

Religion and the Blues Harmonize on Records

"Is the Christian Church ready for a musical reformation?"

The question is pertinent to all religious groups which seek to maintain an "open" attitude toward the modern world.

Its answer, remarkably uniform throughout the diversity of churches, tends toward "yes." There are such reservations and restrictions, however, that the "reformation" some musicians want seems destined to be admitted as a permissible exception to the general rule, not as a complete institutional commitment.

This reformation would be, basically, the adoption of modern popular idioms and techniques in church music.

An example of how the churches are accepting musical change came at the end of February, when the Catholic Church gave implicit approval to the use of guitars and other popular instruments at special religious services. The Church is traditionally conservative in its musical regulations.

A Catholic Ruling

The Catholic decision, sent to the American bishops by Vatican liturgical authorities, did not specifically mention the guitar and did not authorize anything which has not already been done.

Its chief practical effect is to give formal support to the "youth Masses." These have been growing in popularity on college campuses and in some parishes ever since Vatican II. The Council gave tentative approval to a more varied musical idiom adapted to special occasions and particular congregations.

In the new Vatican directive it is emphasized that each bishop has the power to decide which instruments and styles are appropriate for worship in his area. Virtually every bishop in the U.S., acting on earlier general guidelines, has already approved the guitar for youth congregations.

Protestant churches generally have also been hospitable to popular musical styles in services for special congregations and in sacred concerts. They have kept to more traditional styles in most of their regular worship services.

Push by Duke Ellington

The impact of popular and jazz music on churches has been accentuated in a series of concerts by Duke Ellington during the past few years. Since 1965, Mr. Ellington's band has given sacred concerts in at least five Christian churches and one synagogue.

He has performed in Grace Cathedral (Episcopal) in San Francisco, in Coventry Cathedral and in a church at Cambridge University in England, and in two of New York's best-known churches, Fifth Avenue Presbyterian and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. His next sacred concert is scheduled for April 4 in Carnegie Hall, New York.

But despite this activity, the fact remains that Ellington performances in churches are still a relative rarity — with mixed reaction from churchmen and for that matter, from jazzmen. In December, 1966, an Ellington sacred concert, not in a church but in Constitution Hall, Washington, D.C., was opposed by the Baptist Ministers' Conference because his music is "worldly." At the other extreme, some jazz critics have said that Ellington's sacred music, with its large choirs and relatively subdued treatment, is not really jazz.

The English pop group, the Beatles, while avoiding specifically Christian themes, has recently taken an attitude that must be considered religious. Take, for example, the albums "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" and "Magical Mystery Tour."

This attitude, difficult to define, may be described as a sort of transcendental mysticism, mysticism, heavily influenced by the teachings of the colorful Indian religious leader, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

Mysticism in Pop Music?

Mysticism can be perceived as a pervasive influence throughout the group's recent productions and pinpointed in some songs with particular clarity.

"Within You, Without You," from the Sgt. Pepper album, deals with "people who hide themselves behind a wall of illusion" and preaches a clearly religious and perceptibly Oriental message: "Try to realize it's all within yourself; no one else can make you change. And to see you're really only very small, and life flows on within you and without you."

Another pop music group, the Electric Prunes, has gone even further into religious music with recorded "Mass in F Major."

While professional musicians have been attracted toward religious themes, the gravitation of priests and ministers toward composing and performing popular music is even more noticeable.

This trend is reflected occasionally in a special worship service, but its chief, perma-



"Jazz" Mass in Poland

Warsaw — (RNS) — The Roman-Catholic Church in Poland is moving with the times, despite Communist restrictions. Masses with jazz or pop music accompaniment are winning favor among Polish youths. A priest celebrates Mass in St. Christopher's Church at an altar facing a young congregation. Behind him are a popular Polish music group called "Red and Blacks." The Mass also included songs inspired by the Psalms.

ment impact and documentation is coming on phonograph records and in public concerts. In these two media we find today a highly professional level of competence achieved by people for whom religion is the vocation and music an avocation.

Interaction between religion and the jazz-folk-popular spectrum of musical styles was illustrated at a concert entitled "Praise the Lord in Many Voices," performed in Carnegie Hall and recorded by Avant Garde Records. Beginning with the relation between jazz and Negro spirituals, this concert surveyed many modern, popular developments in religious music.

Supervised by Father Clement J. McNaspy, S.J., music critic of the national Catholic weekly magazine America, the concert featured professional jazz musicians and a variety of original compositions performed by Catholic nuns and seminarians and Protestant church musicians.

Catholic Composers

Folk music influences are particularly noticeable in the work of two nationally-known Catholic composer-performers who participated in this concert and have made a number of recordings: Sister Miriam Therese Winter of the Medical Mission Sisters, who presented a Folk Mass at the concert, generally writes for choral performance. Her music (though often very lively) seems to be written with a view to congregational singing.

Paul Quinlan, a Jesuit seminarian, uses a more personal idiom in his modern, free versions of material from the Book of Psalms. The music is more oriented toward concert performance by a soloist or small ensemble than toward community expression.

Also featured at the "Praise the Lord in Many Voices" concert was John Ylvisaker, a Lutheran who puts special emphasis on promoting new idioms in church music. His Mass for the Secular City, following loosely the usual sequence of music for a Mass—provided some of the concert's most striking musical effects.

Mr. Ylvisaker's second album, Cool Livin', is also recorded by Avant Garde, which specializes in modern pop-religious music. In all his work, the young musician reveals unusual mastery of modern styles, ranging from the apparent nonchalance of a talking blues to intense ballads with a solid rock-and-roll accompaniment.

To say that his songs are religiously oriented and carry a moral message seems an understatement in describing music that often conveys an acute note of existential anguish.

Some of the same anguish is also in the music composed and recorded by the Montfort Mission, a group of Catholic seminarians who live in slum areas of St. Louis while they study for ordination in the Montfort Society. Their first professional album is on the Reprise label.

Its chief subject matter is social protest and anger at slum conditions.

Jesuit Singers on Disc

A group of Jesuit seminarians, the Woodstock Singers, also issued its first album privately. This caught the attention of Aardvark Records, which has just released the group's first professional disc, Walkin' Through the Park. Though the note of social protest is included, with such material as Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are a-Changin'," much of the collection's emphasis is on popular favorites. Among them are such Broadway tunes as "Sunrise, Sunset" from "Fiddler on the Roof" and "The Impossible Dream" from "Man of La Mancha."

In the past, the relationship between religion and popular music has often been tinged with exploitation, notably in the type of song known to the trade as the "religious" — sweet, vaguely devout and virtually meaningless either as music or as religion.

There has been, too, mutual hostility between religion and popular music. Through the centuries, churchmen have often denounced "secular" songs. Musicians have countered with satires on religion.

But today, churchmen are using the popular song as a medium for self-examination and reform as well as for exploration of modern religious attitudes.

Hicks
Home Heating Inc.
271-9079 271-4650

MONDAY
is a good day
to visit the
BEST
PERSONNEL AGENCY
to find out the many
opportunities we have
for you.
So is Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday) anytime between
9 a.m. and 5 p.m.
We hope you will
drop in.
Suite 312
Executive Office Bldg.
36 Main Street West
(716)-232-3190

MILLIGAN'S

COUPON DAYS
FORSYTHIA
5 in a Bundle
REG. \$2.49 NOW **\$1.69**
WITH THIS COUPON

COUPON DAYS
KENTUCKY BLUEGRASS
2 LBS. **99¢**
WITH THIS COUPON

HOMESTEAD 10-6-4
\$1.99

CLUMP BIRCH 12' to 15'
\$12.95

MILLIGAN'S
GARDEN SUPPLY
3390 RIDGE RD. WEST
OPPOSITE RIDGEMONT COUNTRY CLUB OPEN 8 A.M. TO DUSK

THERE'S

HOLIDAY FLAVOR

in **MAPLECREST POLISH SAUSAGE**

IF YOU HAVE NEVER TRIED MAPLECREST POLISH SAUSAGE, you have been missing a wonderful eating experience. Polish Sausage is becoming one of America's all-round favorites and Maplecrest makes the very finest Polish Sausage. Pure lean pork and tasty natural seasonings give Maplecrest a special Holiday Flavor all its own. Right now, there is an added pinch of Easter goodness. Try Maplecrest Polish Sausage now. Once you do, you'll enjoy it often.

MAPLECREST SAUSAGE CO., INC. ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

A POP PRODUCT



Where You Find It

American soldiers in Vietnam get to church services whenever they can — either at barracks chapel or in the field.

FOR PERFECT
DIAPER SERVICE

Stork
BABY WASH
328-0770

XAVIERIAN BROTHERS
Religious Teachers
in the service
of the Church

Writon Brother Coy, C.F.X.
601 Winchester Street, Box B
Newton Highlands, Mass. 02101

Hey, Mrs. McGee

Wednesday is Prince Spaghetti Day... Give it a fair shake.

A POP PRODUCT