

# INDULGENCES

**Charles Colson**, former aide to President Richard Nixon, who professed conversion to Christ in 1973 and then subsequently served a 7-month prison sentence in 1974 for his role in the Watergate scandal went on to form the ministry of **Prison Fellowship**.

Then in 1992 he published a book called '**The Body: Being Light In Darkness**'. There are many expressions of endorsement on the back cover of this book including those penned by the following people –

**'Father' Richard John Neuhaus**  
**Archbishop John Cardinal O'Connor**  
**Dr James I Packer**  
**Pat Robertson**

The four that I have listed went on to subsequently be involved in the preparation and publication of the utterly ecumenical document published in 1994 which was called –

**'Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission for the Third Millennium'**

The architects of this document were **Charles Colson** and **'Father' Richard John Neuhaus**. A brother in Christ, and someone I was privileged to minister with on several occasions, was Pastor Jerry Moser of Louisiana and Jerry wrote an open letter to **Charles Colson** concerning the compromise of The Gospel contained in the **ECT** document. That letter can be viewed on this link –

[http://www.takeheed.info/Assorted\\_Articles/Ecumenism/open-letter-to-charles-colson.pdf](http://www.takeheed.info/Assorted_Articles/Ecumenism/open-letter-to-charles-colson.pdf)

In November 2009 **Charles Colson** also signed another ecumenical document called **'The Manhattan Declaration'** and you can read about that on this link –

[http://www.takeheed.info/Assorted\\_Articles/Ecumenism/manhattan-declaration.pdf](http://www.takeheed.info/Assorted_Articles/Ecumenism/manhattan-declaration.pdf)

**ECT** and **Manhattan** were in many ways rightly concerned with what I might call the 'downgrade' in public morality and the signers felt 'The Great Commission' was very much a call to Christianise the world. **Charles Colson** and his fellow ecumenists believed that it was essential for this to be achieved only by visible ecumenical unity. **Charles Colson** summed this idea up perfectly when he wrote the following in the foreword to the book **'Evangelical Catholics'** which was written by Roman Catholic, **Keith Fournier** (who also signed the **ECT** document). **Charles Colson** wrote –

**'It's high time that all of us who are Christians come together, regardless of the difference of our confessions and our traditions and make common cause to bring Christian values to bear in our society. When the barbarians are scaling the walls, there is no time for petty quarrelling in the camp'.**

'The Great Commission' calls genuine Christians to evangelise society, not to try and **'bring Christians values to bear in our** (predominantly unbelieving) **society'**.

I have taken time so far to set out Mr Colson's belief that Roman Catholics are fellow Christians with whom Evangelicals can work for the spiritual betterment of the world. Perhaps by now you're wondering to yourself – 'what has all this to with the title of this article?' namely **'INDULGENCES'**.

Well, on page 271 of his book, **'The Body: Being Light In Darkness'**, **Charles Colson** wrote the following –

**'While the Reformation went far beyond Luther's original focus** (Cecil - which was all to do with INDULGENCES) **we cannot ignore the theological reform it sent throughout the body of Christ** (Cecil – there was no 'reform' where Rome was concerned except to convene the Council of Trent and to 'anathematise' those who did not accept Rome's teachings). **To see this, we must stand back from our partisan passions and view the past five hundred years with some detached perspective. When we do this the picture is remarkable. The Reformers, for example, assailed the corrupt practices of indulgences; today they are gone'**.

At this moment I have a simple question – why did the Roman Catholic endorsers of this book, Messrs Neuhaus and O'Connor, not point out the absolute untruth in the statement I have highlighted in green. There is an excellent article on a link I shall give that highlights multiple problems associated with the writings of **Charles Colson** and in particular I would draw your attention to number 24 of 33 matters of concern that are listed at the start of the article – this is the link –

<http://trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=126>

Unrelated to the core subject matter of this article, but perhaps of interest to readers, there is another excellent assessment by Trinity Foundation of the writings of **Charles Colson** and it can be accessed on this link –

<http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=187>

Now, to return to the false statement by **Charles Colson** concerning **'INDULGENCES'** when he wrote **'today they are gone'** – just in recent times Roman Catholics have been offered the opportunity to obtain a **'PLENARY INDULGENCE'** later this year by attending events in Dublin as you can read on this link –

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/pope-to-grant-indulgences-at-dublin-world-meeting-of-families-1.3507711>

For those not able to attend in person but only able to follow the events either by radio or television then a **'PARTIAL INDULGENCE'** can be earned – words just fail me!!

Because of the local hype surrounding the offer of these **'IRISH INDULGENCES'** I received a request from a local Northern Ireland minister for help as he prepared to speak in the near future on this very subject and I shall conclude this article by copying my reply to him which contains what I hope will be further helpful links –

On **'Indulgences'** it is important to see how they specifically relate to what Rome calls **'Temporal Punishment'**. It is defined in their Pocket Catholic Dictionary (by John A Hardin SJ) as **'The penalty that God in his justice inflicts either on earth or in Purgatory for sins, even though forgiven as to guilt'**.

The same dictionary defines **'Indulgences'** in part as **'The remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins forgiven as far as their guilt is concerned which the follower of Christ... acquires through the intervention of the Church, which, as minister of redemption, authoritatively dispenses and applies the treasury of the satisfaction won by Christ and the saints'**.

When I spoke last year (in 2-parts) on the Reformation my 1<sup>st</sup> part dealt with **'Reasons for the Reformation'** and **'Reaction to the Reformation'**. When dealing with **'Reasons for the Reformation'** the forgiveness of sins figured prominently and with the activity of Tetzal I spoke about the whole idea and error of so-called **'Temporal Punishment'** being discharged via **'Indulgences'**.

This link will take you to the audio of that talk and I would encourage you to listen from 19.50 through to 23.55 (and even beyond if you have time) and if you felt my 'schoolteacher illustration' was helpful feel free to use it.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTZ\\_ANKG\\_Jw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTZ_ANKG_Jw)

Back in 2006 I also addressed the subject of **'Rome and Indulgences'** and this is the link to that article on the ministry web site

<http://www.takeheed.info/roman-catholicism-and-indulgences/>

I also posted another article a few years later on the ministry web site dealing with **'Purgatory'** and it can be found on the following link and perhaps there might be something of help in it.

<http://www.takeheed.info/pdf/November-2014/Purgatory.pdf>

Hope these are helpful and pray you will know the Lord's help when you do speak on the topic.

