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APPROVAL SHEET

**THE CONFESSION OF SIN IN 1 JOHN 1:8-10  
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE  
CONTEMPORARY CHURCH**

**An Essay Presented to the Faculty of  
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the Degree of Master of Divinity (Theology)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

There can never be excessive praying because the Bible admonishes Christians to pray without ceasing. The contemporary Christian therefore has the dire need for effective prayers. This, lamentably is not the case because of the foremost enemy to prayers sin. Sin constitutes such a barrier to our fellowship with God and must not be toyed with. Considering that God is omniscient and omnipresent, sin committed in the most secret of places is bare in God's sight.

The remedy for sin is nothing other than confession and repentance from such. God is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse from all possible unrighteousness if we acknowledge our sins and turn away from these. It is only then that our prayers will cease to be offensive unto God and instead become sweet smelling savour to him who is able to restore us to himself. Confession of sin is indispensable for every growing Christian.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. CONCLUSION

Sin, from the fall of man in the garden of Eden, through the Old Testament and the New Testament to these times, remains the greatest hindrance to fellowship between God and His epitome of creation man. God hates sin and does not tolerate sin. The soul that sins must die-eternally separated from God. In fact all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God-Romans 3:23. The very reasons why John writes inter alia comprises this truth - we have missed God's mark or standard. We need to acknowledge it. No one can claim to be without sin.

More than presenting a verdict on conviction of sin, John is presenting the possibility of forgiveness for sin. God is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse from all sin if only we confess our sins.

The Greek word for confession remains "homologeō" which is; agreement or accordance with what is said about our situation. John says we can not be perfectly sinless - we all need to be more humble to acknowledge sin in our lives.

In 1 John 1:8-10 the call goes to the church in Asia Minor. They needed to get an understanding of the love of God for them, much more they needed to acknowledge their lamentable sinful situation. They needed to be delivered from the contamination of heretical gnostiic teachings on sinfulness and sinless perfection.



John, the Apostle means it when he states in verses 8 and 10 that:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves  
and the truth is not in us..... if we claim we have  
not sinned we make Him out to be a liar and his word  
has no place in our lives.

The acknowledgement of sin was a *conditio sine qua non* to receive God's forgiveness. "If we confess our sins" means; acknowledging sinfulness then humbly asking God to forgive and cleanse from these sins.

John's writing was an encouragement for the brethren in Asia Minor to accept that God alone can be regarded as perfectly sinless. John was appealing virtually to the brethren to reject all teachings contradicting the true knowledge of God which is acknowledgement of the fact that man is sinful and needs God's forgiveness.

We will not *strictu sensu* limit John's letter to the early churches of Asia Minor; the letter appeals even more urgently to the contemporary Church with characteristics similar to the first and second century Gnostics. In the contemporary Church, there are many alleged Christians who like the original recipients of John's letter implicitly claim that they have no sin. This is why they will never think of confessing sin though "confession of sin would have been a natural part of prayer pattern....."(Harrison,1985). John's message in verses 8 and 10 of our passage should spur the contemporary Christian to greater honesty in relating with God and man, "First, he tells us the saints may deny indwelling sin and past offences, thus deceiving himself and betraying his ignorance of the Bible, and making God out to be a liar....." (Rogers, 1940, p 63).

Among those who could be justifiably tagged contemporary gnostics of the modern church are some church leaders. These have exalted themselves above the level of the other Christians and have substituted preaching against sin for nothing but fine talk. They fear hurting those in the church who may be financial bulwarks even if these are rebelliously living in open sin .

.....authentic Christianity does not make people feel better just as they are. It talks about starting again, being changed, and a number of other inconvenient things, all of which demand admitting that you are not so great the way you are. There is a real reason for people to be offended by the church because its message is bound to offend as well as to heal (Brown, 'nd', pp. 13-14).

This attitude of assumed sinlessness could not but generate hypocritical praying to harmonise the fine "talks" substituting for sermons. From Psalm 15, Psalm 66:18, Proverb 20:13, Isaiah 59:1-2, 1 John 1:9 and other passages, we know that God does not commune with anyone harbouring sin. "Prayer is guided by right living as well as by right thinking . True prayer means behaving in a way that is worthy of God's company" (Houston, 1989, p.7).

The contemporary church in its liturgy needs to heed the warning of John in 1 John 1:8 - 10. Those churches that claim holier than thou" attitudes need to retrace their steps to our verses under consideration. We may need to underline as we conclude that the Church urgently needs to acknowledge God's love for her. The atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross was for the salvation of the Church from the bondage of

