From the Psalms of David to Christian Rock – Youth Musical Subculture as a Tool for Evangelization. Historical Perspective

Od Psalmów Dawidowych do chrześcijańskiego rocka – muzyczna subkultura młodzieżowa jako narzędzie ewangelizacji. Ujęcie historyczne

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to present rock music as a tool for evangelization. The Second Vatican Council ushered in a new relationship between the Church community and the world of culture and art. The Church community, in response to the call to the work of the “new evangelization,” undertook unprecedented forms of apostolate, which often aroused controversy. One example here is evangelization through rock music. For some, the aesthetics of this form of music being far removed from the recommendations provided in the documents of the Catholic Church or its cultural and worldview message, unequivocally disqualifies it as a tool for evangelization. For others, on the other hand, rock music has an important evangelizing function, as the genre responds to the expectations of youth culture. Rock music, with its evangelical message, becomes a bridge allowing the Church community to get through with the Good News to the young generation who increasingly tend to live outside the Church’s structures. Consequently, the term “Christian rock” is used in the classification of the genre to indicate its distinctive values and message. The phenomenon of “Christian rock” implies two important aspects. Firstly, the radical transformation of musical forms that religious music is undergoing in order to respond to the needs of the times and, secondly, the fact that the message of the Gospel has realistically entered the world of popular music and has begun to use it to achieve its own goals. The historical framing of the problem inspires further research, e.g. in sociological and cultural dimensions.

Keywords: music, church, subculture, rock music, evangelization, youth

stanowi inspirację do podjęcia kolejnych badań, np. w wymiarze socjologicznym i kulturowym.

**Słowa kluczowe** muzyka, Kościół, subkultura, rock, ewangelizacja, młodzież

**INTRODUCTION**

Although it would be difficult to define the exact beginnings of music-making in the history of humanity, it is certain that music has accompanied people since prehistorical times (Fangorowa 2001, 27). Music permeates almost every sphere of human life, as it is a source of entertainment, it triggers our emotions, and at the same time allows us to express our feelings. Music plays a significant role not only in the sphere of the profane, but also in the sphere of the sacred. Instrumental music can convey what it is difficult to put into words, while singing allows us to translate the state of the soul into the language of lyrics and thus give expression to the living relationship with God.

Music naturally fits into the religious sphere of human life as it is clearly evidenced in the Holy Bible. It can be said that the Bible is endowed with music on two levels. On the one hand, it shows the importance of singing as part of God’s worship. On the other hand, it becomes the source of inspiration for artists who have adapted biblical motifs over the centuries.

Subsequent generations of the Church community upheld the biblical musical traditions. Over time, new forms of singing developed, songbooks and singing schools were created, and organs were introduced for liturgical use. Legal regulations were introduced by the Church authorities to ensure its proper character and role in the life of the Church. Singing became an inseparable element of divine worship. In addition to ceremonial liturgical music, there also emerged folk and religious music rooted in the world of entertainment, and it accompanied people in everyday life.

1. **MUSIC IN THE BIBLE**

Music is recurrently and in various contexts mentioned in the Bible. It had its place in the worship given to God during official celebrations, and it accompanied people in everyday life situations. At
the time of leisure, music was a source of entertainment, during the war, it stirred bravery in the army, and in sad moments it lifted people's spirits.

1.1. Old Testament

The very first pages of the Bible which tell about the creation of the world contain a passage which refers to the person of Jubal, the father of all those who play the flute and lyre (Gen. 4:21). In the Old Testament, singing was linked with numerous events in the history of Israel. Mention can be made here of the thanksgiving to God for the water brought out of the rock (Num. 21:16-18) or the song sung after crossing the Red Sea (Ex. 15:1-21). In 2 Sam. 6:16 we can read how King David was "bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouting and the sound of the trumpet." It was he who also established the ministry of singers\(^1\) from among the Levites (1 Chron. 9:33).

Songs were heard during and after warfare (2 Chron. 20:20-21; Judg. 5:1-31; 1 Sam. 18:6-7). Singing was also present in the painful moments of the Chosen People (Jer. 34:5; 2 Chron. 35:25). Songs, drums and lyres also accompanied farewells before the journey (Gen. 31:27) and called for conversion (Ezek. 19:1-14).

The Book of Psalms occupies a unique place among biblical musical testimonies. The Book of Psalms is the richest biblical source depicting the variety of instruments used (Ps. 4; 5; 6; 54; 55; 61; 67; 76), the way songs were performed (Ps. 6; 12) and the melodies known in the world at that time (Ps. 53; 57; 58; 59; 60; 75) (Bramowski 2012, 33-36)\(^2\).

1.2. New Testament

The musical and vocal traditions of the Old Testament found a natural continuation in the New Testament. Jesus and His disciples took an active part in the life of the Synagogue, praying and singing psalms (Luke 4:16). From the Gospel (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26) we learn that during the Last Supper

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\(^1\) According to 1 Chronicles 25:7, the temple choir consisted of two hundred and eighty-eight people, which proves the important role of music.

\(^2\) For more on the history of Israel’s music and musical instruments in the Bible (Rachuta 2011).
those gathered sang hymns: the final part of “Little Hallel” (Ps. 113-118) and the so-called “Great Hallel” (Ps. 135), ending Passover (Pietkiewicz 2009, 83). The theme of music is presented by St. Paul, who together with Silas “were praying and singing hymns of praise to God” (Acts 16:25). In his letters, he also referred several times to singing during the liturgy (1 Cor. 14:15; 1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

The performance of songs is also mentioned in the Book of Revelation. The twenty-four elders sing a song of praise to the Lamb (Rev 5:6-10). Only “one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads” could learn the “new song” (Rev 14:1-3). The seven angels, seeing God’s wrath coming, sang “the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God and the song of the Lamb” (Rev 15:1-4). After the destruction of Babylon, there will be silence, there will be no more “the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters” (Rev 18:22; conf. Jer. 25:10).

2. **Musical Tradition in the Church Community**

The first centuries of activity consolidated the position of music in the structures of the Church community. Due to the spread of Christianity beyond the borders of Palestine the liturgy and songs accompanying it began to develop and modify.

2.1. Church documents on sacred music

The first Christians initially adapted the singing of psalms and other Old Testament texts from the synagogue liturgy. After the community separated from the Synagogue and the influx of believers who did not know Jewish traditions, the number of songs was reduced (Pawlak 2001, 49).

The first musical forms intended for liturgical use, such as psalmodies and acclamations of the faithful, most often performed in the responsorial form, emerged in Rome already in the 2nd century. The period of persecution hindered the development of liturgical singing. The regaining of religious freedom gave impetus to the further development of the liturgy and new forms of singing (Pawlak 2001, 50-51). For example, “cantus directaneus”\(^4\), i.e., uninterrupted singing of all the faithful developed and a

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\(^3\) The so-called Edict of Milan.

\(^4\) Also referred to as “psalmodia in directum”.

division into two choirs was introduced (4th century) (Nieczarkowska 2020, 18). In the following centuries, Gregorian chant appeared, then polyphony was introduced in its manifold varieties. Initially, no musical instruments were used in churches as they were associated with pagan worship. Therefore, a pivotal moment was the introduction of the organ into use during the liturgy (7th or 8th century) (Pawlak 2001, 51).

Music became an organic part of the liturgy. Therefore, over the centuries, the Church developed a number of legal solutions regulating its place and role in celebrations.

The Second Vatican Council, initiating the restoration of the liturgy, claimed “that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations” which is “their right and duty by reason of their baptism” (Second Vatican Council 1963, 14). This appreciation of the faithful’s participation in the liturgy also demanded a reform of church music.

Introduction of national languages and opening up to local traditions, as well as enabling the Episcopates to manage liturgical matters, gave an impetus to the development of music that did not fit the definition of liturgical music. This required taking a second look at the terminology used and the categories of music related to the broadly understood sphere of religion.

*Instruction of the Polish Episcopate on liturgical music after the Second Vatican Council* notes: “Religious music is a highly effective means of reviving the piety of the faithful” (Polish Episcopate 1979, 44). As a proposal for promoting religiosity outside the liturgy, this document indicates, among others:

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5 Its name originates from the name of its creator, Pope Gregory the Great. Today, some scholars subvert this thesis, pointing out that Gregorian chant originated later in France (Tyrała 2001).

6 The oldest known document on church music is *Docta sanctorum Patrum* (1324) by John XXII. Other legal norms were included in: the documents of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) (Karnas and Maniecka 2004, 651), in the encyclical of Benedict XV *Annum qui* (1749), in the motu proprio of Pius X *Inter pastoralis officii solicitudines* (Pius X 1903, 2). The encyclical of Pius XII *Miae sacrae disciplina* (Sawa 2016, 90-91) published in 1955 can be treated as a conclusion of the current Church guidelines (Nieczarkowska 2020, 27-40).

7 This was confirmed by the Council’s Constitution on the Holy Liturgy “Sacrosanctum Concilium” (Second Vatican Council 1963, 112-121). Further legislation of the Universal and local Church was developed in the following documents: *Instrukcja o muzyce w świętej liturgii Musicam sacram* (1967), *Instrukcja Episkopatu Polski o muzyce liturgicznej po Soborze Watykańskim II*, *Instrukcja Kongregacji Kultu Bożego o koncertach w kościołach* (1987), *Instrukcja Konferencji Episkopatu Polski o muzyce kościelnej* (2017) and other.

8 A similar provision is included in the updated version of the cited instruction from 2017, *Instrukcja Konferencji Episkopatu Polski o muzyce kościelnej*, No. 44.
religious music concerts. This field of activity is also in line with the idea of apostolate and pastoral renewal propagated by the teachings of the Second Vatican Council.

1.2. Music as a form of evangelization

The post-conciliar openness to the world of culture and art as well as the involvement of lay people in the life of the Church gave rise to new forms of apostolate. One of them was Christian pop music (Niegowski and Wiśniewski 2014, 454). In the late 1970s, “Contemporary Christian Music” emerged in America (CCM). This musical trend began to appear in Poland after 1989 and it led to a dynamic development of professional bands promoting Christian values (Warmijak 2007, 140). CCM provided a sphere where both those who actively participated in the life of the Church community, and those who were experiencing a crisis of faith, could find their place. It also allowed to spread the Christian message in a less formalized form to non-believers or those distanced from the institutional activity of the Church who sought to satisfy their spiritual needs through culture.

John Paul II’s encyclical Redemptoris mission (1990) called on the faithful to renew the Church’s missionary zeal. As the Pope writes, the “new spring” of Christianity is to come thanks to the “new evangelization.” “The moment has come to commit all of the Church’s energies to a new evangelization and to the mission ad gentes” (Jan Paweł II 1990, 3). According to the Pope, the “new evangelization” is the proclamation of “the Gospel which is always new and always the bearer of new things, an evangelization which must be ‘new in its ardour, methods and expression’” (Jan Paweł II 1993, 106). Therefore, the introduction of religious music into new spheres, such as recording studios, festivals, television and radio stations, has become a form of proclaiming the Good News, aptly responding to the papal call.

The fact that music exerts its influence on humans is beyond doubt (Stachyra 2022). It is a link between an individual and the surrounding reality, culture and living environment. It appeals to the human heart, emotions, feelings, memories, experiences. Music can spur people into action, but it can also calm them down and bring relief. It affects the body, mind and spirit, and therefore the entirety of human existence (Stachyra 2022). Music has an impact on human behaviour and beliefs, and it is a means of propagating values. This is especially the case when it comes to young people who are building their
worldview and identity (Rusaczyk 2021). Religious music therefore promotes the spiritual development of young listeners, opens them to the presence of God, encourages them to pray and contemplate, brings them closer to the sphere of the sacred and influences their social and moral life.

It should be emphasized that such an impact is exerted not only by calm, meditative music, but also by more dynamic music. The inculturation of the Good News in the sphere of music means that the Christian message can be found in many musical styles, including those that are in no way associated with the religious world (Sawa 2016, 102). An additional advantage of contemporary Christian music is the fact that it constitutes a counterweight to the values and destructive attitudes promoted among young people by contemporary artists, such as alcohol consumption, drug use, promiscuity, consumerism, hedonism, occultism, etc.

3. ROCK MUSIC AND ITS SUBCULTURES – HISTORICAL PANORAMA

Christian music has entered into all the most popular genres, forms and styles of music. In some cases, this gave rise to much controversy as to the appropriateness of combining religious content with a particular musical style, which in its foundations represented opposing ideas.

Rock, as well as its manifold subgenre, has been an object of such a long-standing dispute due to its being a multi-faceted and complex phenomenon that cannot be perceived only in terms of its artistic aspects. For decades, rock has been recognized as a cultural and sociological factor promoting a specific lifestyle, attitudes, values and even clothing.

3.1. Origin of the genre and subculture

An attempt to provide an overview of the origins of this genre for the purposes of this article poses many difficulties. This is due to the fact, that the development of rock music covers the span of many decades and has already been an object of numerous studies9. The history of rock begins in the

9 Detailed descriptions of the history of rock can be found in foreign publications, e.g.: Paytress 2011; Covach 2012; Weiss 1999; Weiss 2007. According to the information provided by the author, the third volume will not be published.
1950s. This genre is a mixture of blues and country, it created its own sound, based on guitar riffs, dynamic rhythm and expressive vocals. Its first performers included, among others, Bill Halley, Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry and Little Richard (Wiak 2024). The dominating genre in the 1960s was psychedelic rock, which derived its origin mostly due to the state of consciousness induced by taking drugs or hallucinogenic substances (James 2023). The 1970s were the heyday of hard rock and progressive rock. The leading bands included, among others, Led Zeppelin, Queen and Pink Floyd (Wiak 2024). In the middle of this decade, there emerged a more dynamic modification of hard rock, i.e., heavy metal. In the most general sense, it was characterized by heavily distorted guitars and a fast tempo (Gać 2022). At this point, it is necessary to mention the appearance of punk rock, which was supposed to be a return “to the roots”. Its characteristic feature was a combination of simplicity and aggressiveness. It was often played without precision, based on just a few chords (Mikzińska 2020). The following decades (1980s and 1990s) brought new influences and changes. The driving force behind the modification of styles was the development of electronics and production of, for example, synthesizers and keyboards (Piasta 1999, 135).

Rock is a genre characterized by dynamic development as well as by its propensity to adapt to the changes induced by the passage of time and to renew itself in a new form. In the history of music, rock is a phenomenon that cannot be easily grasped just on a single plane. It is a complex phenomenon that can be illustratively likened to a lush tree crown stemming from one trunk.

Rock music is more than just musical instruments, new bands, or a form of entertainment. When describing the history of rock, attention should be paid to the social and cultural context. Rock provided a means of expressing young people's rebellion against the orderly world of adults. The possibility to emphasize common values allowed to create a “new” community that rejected the surrounding culture, values and authorities. Rock idols portrayed themselves as rebels, by breaking taboos and making their fans to follow in their footsteps (Kuligowski 2004). Elvis Presley may serve as an example here. The King's concerts gathered crowds of young people (Litwora 1999, 11). Presley was an artist propagating sexual freedom and rebellion against parents and authorities. His performances induced riots and uncontrollable crowd behaviour (Piasta 1999, 125).
One effect of evoking countercultural sentiments among young people was the formation of subcultures\(^\text{10}\), each characterised by their own distinct rules, values and clothing. Some of them were short-lived or did not attract a larger number of followers, but there were also some that managed to influence the young society for decades. The latter included, among others, punk rockers and metalheads.

The punk subculture emerged in the 1970s in the USA and Great Britain. Its view of the world was expressed by the slogans: “no future”, “no rules”, “anarchy”. Punks opposed all institutions, be it political, social and religious, that limited freedom and they expressed those sentiments in their lyrics (Bittner 2011, 133). Punks invariably subverted everything that was dominant and accepted as truth by society. This was done to the purpose of discovering a new, authentic world (Errickson 1999). The aggressive and provocative style of punk music was reflected in clothes and appearance of its fans which included a black leather jacket decorated with studs, buevo boots (military style boots), studded leather wristbands, and a mohawk hairstyle (Bittner 2011, 133).

Punk rockers often lived on the streets or formed groups in abandoned buildings. They refused to take up paid work perceiving it as a form of social oppression. In order to emphasize their anti-system attitude, they took drugs, tattooed and self-harmed themselves (Errickson 1999).

The metalhead subculture took its final shape in the 1980s. Metalheads wanted to distance themselves from the hypocrisy of the world. This was manifested by their ignoring social and political pressures. It allowed the young generation to build a sense of superiority and otherness. The character of the music they listened to, enhanced the intensity of experiences in their everyday lives (Pluta 2018, 24). Many young people who felt oppressed or rejected joined the metalhead society to express their rebellion. As with punks, the heavily male community demanded authenticity and commitment. Characteristic features of their appearance were leather jackets\(^\text{11}\), jeans, band T-shirts, piercings or tattoos, and long hair (Glanek 2018). The symbols they used included a pentagram, 666 (the number of the Beast from Rev 13:18), Baphomet (a five-pointed star as a goat's head inscribed in a circle), an inverted cross and fingers...

\(^\text{10}\) I.e. social groups living according to specific customs different from the ones commonly adopted in society (Słownik języka polskiego PWN 2024).

\(^\text{11}\) One of the typical elements of heavy metal fans’ clothing was a “battle jacket” (sometimes sleeveless), with patches referring to bands or symbols related to the subculture. (O’Hagan 2021, 37-38).
arranged in the shape of horns\textsuperscript{12} (Piasta 1999, 168-179). The recurrent themes in song lyrics can be divided into two categories: “Dionysian” and “chaotic”. The former emphasized the joy of life and the affirmation of sex and drugs, while the latter focused on such themes as chaos, hell, Satan, and death (Weinstein 2000, 31-43). The heavy metal community was criticized for promoting suicidal behaviour, aggression, sexual perversion, and Satanism among youth (Weinstein 2000, 250-259).

The described subcultural revolution reached Poland in the 1950s, when the first sounds from behind the Iron Curtain began to get through to the country. The development of Polish rock coincided with the times of the Polish People’s Republic, when the authorities claimed their supreme right to create culture. Consequently, “rock and roll” is a history of the intricate interaction of the two forces that significantly influenced each other (Idzikowska-Czubaj 2012, 7-8). The precursors of Polish rock and roll were jazz bands: “Niebiesko-Czarni” and “Czerwono-Czarni”, which began to compose slightly harder, dance sounds. Typical rock bands also appeared on the Polish scene, such as “Rhytm and Blues”, “Rytmy”, “Czerwone Gitary” and “Trubadurzy” (Wójcik 2023). Polish rock of the 1960s was characterized by a dynamic, strong rhythm built thanks to drums, guitar riffs and double bass, kept in the Western style and keyboard instruments were a common addition. Although the bands took cues from the West, they did not copy the originals. An example were the lyrics of songs, which had to be held in the “right tone” due to, among other things, state censorship (Ostrowska 2023). In the following decades, more bands began to appear, including: “Maanam”, “Kombi”, “Exodus”, “Perfect”, “Budka Suflera”, “Republika”, “Lombard”, “Lady Pank”. The driving force behind the development of the Polish music scene were festivals (Jarocin, Opole, Sopot)\textsuperscript{13}.

The mid-1970s brought a kind of crisis to rock, which lost its dominant position as a means of expression for youth. Disco culture took hold and discos were supposed to provide compensation for the shortcomings resulting from the state’s isolation policy. Discos were a kind of ghetto spaces where young people could take a breather from the surrounding grey reality.

\textsuperscript{12} For more on the history of the gesture and its adaptation by subculture: Trela 2021.

\textsuperscript{13} In the context of power in the Polish People’s Republic and the possibility of organizing festivals, there emerged a theory of the so-called “safety valve” (Spałek 2021).
The decade of the 1980s, was the time of political changes (including the introduction of martial law) as well as of an economic crisis, which released new layers of rebellion and rejection of reality by the young generation. Rock began to return to the pedestal. Cassettes and fan magazines (fanzines) were published in the so-called “third circulation”, bypassing ministerial censorship. The young generation tried to develop a system of thinking independent of the state apparatus. The great power of this movement is evidenced by the fact that at that time the number of emerging subcultures (punk rockers, metalheads, Satanists, Rastamans) increased significantly.

The time marked by a sense of uncertainty, the leading role of the party and the economic crisis aroused frustration and a desire for change in the young generation. One effect was the emergence from the underground of punk rock bands that had been developing since the mid-1970s. Punk rock as the music of protest became a form of free expression, a contestation of the reality saturated with propaganda, lies and restrictions on freedom. Apart from the festival in Jarocin, another important place for the punk family was the “Post Remont” gallery in Warsaw (Bittner 2011, 134-135).

At the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, heavy metal music and its later subgenres became fashionable in Poland. The band KAT, founded in 1979, was considered one of the precursors of Polish heavy metal (Gać 2022). The typical image of the Polish metalhead did not differ from the Western one. Due to symbols that they wore and their critical attitude to the Church, they were often identified with Satanists (Majewski 2013). The common stereotype of metalheads maintained that they were aggressive\(^{14}\), not very intelligent, and antisocial. However, recent research proves to the contrary (Kaltwasser et al. 2018; Chojnacka 2019).

The brevity of this article prevents a more comprehensive presentation of rock music that would include all its genres and the accompanying socio-cultural phenomena. Rock marked its place in the history of Polish culture as an important worldview-shaping factor and it cannot be categorised simply as a trend of past decades, since today’s adult society is the “young generation” of that time.

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\(^{14}\) Group “pogo” and “mosh” dances taking place during concerts are not an expression of aggression by the participants (Matras 2012, 154).
3.2. The world of rock music and the Church

For the purposes of this article, I would also like to touch on the Church’s attitude towards the “world of rock”. The Church repeatedly faced dilemmas appearing in the field of music. After the Second Vatican Council, one of the challenges was the emerging phenomenon of rock and roll. The problem was related not so much to the musical style as such, but to the associated ideology. The Church, which upholds such values as tradition, morality, intergenerationality, family, respect for the elderly, social order, good manners and upbringing, could not but reject the cultural revolution that consisted in young people’s subversion of any authorities, the importance of family ties, traditions and other values derived from the Gospel as well as propagation of destructive behaviours. The gap between these two worlds was even widened by accusations of anti-Christian, occult inspirations, the cult of personality (musical idols), sexual promiscuity, promotion of stimulants and violence, and manipulation of listeners’ subconscious. Additionally, the concert setting, public statements made by music stars and even the graphic design of album or cassette covers also aroused much controversy.

To illustrate it, it suffices to mention the publications that are still popular in Church circles, such as Diabelskie bębny (Devil’s drums) or Rock: rytmiczne spętanie ducha (Rock: the rhythmic binding of the soul) (Rockwell 1997; Zwoliński 1995). In view of the above, the words of Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and later Pope Benedict XVI, will not come as a surprise: “... this type of music (rock) destroys individualism and personality - man frees himself from his conscious being. (…) Nowadays, there are more and more numerous manifestations of Satanism in music, and not everyone is aware of its dangerous influence yet” (Zwoliński 1995, 62-63).

3.3. “Christian Rock”

In an attempt to define the concept of “Christian rock” it is necessary to include two dimensions: horizontal and vertical. The first is the musical genre used as a form of artistic expression. The second dimension refers to the content that is presented within a given musical arrangement. Its verticality results from the fact that it refers to the spiritual sphere, the relationship between God and man. Song lyrics which incorporate passages from the Bible (especially Psalms) constitute an encouragement to give due
worship to God and are intended to provide an incentive for listeners to live their lives in accordance with God’s will or to do penance (Piasta 1999, 185).

It is obvious that such a definition does not exhaust the doubts whether rock music with its revolutionary ideological charge should be combined with religious content. However, in practice, this has already taken place for years. With the development of contemporary Christian music, there emerged bands offering a “heavy sound”, devoid of any ideological basis and incorporating the Gospel message.

The first band to propose the “new Church music” in 1967 was “The Mind Garage” from Virginia (USA). The band offering its rock repertoire invited everyone to “The Electric Liturgy” held in St. Mark’s Church in-the-Bowery in Manhattan. The liturgy of April 13, 1969 was recorded by NBC15 arousing great interest among viewers (Martinez 2019).

Historians associate the emergence of Christian rock with Larry Norman and his album Upon This Rock (1969). In his works, the artist wanted to get through to the contemporary world and point to Jesus and Christian values. In order to promote his music, Larry Norman established the “Solid Rock Records” label. Other rock musicians followed in his footsteps and began to spread the Christian message. Those included such artists as Keith Green, Carman, or Steven Curtis Chapman (Trzciński 2016). Some of the bands, such as the “Resurrection Band”, apart from musical activity, undertook charitable work supporting the homeless and the poor (Trzciński 2019).

Nowadays, “heavy riff” artists also include those who have made an international career and wanted to share their own experience of faith, e.g. “P.O.D.” (Payable on Death) or “Skillet”, whose album “Rise” sold 345,000 copies (Payne 2015).

The Polish rock scene did not remain passive. Bands began to appear that were more and more willing to weave Christian values into their work. It is worth mentioning the punk rock band “Armia”, founded in 1984, which underwent a textual transformation from Gnosticism to Christian values (Jakimowicz 1997b, 21-27).

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15 Fragment of the recording is available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sESGpXDviR0 (Accessed on: 3.05.2005).
Another example is the band “Houk”, whose album, “Soul ammunition” (1992), helped them achieve critical acclaim and start an international concert tour, while their songs were broadcast on radio stations and MTV (Wołódzko 1999).

An important event for Christian music was the “Song of Songs” festival in Toruń, were many bands, including those from the rock environment, were promoted. Proof of this is the metal band “Pneuma”, which in 1998 took first place in the so-called “small stage” of the festival for their debut album Wiatr wieje tam, gdzie chce (The wing blows where it wishes). The second album Berakha includes a song containing the words of the Lord’s Prayer (Sękowski 2012).

In 1991, Robert Friedrich started a band named “Creation of Death”, which was supposed to be an alternative to the Satanism prevalent at that time. The lyrics of the songs related to faith, religion and catechism truths. However, the band suspended its activities after releasing one album (Szubrycht 2022).

Further attempts to sing about God and faith resulted in a breakthrough event in the Christian rock scene. In 1996, a project called “2 Tm 2,3” was initiated16. Its members included the following artists: Tomasz Budzyński, Robert Friedrich and Dariusz Malejonek. The path of their conversion was described in the book by Marcin Jakimowicz entitled “Radykalni”. The musicians decided that they would create together “something” new, something evangelistic in nature, where they would be able to sing directly about faith (Chmiel 1996). The artists did not abandon their current style of music. The novelty of 2 Tm 2,3 was the complete abandonment of original texts in favour of quotations from the Holy Scripture, which was a revolutionary combination of rock with the content of the Bible. The founders of “Tymoteusz” spoke the Word of God in a form understandable to the young generation (Koziczynski 1997, 52)17.

Christian rock originates from a “spiritual need”. On the one hand, it were believing rock fans themselves who looked for music conveying a positive message and matching their taste (Perfuński 1997, 28-29). On the other hand, this need came from the artists, who wanted to share their personal

16 The name of the band, also called “Tymoteusz”, refers to a passage from the 2nd Letter of St. Paul to Timothy.
17 Other bands that marked their presence on the “Christian rock” scene include: “Illuminandi”, “Anastasis” and “Malchus”.


experience of God, strengthening their journey of faith for young listeners (Kowalczyk 1997, 17). An interesting fact here is that some artists avoided the Christian “label” in conviction that it may close off a certain group of listeners to their music (Jakimowicz 1997b, 35).

Christian rock was part of the “new evangelization” and made it possible to convey religious content to young people who prefer this type of music. It created a space promoting an alternative system of values and moral attitudes towards the “traditional” world of rock. There are many examples of clergy supporting this type of evangelization. They organize concerts or play in such bands (e.g. “Fratello Metallo”) (Matera 1999).

Christian rock bands brought the Good News to those spheres where there was no place for the traditional message of faith. Music festivals\(^\text{18}\) have become a special opportunity for evangelization during which the audience could encounter the message of the Good News (Jakimowicz 2006).

Analysis of the presented content may raise further questions about the so-called “Christian rock”. Can it serve as an effective tool for evangelization?

An answer to this question, would require conducting a survey among those immediately concerned. Research on this issue would help justify or deny the validity of artistic creativity within a genre which maintains to give rise to much controversy in source literature that, in turn, fails to provide a definite answer here.

CONCLUSION

The presented historical outline generally shows the changes that have occurred in music thematically related to God. Although the forms changed, the intention remained the same. People have always created art and used art to worship and praise God. Religious music has undergone a complex path of transformation. Initially closely associated with the world of the sacred, it expanded its presence in the sphere of the profane, where it consequently reached for means of expression that did not fit into the accepted canons.

\(^{18}\) In Poland, for example, it was the former “Przystanek Woodstock”, today called “Poland Rock”.
Studies on the history of sacred music have shown that the Church has many a time faced such breakthroughs. Mention may be made here of the introduction of organs into liturgical use. Overcoming this fear opened up the Church music to new horizons, giving impetus to the development of new musical forms in the future.

A similar analogy can be noticed in the context of rock music, rejected by the Church circles as a demoralizing phenomenon. The post-conciliar opening to culture meant that the Church community began to look for new ways of proclaiming the Gospel.

Broadly understood rock music which interested young people was one of the options here. This type of music allowed to get through to a wide group of young people with the message of the Gospel in a form that was understandable and acceptable to them.

Many found the very idea of “Christian rock” outrageous, perceiving attempts to match gospel themes with such a style of music as a transgression of the boundaries of propriety as it meant evangelizing young people with something inherently “anti-evangelical”. Others, however, accepted it because they saw it as the voice of the Church fitting into the world of youth culture.

“Christian rock” was, is and, for many years to come, will provoke discussion. After all, does a long-haired boy wearing boots and a black jacket necessarily have to be identified with the “666” sign? A common saying goes, “you can’t judge a book by its cover.” It is similar in this case. God created the human heart, and He knows how to speak to it most effectively. Therefore, the best conclusion here will be the words of Jesus: “So then, you will know them by their fruits” (Mt 7:20).

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