7:43). Up to this point, the Ἰουδαῖοι,

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36 The word “world” (κόσμος) already appeared in 1:29, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” As “who takes away the sin of the world” is an attribution to the Lamb of God and not a title, I will not deal this expression detailed in this paper.

which the Gospel uses to refer to Jewish people who do not follow Jesus, have shown hostility toward him (5:18). Meanwhile, the people who began following Jesus after he fed them are confused by his sermons and leave (6:22–66). The rest of Jesus’s followers, including the twelve, remain steadfast. Chapter 7 adds the “crowd” (ὄχλος), who are ambivalent but curious. Thus, we find differences in opinion emerging among the people in the narrative world of the Gospel of John.

The conflict among the Jews is more clearly illustrated in Chapter 9. The man who is blind from birth first considers Jesus a “prophet” (9:17) as do other characters in earlier chapters (4:19; 6:14; 7:40). Through the discussion, it becomes clear to him that Jesus comes from God, and he therefore believes in Jesus as the “Son of Man” and calls him “Lord.” Despite being “divided” in their opinion of Jesus’s righteousness (9:16), the Pharisees remain positioned as adversaries (9:28–34). Thus, the conflict between the Jews who believe in Jesus and those who do not is heightened.

The story of Lazarus follows the pattern of Chapter 9. Martha recognizes Jesus as “the Son of God, the Messiah” (11:27). Martha’s answer is a confession of faith in response to Jesus’s words, “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25). Her confession seems different from the disciples’ confession at the beginning of this Gospel in its content, as discussed in Section 2.1.7.<sup>37</sup> Like the man in Chapter 9, Martha is here depicted as becoming a believer in Jesus.<sup>38</sup>

Chapter 20 is the final chapter containing a confession of faith that uses a title for Jesus. Mary Magdalene uses the title “Rabbouni” (20:16), which should

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37 Rogit describes the process of Martha’s confession of faith, in which Jesus’s words lead her from her initial confession (11:21–22), which contains her misunderstanding, to her final confession (11:27). This article examines not only chapter 11 but also in the context of the Gospel’s broader narrative. Rogit, “Faith Confession of Martha: An Exegetical Survey (John 11,17–27),” *Bible Bhashyam* 31(2005), 200–214.

38 When Jesus ordered to open the tomb of Lazarus, Martha said “there is a stench” (11:39). Martha’s saying could be interpreted as an emphasis of Lazarus’s death, not a doubt for Jesus.

be interpreted “my Teacher,” as we have seen in Section 2.1.9. Thomas uses the title “My Lord and my God” (20:28). Here, the qualifier “my” is emphasized on both confessions. Thus, confessing that Jesus is the agent of personal salvation is the ultimate point of a confession of faith in John’s Gospel.<sup>39</sup>

### **3. Analysis**

From the textual analysis above, several characteristics of the confessions of faith in the Gospel of John are evident. As I shall establish below, the most notable characteristics are the contents of these confessions, the recipients of the confessions, and their place within the context of the wider Gospel narrative.

#### **3.1 Contents**

As previously established, the contents of the confessions of faith are primarily revealed in Chapters 1–11 and 20, while the lack of confessions in Chapters 13–19 is not surprising given that Chapters 13–17 are Jesus’s farewell discourse and Chapters 18–19 are the Passion narrative. The contents of the confessions in Chapters 1–11 are unchanged in their usage of titles. From the beginning, “prophet,” “Son of God,” and “Messiah” are mentioned repeatedly. In Chapter 9, “prophet” is used by the healed man, and in Chapter 11, Martha uses “Son of God” and “Messiah.” These titles represent the fundamental perceptions of Jesus by the characters in the Gospel of John.

Jesus neither affirms nor denies the titles used in these confessions. However, Jesus shows disfavor to the title “the King of Israel.” While Jesus does not clearly deny the title in Chapter 1, in Chapter 6, he tries to escape those who try to make

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39 This confession of faith contrasts with Peter’s in Chapter 6, which speaks of “us” as a collective group of disciples. In Chapter 20, Thomas, who was with the other disciples (20:26), still confesses using the possessive pronoun “mine” rather than “ours.”

him king (6:15).<sup>40</sup> Further, in Chapter 18, when Pilate asks Jesus if he is the “King of the Jews” (18:33), Jesus turns Pilate’s words back on him without making any clear denial of them (18:34, 37). Finally, in 19:3, the soldiers use this title to insult Jesus. Therefore, “king” or “the King of Israel” is a highly ambivalent title treated with significant irony: “king” is usually the highest title or position for a person, though Jesus tried to escape from it, and Jesus was mocked with it.

Nevertheless, the other titles are inconsistent with the theology of the Gospel of John, which posits that Jesus is God himself (e.g. 1:1; 8:58; 10:30). The terms “prophet” and “Messiah” are traditional Jewish terms referring to human individuals, and “Son of God” (as it is used in this Gospel) is also distinctly human. From these observations, the content of these confessions of faith that appear in Chapters 1–11 (though Chapter 11 begins to show an evolution) must have been considered insufficient to describe Jesus from the perspective of the author.<sup>41</sup>

Considering this, it is interesting to note that in the resurrection narrative of Chapter 20, Mary Magdalene uses “Rabbouni (my Teacher)” (20:16) and Thomas uses “my Lord and my God” (20:28). As noted previously, the most noticeable development here is the additional meaning of “my,” which is absent from earlier

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40 Here the word βασιλέα has no attributes such as “of Israel” or “of Jews.” As the people (6:14) or crowd (6:2) who experienced the miracle of Jesus should be the people of Israel or Jews in general term and tried to make Jesus *their* king, these “king,” “the king of Israel,” and “king of Jews” could be regarded as identical titles.

41 Some may ask why the Evangelist uses the insufficient titles of “Messiah” or “Son of God” in Martha’s confession (11:27) or the (first) epilogue of the Gospel (20:31). In fact, the word “Messiah” (Μεσσίας) appears in John 1:41 and 4:25, with its translation “χριστός.” In 11:27 and 20:31 (and other places), the original word for the translation “Messiah” is ὁ χριστός: it should be translated as “the Messiah” or “the Christ,” and this title is favorably used in John (4:29; 7:26, 31, 41; 9:22; 10:24). As for “Son of God” (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ), this title occurs in John five times (1:34, 49; 11:4, 27, 20:31) and is combined with ὁ χριστός only two times, namely 11:27 and 20:31 (ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ). Thus, 11:27 and 20:31 stress the similarity between the title ὁ χριστὸς and ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ and they have a different significance from the other three instances.

chapters.<sup>42</sup> The use of the qualifier “my” after Jesus’s resurrection emphasizes the personal nature of these confessions. As we have seen in the previous paragraph, the confessions of faith made by the characters before the resurrection of Jesus are all treated as insufficient by the author. This indicates the evangelist’s perspective that true faith in Jesus could not be adequately identified or confessed until after his resurrection.

### **3.2 Recipients**

The confessions of faith in the Gospel of John are unique because they are usually spoken not to Jesus but to other characters. In Chapter 1, John the Baptist speaks to his disciples; subsequently, those who become disciples share their experiences with their close relatives. In Chapter 4, the Samaritan woman proclaims her newfound faith to the people of Samaria (4:29). The blind man in Chapter 9 confesses to the people that Jesus is a prophet (9:17) and tells the Pharisees that Jesus came from God (9:33). This implies that confessions are not necessarily made to Jesus himself but also function as a testimony to others.

Of course, confessions made directly to Jesus also occur, including the Samaritan woman in 4:19, Peter in 6:68, and the formerly blind man, who calls Jesus the Messiah and bows down to him at the same time (9:38). In Chapter 11, Jesus prompts Martha to confess her faith after a conversation with him (11:22–26; 11:27). Finally, Thomas’s confession in 20:28 is a confession to Jesus as well as the other disciples.

Confessions of faith in Jesus often simultaneously function as a statement of

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42 As noted earlier, Martha’s confession is emphasized in Chapter 11 with the personal pronoun “I believe.” However, it does not attach to a title to Jesus that will be discussed here. Croteau classifies both the blind man’s “I believe” expression in 9:38 and Martha’s “I believe” as “adequate belief.” See Croteau, “Analyzing Professions,” 41–42. I will also not deal with the phrase “I believe,” as in this article I limit my analysis on the titles of Jesus. Nevertheless, Croteau’s argument supports this claim.

faith to others: a character conveys their faith in Jesus to other characters. The only two episodes that do not include this element are Peter in Chapter 6 and Martha in Chapter 11; in these episodes there is no response by other characters to their confessions. However, Peter speaks on behalf of a group of disciples, which makes it a statement of communal rather than personal faith. As for Martha, she goes to Jesus to speak with him in private. This shows that Martha's faith relies on a one-on-one relationship with Jesus. This important faith leads to the resurrection of her brother and is distinct from Peter's communal statement of faith. This personal relationship suggests that personal faith is prioritized in the Gospel of John.<sup>43</sup>

### **3.3 Context**

What place does the confession of faith in the Gospel of John have in the overall narrative of the Gospel of John? First, Chapter 1 speaks of the faith of the disciples, those closest to Jesus. In the calling of the disciples, the titles they give to Jesus are far from sufficient. This insufficient faith indicates that even the disciples do not entirely understand him or his mission. Their confessions are still based on Jewish concepts limiting his role to the Jewish people and Israel, showing the limitations of their traditional views. Nevertheless, in those episodes, something more significant than traditional views is foretold by both the Baptist (1:29, 36) and Jesus himself (1:50–51).

Next, in the confession of faith by the Samaritan woman in Chapter 4, Jesus's nature is correctly understood by the Samaritans because of what the woman proclaimed, although the woman herself uses the wording of the conventional confession of faith, namely by using the title "Messiah." The episode with the Samaritans indicates that while Jesus's disciples do not understand him fully, the Samaritans ironically perceive him more accurately. Chapter 4 thus introduces

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43 This does not mean that the faith of the group, such as that of the disciples or the Samaritan people (4:42), is inferior to a one-on-one relationship with Jesus. However, the narrative of the Gospel of John seems to focus more on individual faith.

the expansion of the Jesus movement in Samaria (4:36); their confession of faith indicates that this direction was part of the plan for moving beyond traditional Jewish Messianic frameworks.

Meanwhile, the confession of faith in Chapter 9 illustrates the further irony that those rejected by traditional religious leaders could recognize Jesus correctly: the man who reaches to worship Jesus is an exemplar of such people. This fact indicates the appropriate direction for the confused crowds to follow in Chapters 6–7: belief in Jesus. In other words, the conflict over Jesus is decisive through the confession of faith.

After the importance of a confession of faith in Jesus becomes clear, Chapter 11 presents its consequences. The story of Lazarus’s resurrection differs from other “signs” (i.e., miracles) in the Gospel of John in that the narrative leading up to the miracle is extensive. Generally, dialog follows the performance of a miracle (Bultmann’s “apophthegmata”). The descriptions of these dialogs are more extended and thus given more emphasis than the miracle itself. The opposite is true for the final “sign” before Jesus’s own death and resurrection: the raising of Lazarus. Here, the discussion leading up to the miracle is critical. First, Martha complains to Jesus that if Jesus had been here, her brother, Lazarus, would not have died (11:21). In response to her, Jesus declares that Lazarus will rise again (11:23), but Martha does not understand what Jesus said: she only believes the resurrection in the future (11:24). Jesus further insists that those who believe in him, even though they die, will live and everyone who lives and believes in him will never die: then Jesus asks Martha whether she believes this or not (11:26). Martha responds to Jesus that she believes in him (11:27): although Jesus asked her whether she believes this (τοῦτο), she replied that she believes in *him*. Then, her reply should be considered as a confession to Jesus, and through this plot, Martha’s confession of faith is treated as a necessary condition for the resurrection of Lazarus.

Finally, Chapter 20 emphasizes a personal relationship with Jesus, as Mary

Magdalene and Thomas call the risen Jesus “my Teacher” and “my Lord and my God,” respectively. These confessions indicate that their confession completes their relationship with Jesus. Thus, the Gospel of John demonstrates that coming to a relationship with Jesus is the central function of a confession of faith in him.<sup>44</sup>

### **3.4 Peter’s Confession of Faith**

Based on the discussion in previous sections (3.1–3.3), I will now return to Peter’s confession of faith to examine its unique features. First, in Chapter 1, a break in the chain of confessions of the first disciples to Jesus occurs when Peter arrives. In chapter 1, John the Baptist introduced Jesus to his disciples, and one of them, Andrew brought Peter to Jesus; Philip invited Nathanael to Jesus. Peter brings nobody to Jesus: thus halting the chain of calling. While Andrew confesses that Jesus is the “Messiah” (1:41), Philip calls him the one foretold in the Old Testament (1:45), and Nathanael calls him the “Son of God” and “King of Israel” (1:49), Peter makes no confession until Chapter 6. Indeed, Peter is oddly passive in this scene, though Jesus gives him an epithet.<sup>45</sup> Peter thus plays a unique role in the calling narrative that is in clear contrast with the similar narratives in the other Gospels, where he is highly active.<sup>46</sup> This portrayal of Peter gives the reader the impression that he stands somewhat apart from the other disciples.<sup>47</sup>

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44 Bowen puts this another way: “For John, belief means rather that someone is engaged in a movement away from darkness and toward light. They are in what we might call an evangelistic process. ‘Believing’ for John is simply an indication of direction.” Bowen, “Coming to Faith,” 278.

45 Based on this action, Wengst suggests Jesus’s prior knowledge of Peter and the relationship to John 10:3, which states that the shepherd “calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” K. Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium*. 2. Aufl. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2004), 98.

46 This description differs from the account in Mark 1 (paralleled in Matthew 4), where Peter responds immediately to Jesus’s call, and from Luke 5, which describes a dialog between Jesus and Peter.

47 Schenke argues that Peter does not recognize Jesus as the Messiah on his own but

Peter's words to Jesus in Chapter 6 are generally regarded as "Peter's confession of faith."<sup>48</sup> The title Peter applies to Jesus here is "the Holy One of God" (6:69). This statement is not among the titles given by other characters, nor is it used again in the rest of the Gospel of John. The title is used only twice in the other canonical Gospels, when it is uttered by unclean spirits during an exorcism narrative (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34). It is not easy to determine the direct dependence of the words in Mark's Gospel on those of John's Gospel, but this coincidence could not be accidental.<sup>49</sup> A parallel scene in which Peter confesses his faith in Jesus occurs in Mark 8:29, where Peter calls Jesus "the Messiah."<sup>50</sup> Therefore, there must have been a specific intention, namely the degradation of Peter, in using the title "the Holy One of God" in the Gospel of John.

Following Jesus's resurrection, as discussed above, the Beloved Disciple and Thomas both come to faith in Jesus. However, there is no clear explanation for Peter seeing the empty tomb and believing in the resurrection of Jesus, nor does he confess that Jesus is his God, as Thomas does.<sup>51</sup> In fact, after denying Jesus

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through the testimony of Andrew. Furthermore, since Andrew received the testimony of John the Baptist, Schenke suggests that Peter heard the Baptist's testimony indirectly. L. Schenke, *Johannes: Kommentar* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1998), 47.

48 Brown provides a detailed comparison with Mark 8:27–33. Brown, *John*, 1:301–302.

49 Many scholars suppose that the author of the Gospel of John knew the Gospel of the Mark. The latest discussion on John's dependence on the Synoptic Gospels is de Boer's commentary (de Boer, *John*, 174–188). Meanwhile, Tagawa states that the "Holy One of God" title in John is a criticism of Peter based on Mark. Kenzo Tagawa, *Shinyaku Seisho: Yaku to Chu [The New Testament: Translation and Notes]*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Sakuhinsha, 2013), 367–369.

50 In the parallel to Matthew 16:16, he says, "Messiah, the Son of the living God," and in Luke 9:20, "the Messiah of God." In both cases, "Messiah" is used. In this respect, there are similarities between the content of the Synoptic Gospels and the "Holy One of God" in the Gospel of John, as well as apparent differences. These differences can be argued without assuming that the writer of the Gospel of John knew the Synoptic Gospels and "rewrote" their traditions.

51 Even in the resurrection narrative of Luke's Gospel, Peter is only described as being

in Chapter 18, Peter does not speak at all during Chapter 20. Compared to the Beloved Disciple and Thomas, Peter's passivity is again emphasized in the story of Jesus's resurrection.

Peter's passivity in Chapters 1 and 20 is compounded by the expressions used in his confession of faith in Chapter 6. These descriptions imply that Peter is not superior to the other disciples. In other words, Peter does not have a special position by comparing him with the other disciples. However, this tendency should be regarded as an addition by the (first) author of the Gospel to the tradition the author received.<sup>52</sup>

#### **4. Conclusion**

The confessions of faith in Jesus found in the Gospel of John are diverse and expressed by various characters. However, the titles used in the Gospel of John tend to be distinguished between those used during the public ministry of Jesus and those used after his resurrection. The titles used during Jesus's public ministry are often stated to other characters and the confessions of those titles make change others: introduce Jesus to them, invite the faith in Jesus, or cause divisions among them. After the resurrection, the idea of Jesus being God is added to this roster, as Jesus becomes "God" for believers. Thus, the Gospel of John uses the titles chosen for confessions of faith to emphasize that the resurrection of Jesus changed believers' understandings of Jesus as well as the nature of faith in Jesus. This new

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"amazed" on seeing the empty tomb (24:12) and is not described as having believed. This may be an explanation of Peter's superiority using a tradition analogous to "some of his companions went to the tomb" in Luke 24:24.

52 I call this author "first" based on the theory that Chapter 21 is an addition that reevaluates Peter following the degradation of Peter in chapters 1–20. Haenchen points out that at the beginning of Chapter 21, "Peter appears—in strong contrast to chapters 1–20—to set the tone (Haenchen, *John*, 2:229). Some scholars, including Brown (*John*, 2:1081–1082), agree that Peter's rehabilitation is one of the themes in Chapter 21.

title “God” is the only one that added after Jesus’ resurrection, nevertheless, this is the first time where the character besides Jesus confess that Jesus is God in the Gospel of John.<sup>53</sup> The above analysis using literary criticism confirmed that the content of the confessions of faith developed through the narrative. Confessions of faith are given a two-sided character that is both communal and personal.

However, the Gospel of John does not emphasize Peter’s faith in Jesus. We find a tendency in the Gospel of John to make Peter’s status even compared to the other disciples. This differs from the confessions of Peter’s faith found in the Synoptic Gospels, which instead use it to elevate Peter’s status. Thus, Peter’s confession of faith in the Gospel of John indicates that John’s (first) author did not value Peter highly.

The confession of faith in the Gospel of John thus takes on a unique function. It is used to illustrate the internal journey of multiple characters as well as reflect the narrative’s development of Jesus’s identity and role. Meanwhile, by comparing other confessions of faith with that of Peter, a tendency not to highlight Peter’s status in the Gospel of John becomes clear. Examining confessional expressions of faith thus serves as an important tool for deeper understanding the Gospel of John.

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53 Of course it is declared in Prologue (1:1, 14) and by Jesus himself (8:58; 10:30).