

**ROCK APOSTLES**  
**A RELIGIOUS STUDIES INVESTIGATION OF**  
**CHRISTIAN POPULAR MUSIC**

**KINGA POVEDÁK**

PhD theses

Consultant: Prof. Dr. Barna Gábor Dsc.

SZTE BTK Doctoral School of History, Modern History Programme

**SZEGED**

2016

## AIMS

The study deals with a phenomenon that has been little researched in Hungary: it analyses *Christian popular music*. Its main aim is to map and define the phenomenon of Christian popular music and its variants that appear among different historical, political and religious circumstances; to explore the motivations behind the emergence of Christian popular music, the mechanism of the reaction of religious music born in response to cultural changes, and the effects on society of Christian popular music. Summing up, to show Christian popular music as a response to social changes and the responses on the part of society to Christian popular music. It was the intention of my doctoral dissertation to focus on the overarching cultural processes, to describe and interpret the reactions and counter-reactions, using the tools of cultural studies.

## TERMINOLOGY

My study began from an exceptional situation regarding terminology. The terminology describing the phenomenon studied is confused and imprecise in both the Hungarian and English languages. In general usage the Hungarian concept of *Christian popular music* can be used to mean *guitar songs*, or *praise music*, *beat masses*, at other times it appears in the form of *church disco*, *Christian rock*, *sacred beat*, *religious beat*, *Jenő songs*, or *Yellow Book songs*. The terms found in English, used in parallel, interchangeably and inconsistently include *Contemporary Christian Music (CCM)*, *Praise&Worship Music*, *Christian Rock* and *Christian Popular Music* but these in no way correspond to the guitar songs based on folk-beat music and intended mainly for liturgical use that have emerged in Hungary since the 1960s and are still in use. Despite all their shortcomings, I regard the Hungarian expression *Christian popular music [keresztény könnyűzene]*, and the English term *Christian Popular Music* to be the closest equivalents.

It is a problem that often performers who openly embrace their Christian faith but never refer to it in their songs, are also classified in the category of Christian popular music. In other cases the opposite may occur: when a song sung by a popular secular performer contains such direct Christian references that it would not be out of place in a praise concert, but neither the performers, nor the listeners, nor the “Christian popular musicians” regard it as belonging in that category.

Another problem is caused by the fact that Christian popular music cannot be classified unequivocally solely in the field of religious music as it is precisely its symbiosis with the profane that gives it a distinctive character. It adopts different forms in the various periods, or often at the same time differing from one geographical region to another. It is shaped by the culture of the given period, the political and religious circumstances, the religious market, all factors that separately or together increase the diversity and so add to the terminological confusion.

Both internationally and in Hungary Christian popular music has become a phenomenon almost too rich and complex to grasp. Among the many subgenres it is difficult to define exactly what it is that they have in common; do we really even find the same phenomenon behind pieces in the “new” style that are sometimes similar and at others very different? Because none of the

attempts at a definition presented here was able to cover the whole of Christian popular music well and comprehensively, I was obliged to create a definition that takes into account several aspects.

In my opinion, when looking at Christian popular music it is worth examining simultaneously the existence of basically three aspects. These are: the function of the music, the personal faith of the performer, and the content of the songs. We can speak of a Christian popular music composition if we can more or less find a connection with Christianity in all three aspects. The definition I propose is the following: *the term Christian popular music applies to compositions of popular music with a content linked to Christian teachings and ideals, performed by Christian musicians with liturgical, praise or evangelising intention.*

## RESEARCH HISTORY

Because of the *transdisciplinary nature* of the dissertation, I had to build on the research precedents not only of a single discipline but of practically all of the social sciences that have dealt with Christian popular music or its precedents. Accordingly, I have drawn on the works of authors approaching the field from the angle of *popular music studies, music theology, theology, liturgical studies, history of music, church history, social history, and ethnomusicology.*

However, the basic frame of interpretation applied in my dissertation has been drawn from *religious studies*. I approach Christian music not through theology or church history but by focusing on the lived religious reality of the individuals and communities receiving it. Independently of periods or political systems, each chapter – on the characteristics of the years of socialism, the unfolding debates, the various functions of religious music, the characteristics of its spread, or contemporary trends – can be interpreted basically within the frames of *vernacular religion*. However transdisciplinary the research chapter may be, it must be stressed that Christian popular music can be regarded as having been hardly researched at all, either internationally or in Hungary.

## METHODOLOGY

My dissertation focuses on several periods simultaneously, and I had to choose different methods to analyse the different periods. An investigation of the years of socialism would have been inconceivable without the use of archival sources. It is worth noting in connection with the sources to be found here that no observations were directed specifically at Christian music, in all cases music came to the attention of the authorities through investigation material on persons under surveillance (a parish priest, choir member, member of the spirituality movement). I supplemented my research in the archives with the reminiscences of informants from Szeged (oral history), as well as with a press history analysis in the hope of obtaining a fuller picture. Similarly, contemporary processes were studied by conducting interviews (group and individual in-depth interviews), and with interviews by questionnaire. These were supplemented with field research with a multi-level perspective.

In the course of my research, taking into account the transformation of the validity of the concept of field (Marcus and Hannerz), I followed the position that – moving beyond positivist, descriptive ethnography – the field is no longer restricted simply to a social group or religious community. In my case this was especially justified because my dissertation does not aim to be either a case study, an in-depth exploration or a positivist description, but instead to grasp Christian popular music on multiple planes in order to interpret and show the functions it has served in different periods (in both individual and collective identity, as well as in religious modernisation), and its characteristics.

I applied mainly the method of Marcus's *multi-site ethnography* and Hannerz's *multi-local fieldwork*, that expands and restructures the field in the sense of classical anthropology, and as a result my field also changed and became more varied. I was not tied to a church choir, a spirituality movement or a particular concert series, instead I traced the complex manifestation forms of the phenomenon examined in a broader context, following the research possibilities given by Marcus. (1. follow people, 2. follow the thing, 3. follow the metaphor, 4. follow the story, 5. follow the life of a particular individual, and 6. follow the conflict). In doing so I did not spend continuous longer periods in the different fields but applied Wulff's *yo-yo fieldwork* method to achieve a fuller result.

## CATHOLICISM AND MODERNISATION

The frame of interpretation of the phenomenon is in practice the connection between religion and modernisation. It provides a good example of how the community demands appearing as a consequence of modernisation give rise to similar response reactions in the different cultures and how, in many cases, these arise entirely independently of each other and are manifested in essentially identical forms.

Naturally, the effect of the intention of transformation, innovation, “modernisation” was felt in differing ways in the various parts of the former bipolar world. While in the democratic societies the reforms took place openly, and as a consequence they could be implemented in practice almost at once, behind the Iron Curtain, among others in Hungary, learning about them depended on the one hand on the intention of the state authorities, and on the other hand also on the intentions of the church leadership cooperating with the state. For this reason the spirit of the reforms could be asserted only to a limited extent, filtered through state (and church) censorship, and with considerable delay, and their implementation took even longer.

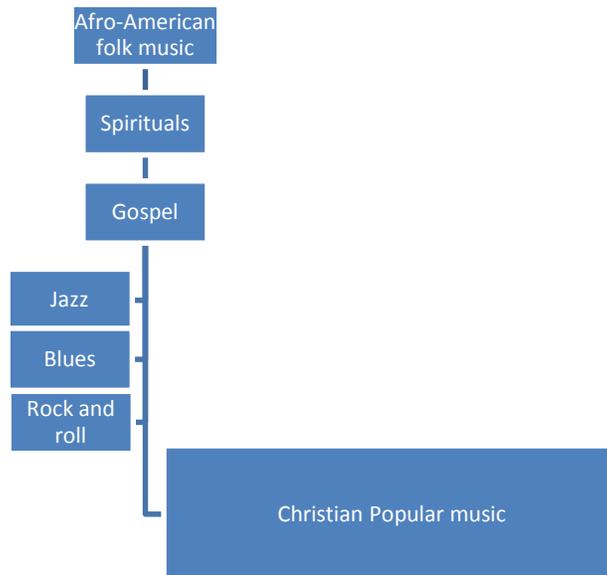
In the case of the Roman Catholic Church, after the reforms of the II Vatican Council, the church appears as the interpreter of the signs of the times, as a companion traveller of modernity, and in a way as its partner. The Council gave greater importance to the laity, and at the same time modernised the forms of the religious cult.

The church's elite found their way back to the lost emotional values, and as Helleman also noted, the institution tried to bring itself closer to modern times, it no longer condemned modernity but under the aegis of the key word “aggiornamento” strove to adapt Catholicism to modernity, but this was far from straightforward and problem-free. Although in the spirit of “aggiornamento” the Council tried to bridge the gap and move closer to its own age, the suddenly introduced reforms

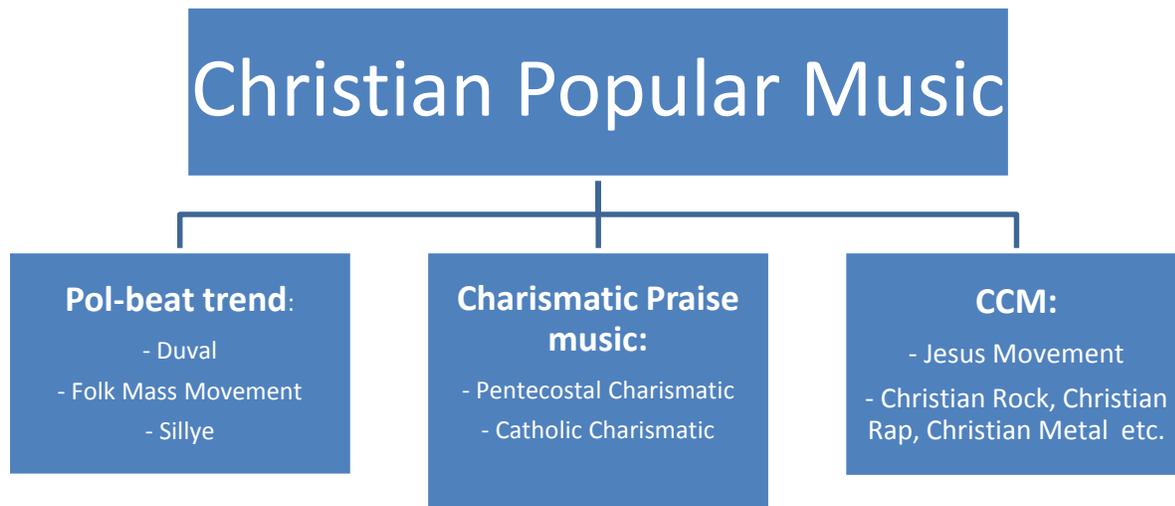
had an ambivalent effect. Rather than a simple solution, the transformation did more to cause an internal crisis. A trend enclosing itself in traditionalism and increasingly out of touch with the age existed and continues to exist side by side and in confrontation with another trend increasingly adapting to the circumstances of the age. The tensions between these two trends are often greater than in comparison with a trend outside Catholicism.

## THE EMERGENCE OF CHRISTIAN POPULAR MUSIC

On the musical plane the roots reach back to the *spirituals* that arose in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century among the Afro-American population, that developed into *gospel* by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the beginning of the following century this gave rise to popular secular musical genres such as jazz, blues, and then from the middle of the century rock and roll. Later, as these returned to religious frames, they contributed to shaping Christian popular music. The diagram showing the dynamics of the process indicates that *syncretism*, a merging with secular genres and styles, has been present throughout the development of Christian popular music and its precedents.



Today, three main forms of Christian popular music can be distinguished: 1. fashionable music conveying a Christian message, created for entertainment purposes and performed at concerts and praise concerts (CCM); 2. popular songs created for praise and also appearing in liturgical use, and 3. liturgical songs performed mainly with acoustic instruments (in Hungary the guitar, in the US piano and guitar) that are mainly used at religious services, mass and in private devotions.



## WARS OVER MUSIC. THE EVALUATION OF CHRISTIAN POPULAR MUSIC

The appearance and rapid spread of the new style of music naturally did not go unnoticed. Some of the reactions and evaluations welcomed the innovation and opening, but most opinions in the press and the literature took a negative view. This kind of protracted war that seems to be waning a little at present but rumbles on beneath the surface with occasional public outbursts is impossible to interpret in itself without taking into account its wider connections to modernisation and the II Vatican Council. In practice the same concerns were raised when the new music style suddenly appeared and in connection with the general interpretation of the Council's reforms: 1. it breaks up of traditional forms; 2. it comes from below and is therefore unregulated, the rapidly spreading initiatives are not necessarily in harmony with doctrine; 3. because it is too open to secular culture it is absorbed into it and becomes secularised; 4. it leads to increased emphasis on emotions rather than on faith.

On the surface it would appear that the demand for religious renewal would automatically lead to support for Christian popular music, for the revival movements arising at the level of micro communities, even more, pointing beyond this to the existence of a kind of correlation at generational level, revealing a fracture line between the older generations (rejectors) versus younger generations (supporters). However, far more complex attitudes and conclusions can be found at the deeper levels of the phenomenon, in numerous cases contradicting the superficial picture. The phenomenon of the debates is further nuanced by the fact that no generalisations can be made about them on a geographical basis. Like the many kinds of modernity, the evaluation of Christian popular music can also change on the basis of cultures and political systems. It was different behind the Iron Curtain and different in the plural democracies, and within the latter it was different in the United States compared to, say, France.

Right up until recently, the literature in English dealing with the debates had two fundamental characteristics: on the one hand participants in the debate as practising believers made no attempt to hide their position as such, treating the topic practically as a question of faith. Even the seemingly most objective writings occupied a position on one side or the other – depending on personal involvement. On the other hand, as a consequence we find arguments and not interpretations, always with the aim of persuasion.

A general trend that can be observed is that while debates among evangelical congregations are basically grouped around questions of theology and music theology, within the Roman Catholic Church they began from a far more profane, aesthetic basis. Criticisms coming from the Catholic side mainly appeared from the direction of high culture, were based on the values of high culture and it was mainly the critics who spoke up. The church officials who expressed an opinion gave the impression of an institution isolating itself from the world and the secular, one that opposes the profane culture of its own age to the religious sphere, regarding the two as incompatible.

Miller collected the following criticisms from the “literature”. 1. Christian popular music is harmful to the health, 2. it causes moral corruption, 3. it is too secular, 4. it is on a low standard aesthetically, 5. the motivations are questionable, the power of money lies in the background.

Many people have expressed the criticism that the emerging Christian popular music industry has gone too far in embracing the materialism of the consumer society that is contrary to Christian teachings. In the opinion of Ratzinger, the church’s search for a “new language” must not be limited to the church subordinating itself to modern culture that is constantly occupied with seeking itself amidst doubts. Christian popular music cannot be used merely for the purpose of pastoral success.

## CHRISTIAN POPULAR MUSIC IN HUNGARY

The appearance of Christian popular music in Hungary cannot be examined merely as the result of a musical process, it must be placed in a much wider context through which it becomes possible to analyse the circumstances that gave rise to the phenomenon that has a variety of motivational sources. The analysis must take into account the political and religious circumstances of the Kádár era, the changes in the church policy of the one-party state regime; changes in the policy of the Catholic church; the measures taken by the II Vatican Council that opened up a whole range of possibilities in religious culture, and how they took root in Hungary; the broader cultural context that led to the religious reforms; the differing values of generations that grew up after the Second World War; rock and roll that began to spread in the 1960s, as music, a way of life and a movement shaping the culture; and the attitudes and preferences of the period known as postmodern. All these factors together created circumstances in Hungary in the 1960s where Hungarian Christian popular music seemed to have emerged overnight.

The attitude of the Kádár regime’s policy on religion towards Christian popular music can be seen on files now preserved in the State Security Archive which show that from the 1960s up to the second half of the 1980s the state kept under surveillance youth communities, the spirituality movements that appeared and their gatherings. The main focus was on the central, organising

individuals, especially on ministers of religion who reached out to young people. The gradual relaxation that occurred in policy over that period of roughly two decades can be clearly observed from the files. While at first the aim was to prevent the formation of such communities and to intimidate organising individuals, after a while, from the early 1970s the emphasis shifted to “only” continuous control.

The reason for the regime’s antipathy was, on the one hand, that the parish choirs and orchestras grouping young people provided space for a new kind of religious experience and the demand for renewal that accompanied it, and for the use of music to counteract the tendencies to secularisation that were already appearing at that time. On the other hand it saw as a risk factor the fact that the new forms in harmony with the changing demands of postmodern society – took a different attitude to the institution, as an object of respect above all else, thereby endangering the rather shaky relationship between state and church and their cooperation fraught with tensions. However, these tendencies did not always stop at the borders of religion, they also carried a secondary political meaning. In the great majority of cases this was not a critique of the existing system, or opposition to it, or perhaps an alternative, anti-communist model based on a Christian social system; they were far more depoliticised than that, and generally did not openly express “opposition to the regime”, but rather the existing regime projected its own fears on to them.

The suspicions of the one-party regime had the result that up to the 1980s Christian popular music, although in itself basically apolitical, came to be regarded as a *doubly alternative movement*. The one-party regime looked on it with suspicion but at the same time it also represented a kind of alternative culture within the church. Many priests – especially the peace priests – harboured an aversion to it because they saw in its community-forming power a factor endangering the relationship between state and church, while others rejected the musical genre itself. As a result, during the years of socialism Christian popular music that basically functioned as a new religious language, was regarded as a revival movement coming from below, and also symbolised an alternative religiosity in face of traditionalism.

On the basis of the contents of surveillance reports found in the State Security Archive, it can be said that Christian popular music appeared in the public sphere in Hungary with surprising suddenness, practically at the same time as similar processes in the West, evoking mass reactions. The “revolution” in religious music is generally linked to the “beat mass” (known at the *Szilas Mass*, for its composer, or the *Teenager Mass*) performed in Matthias church on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1968, at Easter. At the same time church choirs and youth groups all around the country formed bands that existed for varying periods. Although in the majority of cases their operation was interrupted either by the political situation, the limited possibilities or the rather mixed reception, the phenomenon nevertheless became increasingly popular.

It can be clearly observed that the wave of spiritual awakening began as an urban phenomenon, with centres in Budapest and country towns, for the most part oriented around the places with agile parish priests, and then in the next phase, largely from the second half of the 1970s the “beat masses” of urban choirs also appeared in the villages, reflecting also in vernacular religion the dichotomy of urban (modern, innovative, individual-oriented, missionary) versus rural (traditional, conservative, institution-oriented, inward-turning) religiosity.

The 1970s brought a number of changes. Christian popular music became known throughout the country, it grew into a movement in which the church secondary schools also played an active part. But it was the Danube Bend area that became the generator of changes. The meetings in Kismaros and later in Nagymaros in 1971 arose from the fortunate encounter of the Sillye family who were vacationing there and parish priests in the region. It came about in great part due to the way the new religious music at first attracted young people like a magnet, then spiritual programmes were quickly built up beside the music and became the central events of the meetings. Neither the state authorities nor the church hierarchy took a favourable view of the meetings. The network of informers was continuously present around the parish priests who organised them and at the venue of the event. In the 1970s they operated on the borderline of illegality, barely tolerated, and even within church circles they did not become officially accepted (but not supported) until in April 1980 the Hungarian Catholic Church, together with László Lékai, were strongly criticised by John Paul II, after which Lékai himself celebrated mass in Nagymaros at Whitsun 1980. This is one of the reasons why many people regard Nagymaros as the cradle of the revival of Hungarian Catholicism.

A new music style that was much livelier than the Szilas trend also began with Nagymaros. Its melodies now made it capable of spreading beyond the confines of the church as it could be sung by individuals and in small groups. This kind of pol-beat style music, that spread mainly through performances by Jenő Sillye, could be used for liturgical, praise and entertainment purposes. It is partly for this reason that its evaluation evoked sharper debates than earlier.

After the change of regime religious pluralism transformed Christian popular music too. There was an increase in the influence of Pentecostal charismatic religious music, resulting in variety of style, and with the achievement of freedom of religion the evangelising function also increased, while in the music itself, besides the focus on the acoustic guitar of the 1970s to 1980s, amplifiers, drums, electric guitars and synthesisers also appeared.

The change over the years in the role played by Christian popular music in vernacular religion can be clearly observed. While in the 1960s the “beat mass”, as a rite based on fashionable secular musical genres of the time was regarded as popular and a group-forming force because of its innovative and fashionable nature, by the 1980s it had become part of the rites of the emerging small communities. It continued to be popular but it lost much of its power as a novelty to shock and attract and no longer functioned as a primary group-forming force. However it had put down roots in religious culture and functioned as the “religious language” of youth (as well of the generations who had reached adulthood in the intervening period). Analysing the changes that occurred over a period of decades it can be said that the earlier fears of the state surveillance machinery that beat masses could arouse the interest of young people and thus contribute to evangelisation and indirectly to the formation of religious communities, proved to be well-founded. Christian popular music and religious revival existed in symbiosis, each was inconceivable without the other.

## THE ROLE OF PARISH PRIESTS

Parish priests played a prominent role in the appearance and spread of Christian popular music, as they were the ones who were able to support any demands or initiatives of parishioners coming from below – often making their own personal situation difficult in doing so – to provide space for them, make them part of religious practice, or do the opposite and reject them. This is a case where a person of the church, representing the official, institutionalised religion, was able to exercise considerable influence on the characteristics of the rites of vernacular religion, and its artistic dimension. This on the one hand gives a glimpse into the role of the clergy as intermediary or transmitter between the official and the vernacular, popular religion, from the religious point of view. In most cases their attitude was determined not principally by aesthetic principles, but rather by the extent to which the phenomenon could be useful for religion (evangelisation).

## PRO AND CONTRA CHRISTIAN POPULAR MUSIC

The conflicts that arose in connection with the emergence and modernisation of contemporary religious movement reached a peak in Hungary from the late 1960s to the 1980s and although they declined in intensity with the spread of the new music and people became “accustomed” to it, they are still present even today. As the volume of information accessible for individuals has increased, the arguments behind these debates have become increasingly complex. All this has contributed to the rejection of aesthetic canons and modes of interpretation in the postmodern age, and together with deconstructionism, there has been a radical change in the attitude towards institutions and authority. The appearance and evaluation in Hungary of Christian popular music, following the processes of “worship war” or “music war” in Western Christendom, often drew on the views of their ideologists.

The discourses that have arisen have been basically determined by the following focal points: 1. music as a means of religious revival; 2. the dichotomy of sacred and profane; 3. the aesthetics of music; 4. liturgical or theological considerations; 5. political motivations.

1. *Music as a means of religious revival*: In many cases those who rejected this music did not see or perceive the emergence of the new language and the new religious demands. The fact that the regime had forced religious life and with it in practice also the clergy to remain within the churches meant that there were ever fewer opportunities for religion to keep pace with the rapidly changing cultural frames. As a consequence many parish priests were entirely out of touch with the youth culture of the 1960s, its trends and demands; for them the appearance of popular culture within religious frames meant no more than the penetration and spread of secular entertainment culture into the sphere of religion. 2. *The dichotomy of sacred and profane*: Because Christian popular music drew its forms largely from fashionable contemporary popular music, right from the start it gave rise to opinions that interpreted the spread of the characteristics of entertainment culture as a kind of profanation. Some stressed the excessive “secularisation”, and the neglect of “ecclesiasticism”. For them Christian rock music was not the language of religious evangelisation, on the contrary, they thought it was a possible path leading away from religion. Others basically thought that with the help of the music they could again carry out a mission in their own society. For them modern religious music also served the purposes of evangelisation and represented a

remedy for their anxiety over the fate of the church. 3. *The aesthetics of music*: Those who judge Christian popular music on the basis of aesthetic considerations, applying the aesthetics of “classical music” education and “high culture”, attack something that basically does not belong in those categories and is actually a work of “vernacular art”. In their arguments, “traditional” Gregorian chant, and organ mass appear as high art, while Christian popular music is presented as aesthetically worthless, kitschy and repulsive. 4. Criticisms based on *liturgical and theological considerations* did not appear in Hungary until the second half of the 1990s, and even then in only a few cases. 5. *Political motivations*: It cannot be shown either from recollections or historical documents that there was any form of resistance to the socialist system behind the appearance of Christian popular music. It is therefore not a relevant assumption to seek a political thread behind support for the phenomenon, even if the regime rejected the movement for political reasons. On the other hand, in the 1960s and 1970s maintaining the shaky cooperation with the state played a part in the fact that some members of the hierarchy or parish priests rejected the movement. In many cases fear of the authorities overwrote aesthetic preferences, or the faith placed in a connection between religious revival and Christian popular music. Many examples of the opposite can be found among the parish priests without whose pastoral activity renewal of the church from below or the spread of Christian popular music would not have been possible. However, in their case, support was given to Christian popular music mainly for purposes of evangelisation and not for political reasons.

The arguments in favour of Christian popular music basically follow two main lines. There are those who support it because of the part this music plays in religious revival, and those who remain on the grounds of relativism and recognise the shortcomings of the songs. Nowadays there is increasing support for the position that there is a need for professional selection of Christian popular music.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIAN POPULAR MUSIC

The complexity of the phenomena arising around Christian popular music and the possibilities for interpretation – from an ambivalent judgement, to diversity of functions and possibilities for use – can be attributed in practice to the nature of the music, its spread and the characteristics arising in the consequences of its spread. Because of its political aspect the spread was largely hidden from the state authorities, occurring as a kind of samizdat process. This samizdat spread could also be observed in connection with the distribution of Christian popular music songs brought in secretly from abroad, and with the copying of recordings made in churches by similar Hungarian bands, and this phenomenon had a decisive influence on the characteristic of the phenomenon that resulted in the anonymity of composers and the existence of variants that can be described as a characteristic of folklore. The *samizdat distribution* was facilitated by the fact that in many cases the members and leaders of the youth choirs and religious instruction groups that were taking shape were college and university students living away from home during their studies. As a consequence they regularly took the new religious music from the university centre to their groups at home. As a result of this process the songs also existed in variants differing from the original version in rhythm,

beat and orchestration and indeed, over time – for the most part in the late 1990s and early 2000s – many of them also changed genre.

The “hand-made” character, the anonymous copied scores and individually compiled songbooks survived after the change of political circumstances. This largely contributed to the fact that in many cases the songs crossed denominational borders and their use acquired an ecumenical character. With the spread of internet use, under the influence of the scores, sheet music books and song collections that appeared online, and the video-sharing portals, this transdenominational and supradenominational character further strengthened, bringing a significant increase in the number of songs that migrated and gave rise to variants. Very complex variations can be found in the case of a song composed by László (Sali) Szűcs in 1973, *Set out on the path!* chosen for a case study. Five levels of variation could be distinguished. 1. The orchestration of the song changes and with it the rhythm. 2. The differing orchestration and tempo lead to a transformation of the melody, followed by a deterioration of the lyrics. 3. The song undergoes a change of function. While the original was composed principally for liturgical use, newer variants have a praise character, a ritual character linked to the individual life career, and finally an entertainment character. 4. It undergoes a genre shift. A simpler form of this occurs when the lyrics become prose; because of its beauty and message it is performed as a verse at funerals and christenings. In other cases, together with this shift the channel changed from live performance to online, and is spreading in chain letters, with an emotionally rich visual accompaniment, as anonymous wisdom or message. 5. Finally, at the fifth level it crosses denominational borders.

The same processes can be observed and grow stronger when a song spreads online. Although the online spread makes it possible to follow and search the composition, the composer and the original version, at the same time the possibilities offered by online channels increase the number of variants, make them accessible on a mass scale and strengthen the anonymity. The internet spread also strengthened the trend in Christian popular music that can be described by the process of “pentecostalisation”. The songs of bands associated with the most popular international Pentecostal-charismatic denominations are increasingly spreading in Catholic popular music too. And although the theology and religious terminology of these songs differs from those of the Catholic church, this does not prevent their rapid spread and growth in popularity, reflecting the nature of vernacular religion, in many cases its superficiality and tendency to syncretism.

## CONTEMPORARY TRENDS

Christian popular music reflects the religious reality of our time, through it we can gain an insight into macro level social/cultural processes. It shows 1. how the music is becoming superficial, 2. the religious trends that are occurring, 3. the characteristics of youth religiosity, 4. religious syncretism.

1. *Becoming superficial and deeper*: Apart from a few exceptions, the role of music as social criticism has almost disappeared in the West and in Hungary, its place has been taken over by the fashionable and the commonplace. To a certain extent similar processes can also be found in connection with recent religious music. The praise character is quite clearly winning over the

expressive-identity preserving function, and although this too cannot be labelled simply as *fashionable*, just as communication directed at the transcendent cannot be called *superficial* and *light*, nevertheless the commonplace is spreading in the music. At the same time, parallel with the fact that appearance in the various channels requires a rising level of musical professionalism – and with it PR activity that calls for more and more funds – increased value is being attached to the text as well as to the melody. A two-way process can be observed: on the one hand the internet facilitates massification, while on the other collections and songbooks increasingly demand “canonisation”. 2. *Reflecting religious trends*: With the arrival of plural democracy, Christian popular music could also appear in the public awareness. It may appear logical that after 1989 the characteristics of the American religious market would appear in Hungary too on the market for religious/spiritual demands and acquire great popularity, but that did not happen. A Christian subsystem of secular mass culture emerged to only a limited extent, but it did not become an economic factor in the area of Christian popular music. 3. *Youth religiosity*: On the whole it can be said that Catholic popular music no longer has the same power to attract young generations that it did half a century ago. Its revolutionary and demonstrative character has faded away. Although of course there are exceptions, a large part of its audience is made up of the ageing generations who had lived under the conditions of socialism and for whom this style still preserved its original, far more complex meaning. Younger people born into pluralism perceive nothing of that. For them guitar masses evoke associations of their parents’ music, while they regard the religious music of their own generation to be separate from that, music that in most cases can no longer even be associated with Catholicism but rather to the international Pentecostal-charismatic praise bands on the internet with millions of downloads. 4. *Syncretism*: Basically three forms of religious mingling can be distinguished: a.) one, when the music acquires a supradenominational character but remains within religious frames; b.) two, when it intertwines with secular culture, either as the religious music adopts more and more secular features, or c.) when secular music absorbs religious elements.

My dissertation dealt in detail with the latter two of the above, through the phenomenon of *pentecostalisation*, or *charismatisation*. It can be generally observed that by the present time the leading orchestras on the global Christian popular music market belong almost exclusively to the Pentecostal charismatic movement (Hillsong United, Jesus Culture, etc.), and their songs have also appeared within the Roman Catholic communities. One of the characteristics of the many songs borrowed from the Pentecostal movement is that the positive Christian message has been packaged in a way that is in line with the fashionable music trends of mass culture, free of the theology of suffering, avoiding the cross and conveying only the message of resurrection. All this is accompanied by a religious practice based on a high degree of spontaneity and individual intuition.

The factor explaining the musical changes is that under the conditions of Late Modernity, in line with the mechanism of the consumer and experience society, religious experience must also meet the demand of the masses. One manifestation of this is the infiltration into the liturgy of current fashion trends, among others through Christian popular music. It is not simply that in different religious groups using a similar profane music fashion the religious experience is similar because of the music used, but also that this kind of music style is better suited to the given religious experience. In other words, in keeping with the postmodern religious demands, the charismatic

experience that can be successfully “sold” on the religious market and the ritual frame in which it is presented results in the appearance of a similar music style which, in the present case, functions not only as an aesthetic category but also as the channel of religious communication.

By the 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian popular music has become a mass of phenomena impossible to order within sociological categories. A great deal of overlapping can now be observed in both genres and functions. The founders who have been active since the 1960s live side by side with several generations who have grown up on their music, as well as with the youngest generations who reject them and for whom the melodies of the “original” guitar masses in many cases are just as foreign as Gregorian chant. The stylistic differences in their religious music automatically lead to this music being written for a different purpose and with different function, from which it logically follows that they need spaces, rites and occasions where the music can be used according to the original intention. It is not simply a matter of alternative religious services but of alternative rites: (ecumenical) religious festivals and flash mobs are spreading. There is now no longer one single kind of Christian popular music, either in style, characteristics or manner of use, and the economic connections behind the music (if they exist at all) also differ. While the process of pentecostalisation has been traced here as a general trend in the area of Catholic popular music, at the opposite end of the process variation can be observed to flourish, together with the disintegration that accompanies it. Often the different styles have nothing in common, either in external features, in function or in the way in which they are used.

#### PUBLICATIONS BY KINGA POVEDÁK ON THE THEME OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

##### 2016

Clara Saraiva, Lionel Obadia, **Kinga Povedák** and José Mapril: Experiencing Religion, New approaches to Personal Religiosity. In. Clara Saraiva, Peter Jan Margry, Lionel Obadia, Kinga Povedák, José Mapril (eds.) *Experiencing Religion. New approaches to personal religiosity*. Berlin, Lit Verlag. 3-12.

Clara Saraiva, Peter Jan Margry, Lionel Obadia, **Kinga Povedák**, José Mapril (eds.) *Experiencing Religion. New approaches to personal religiosity*. Berlin, Lit Verlag. (240 p.)

Povedák, Kinga: Aspects of Catholicism and Modernity Through the Example of Christian Popular Music. *Romanian Journal of Sociological Study* 2016 (1-2). 25-37.

##### 2015

Povedák, Kinga: From the Singing Rabbi to the King of Hasidic Reggae. In. Barna, Gábor (ed.) *Religion, Culture, Society. Yearbook of the MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture*. Szeged, MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture.

Povedák, Kinga: Belonging, Integration and Tradition: Mediating Romani Identity Through Pentecostal Praise and Worship Music. In. Anna E. Nekola and Tom Wagner (eds.)

*Congregational Music-Making and Community in a Mediated Age*. Farnham, Ashgate. 161-183.

## 2014

Povedák, Kinga: Az „éneklő rabbitól” a haszid reggae királyáig. Gondolatok a kortárs zsidó vallásos zene kapcsán. [From the “Singing Rabbi to the King of Hasidic Reggae]. In. Glässer Norbert – Zima András (eds.) *Hagyománylancolat és modernitás. [Chain of Tradition and Modernity]*. Szeged: SZTE BTK Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology. 318-332.

Povedák, Kinga: Az egyházi könnyűzene fogadtatása és megítélése a szocialista Magyarországon. [The Reception and Judgement of Christian Popular Music in Socialist Hungary]. In. Barna, Gábor – Kerekes, Ibolya (eds.) *Vallás, egyén, társadalom. [Religion, Individual, Society]*. Szeged, SZTE BTK Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology. 111-122.

Barna Gábor - **Povedák Kinga** (szerk.): *Lelkiségek, lelkeségi mozgalmak Magyarországon és Kelet-Közép Európában: Spirituality and spiritual movements in Hungary and Eastern Central Europe*. Szeged, SZTE BTK Néprajzi és Kulturális Antropológiai Tanszék. (439 p.)

Povedák Kinga: Vallás, zene, közösség: A Pünkösdi Megújulás és a Katolikus Karizmatikus Megújulás interferenciái. In. Barna Gábor - Povedák Kinga (szerk.) *Lelkiségek, lelkeségi mozgalmak Magyarországon és Kelet-Közép Európában: Spirituality and spiritual movements in Hungary and Eastern Central Europe*. Szeged, SZTE BTK Néprajzi és Kulturális Antropológiai Tanszék. 32-45.

Povedák, Kinga: Religion, Music, Community. The Interferences of the Pentecostal Charismatic Renewal and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. In. Barna, Gábor (ed.) *Religion, Culture, Society: Yearbook of the MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture*. Szeged, MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture. 114-128.

Povedák, Kinga: Catholicism in Transition. The ‘Religious Beat’ Movement in Hungary. In. Giselle Vincett, Elijah Obinna (eds.) *Christianity in the Modern World - Changes and Controversies*. Farnham, Ashgate. 139-156.

## 2013

Povedák, Kinga: New Music for New Times(?) Debates over Catholic congregational music. In. Tom Wagner – Monique Ingalls – Carolyn Landau (eds.) *Christian Congregational Music: Local and Global Perspectives*. Farnham, Ashgate, 2013. 99-116.

## 2011

Povedák, Kinga: 'Na, hoztál új dalt?' A katolikus könnyűzene szerepe Magyarországon. [Hey, Did You Bring a New Song? The Role of Catholic Popular Music in Hungary]. In. Barna, Gábor (ed.) *Religions, Borders, Interferences*. Szeged, SZTE BTK Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology. 27-36.

Povedák, Kinga: The Inner and Outer Character of Contemporary Christian Music. In. Kõiva, Mare (ed.) *The Inner and the Outer*. Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu. 213-224.

Povedák, Kinga: 'Did you bring new songs?' The role of Contemporary Catholic Music in Hungary. *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 2011 (1) 31-41.

#### CONFERENCE PAPERS PRESENTED ON THE THEME OF THE DISSERTATION

*The sound of religious change: Changing rituals in vernacular Catholicism. Utopias, Realities, Heritages. Ethnographies for the 21st century. SIEF 12th Congress: Zagreb, Croatia. (21-25 June 2015)*

*Folkloristic perspective in the transmission and spread of popular religious music. Third Biennial Conference. Christian Congregational Music: Local and Global Perspectives. Ripon College Cuddesdon, Oxford, United Kingdom (4-7 August 2015)*

*Belonging, Integration and Tradition. Mediating Romani Identity Through Pentecostal Praise & Worship Music. 2015 Gypsy Lore Society Annual Meeting and Conference: Chişinău, Moldova (10-12 September 2015)*

*A vallás és a populáris kultúra interferenciái: a keresztény könnyűzene. Vallás és művészet konferencia. [Interferences of Religion and Popular Culture: Christian Popular Music]. Conference on Religion and Art. Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, Budapest (8-9 May 2015)*

*A kétszeresen alternatív zenei szubkultúra: könnyűzene a magyar katolikus egyházban a szocializmus éveiben. [Doubly Alternative Music Subculture: Popular Music in the Hungarian Catholic Church in the Years of Socialism]. Institute of Musicology: Támogatott, ajánlott, hivatalos. A populáris zene és a kulturális politika viszonya Magyarországon. [Supported, Recommended, Official. The Relationship Between Popular Music and Policy on Culture in Hungary]. Budapest (17-18 September 2015)*

*Performance and Creativity in Religious Experience: A case study of Pentecostal-charismatic worship music from Hungary. 10th Conference of SIEF Ethnology of Religion Working Group, Lisbon, Portugal (22-24 May 2014)*

*Performance and Creativity in Pentecostal Romani religious music. Workshop on religion and music, NLA University College, Bergen, Norway (1-2 August 2014)*

*Performance and creativity in religious experience: A case study of Pentecostal-charismatic Romani worship music. Ohio State University, Columbus, OH USA (24 November 2014)*

*Állandóság és átalakulás a megélt vallásosságban a keresztény zene változásainak tükrében. [Permanence and Change in Lived Religion in the Popular of Changes in Christian Music]. Móra Ferenc Museum, Szeged (7 May 2014)*

*Pentecostal religious practices among Romani communities in Hungary. SIEF International Congress, Tartu, Estonia (30 June – 4 July 2013)*

*Global Influences, Global Reactions. A Contemporary Hungarian Case Study.* Christian Congregational Music: Local and Global Perspectives. Oxford, United Kingdom (1-3 August 2013)

*Vallás, zene, közösség. A Katolikus Karizmatikus Megújulás: pünkösdiessedés a Katolikus Egyházban?* [Religion, Music, Community. The Catholic Charismatic Revival: Pentecostalisation in the Catholic Church?] Vallás, Egyén, Társadalom [Religion, Individual, Society] conference, Szeged (7 October 2013)

*The Pentecostalization of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Charismatic Revival.* Spirituality and spiritual movements in Hungary and Eastern Central Europe. 11th Szeged Conference on Ethnology of Religion (10-12 October 2012, Szeged)

*“Download the Lord's song.” Youtube as a channel for global Charismatic worship practices.* Religion on the Move. How Motion and Migration Influenced Religion. 10th Conference of the SIEF Ethnology of Religion Working Group, (12-14 September 2012, Szeged)

*New Music for new religious experiences.* Religious Experience and Tradition. International Interdisciplinary Conference (11-13 May 2012, Kaunas, Lithuania)

*Az “éneklő rabbtól” a haszid reggae királyáig.* [From the “Singing Rabbi” to the Hasidic Reggae King]. Conference on Jewish studies (28-29 February 2012, Szeged)

*“New religious practices for new generations”* New Movements in Religion 10th EASR Conference (18-22 September 2011, Budapest)

*New music for new times(?) Debates over Catholic congregational music in Hungary.* “Christian Congregational Music: Local and Global Perspectives” Conference (1-4 September 2011, Ripon College Cuddesdon, Oxford)

*A vallás és a tömegkultúra határán.* [On the Border of Religion and Mass Culture] 7th International Hungarian Studies Conference (Cluj, 22-27 August 2011)

*Reconstructing symbolic language after the “forced silence”:* denominational school spaces in Hungary. ‘People make places. Ways of feeling the world.’ 10th International SIEF Congress (17-21 April 2011, Lisbon)

*From rock concerts to liturgy. The role of contemporary Christian music in Catholic communities.* 11th EASA Biennial Conference (24-27 August 2010, Maynooth, Ireland)

*From festival to liturgy: Contemporary Christian Music in Hungary.* SIEF 6th Ritual Year Working Group Conference (4-7 June 2010, Tallin, Estonia)

*Jesus – Rock – Festival. Contemporary Christian Music in Hungary.* ‘The Changing Face of Christianity’. BSA SOCREL Annual Conference (6-8 April 2010, Edinburgh)