

Gerald Fowler,
 Dr. Christine Pickard, E.A.C. Goodman, LL.B.(Sol) Pamela Manson

The N.C.R.O.P.A. is affiliated to the National Council for Civil Liberties

NO/DAW/DP

3rd September, 1980.

The Rev. Philip Myatt,
 Walcot Parish Church,
 Bath,
 Avon.

Dear Reverend Myatt,

Having seen the erotic revue "Oh Calcutta" three times since its first London performance at the Roundhouse on 27th July 1970, I feel fairly competent to pass judgement on it.

I gather from "The Stage" that you have objected to it being presented at Bath's Theatre Royal because of its nudity and "obscenity". You are a priest and therefore, presumably, a believer in the concept that God created Man. If you find anything objectionable about the naked human form, are you not, therefore, making an impertinent and irreverent attack on your creator?

With regard to your criticism that "Oh Calcutta" is "obscene" (incidentally, I assume that you have already seen the show yourself), "obscenity" is a purely subjective term. This has become all too apparent to this campaign in its fight against bigotry, hypocrisy and repressive censorship in this country. Even the Williams Committee (to which we gave both written and oral evidence) described the word as being now "worn out". I suspect that what you really mean is that you are disgusted by it. Speaking personally, as a devout atheist and humanist, I am disgusted by a great deal of what is perpetrated and disseminated in the Church's name. Even passion plays depicting a man being nailed to a cross could well be described as disgusting - or "obscene". Would you like to see such performances banned also?

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The difference between you and me, vicar, is that, whereas I am tolerant of your beliefs and would vigorously champion your right to hold them, you are not so of mine. In addition, you and your ilk want to go further than mere condemnation. You demand the outright suppression of anything of which you personally disapprove, by force of law if necessary.

"Oh Calcutta" is a revue about sex - a perfectly natural phenomenon and one of Man's prime instincts. If "many young and vulnerable (vulnerable to what?) people see it" - even "out of curiosity", it will do them no harm at all and, in some cases, positive good. It is high time the myth that sex is 'naughty' or 'dirty' or 'immoral' is deflated once and for all. In any case, if you don't like the "Oh Calcutta" type show, you have a very effective remedy - stay away! - just as I have by staying away from your church if I wish to be spared the unpalatability of your brand of sermonising.

In one respect, though, we should be thanking you. I telephoned the London office of the management who are presenting "Oh Calcutta" this afternoon and they are delighted to report that, since your public utterances about the show, and the attendant publicity they have received, the box-office business has boomed! The public obviously know what they want, even if you don't. But then, as Alistair Cooke said in his "America" programme on BBC Television about one John Winthrop, "Like most Puritans, he knew what was right for other people"!

Yours sincerely,

David Webb,
Organiser,

National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts

P.S. I should just add that the NCROPA has many members who are also practising Christians but who find no conflict whatsoever between supporting our aims and following their chosen faith.