“Your Favorite Rapper’s a Christian Rapper”: Chance the Rapper’s Creation of a New Community of Christian Hip Hop Through His Use of Religious Discourse on the 2016 Mixtape Coloring Book

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Abstract
In 2016, popular Hip Hop artist Chance the Rapper released his third mixtape, Coloring Book, after publicly identifying himself as a “Christian Rapper”. Coloring Book received critical acclaim and earned Chance a Grammy Award. This led many listeners—music critics and Hip Hop fans—to question what Christian rap might be, and to speculate in which way religion and/or religious discourse had or might shape the message and medium of Hip Hop. This thesis offers a critical and scholarly examination of the new community of listeners of Christian Hip Hop that Chance was able to create through his creation of a new religious discourse. First, it will examine existing scholarly literature concerning religious discourse both in Christian and secular Hip Hop; through this, different methodologies will emerge for interpretive analysis. Next, it will examine key thematic trends in the history of Christian Hip Hop—including artists, sounds, and messages. In addition, it will examine the Chance’s background in order to better understand the motivations behind the mixtape. Finally, it will explore the religious discourse of Christian Hip Hop through an analysis of Chance the Rapper’s “Finish Line/Drown”—the most interpretively rewarding song on Coloring Book. Although the past several decades’ Christian themes in Hip Hop have been analyzed by scholars, Christian Hip Hop genre has largely been overlooked. Chance the Rapper’s revitalization of the genre provides an opportunity to provide new scholarship; the goal of this thesis is to demonstrate how and why this artist has expanded the genre’s community.

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Chicago's Chance the Rapper just released 2016's richest hip-hop album. Though Kanye said The Life of Pablo was a gospel album, Coloring Book delivers on that promise in much more than fits and spurts. Gospel choirs are the backbone of the LP, rocketing heavenward in the background the same way soul samples did on Kanye records, James Brown breaks did on Public Enemy records or disco interpolations did in the Sugar Hill catalog. Chance The Rapper drops highly-anticipated "Coloring Book" mixtape, which features Kanye West, Lil Wayne and Jeremih. Coloring Book received a 4.6 rating from HipHopDX. Stream Chance The Rapper's Coloring Book via Apple Music below. (This article was first published May 13, 2016 and is as follows.) Chance The Rapper drops Coloring Book mixtape. Chicago wordsmith Chance The Rapper has already had quite the stellar month, he's featured on the cover of Complex magazine's June/July issue, and is also named in a petition demanding that mixtapes be considered at the Grammys. Get the most important stories in Hip Hop straight to your inbox. Subscribe. Something's Wrong. Chance the Rapper is opening his Coloring Book. After much anticipation, the Chicago MC has officially unveiled his third mixtape, which previously went by the name Chance 3. Following 2012's 10 Day and 2013's Acid Rap, Coloring Book delivers on the promise the Chicago spitter made on Kanye West's "Ultralight Beam." The 14 tracks are full of A-list collaborations including Kanye West, Justin Bieber, Lil Wayne, 2 Chainz, Young Thug, Lil Yachty, Future, Jay Electronica, T-Pain, Kirk Franklin, and more. During a recent Complex cover story, the recently hospitalized rapper also promised that this project would be better than his collaborative effort Surf, which he crafted with Donnie Trumpet and The Social Experiment last year. "This stuff is way better than Surf," he said. "I'll say that on record. Chance The Rapper comes into his own on the vibrant "Coloring Book." Save for a cluster of Chance The Rapper's most dedicated fans, I imagine that everyone has considered him corny at least once. The surprising thing is that it hasn't taken the rest of hip hop very long to catch onto Chance's (I was about to write sh*tick, but implying that he's anything less than 110% honest is clearly misguided) unique charm. While 2013's Acid Rap found him working very much within an environment of other guys willing to get goofy and introspective-- Action Bronson, Childish Gambino, Twista, Ab-Soul-- the following year saw him making in-roads with artists whose careers would be in jeopardy if they even thought of releasing their own versions of children's TV theme.