Macklemore's theology

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A theology professor of mine liked to remind our class that everyone's a theologian. I don't think he meant that everyone's a particularly *good* theologian or has something significant or meaningful to say. The point was that we should always be on the lookout for how people theologize, how they conceive of God in real life.

You may not find a more popular theologian right now than Macklemore. I doubt he'd be too keen on that label. But when the hip-hop chart topper isn't busy [thrift shopping with his producer Ryan Lewis](#), he seems fairly interested in the feasibility of God in human experience. [In a recent conversation with *Interview* magazine](#), Macklemore admitted that his

> relationship with God is as strong as the time and energy I put into connecting with God. Today, I woke up, said some prayers, meditated, and jumped on Twitter. I'm all over the place. I find that when I put my spiritual life first, the rest of my life is easy. When I put my career first, that's when I have problems.

Macklemore, who [once rapped about "atheist Jesus peace,"](#) doesn't necessarily have a traditional view of being in relationship with God. But clearly his Catholic upbringing had a profound effect, providing a symbolic language for him to talk about "something greater than me." Perhaps it also taught him an ethical framework. Macklemore recently made a splash with the pro-gay anthem "[Same Love](#)":

> When I was at church, they taught me something else:
> If you preach hate at the service, those words aren't anointed.
> That holy water that you soak in has been poisoned
> When everyone else is more comfortable remaining voiceless
> Rather than fighting for humans that have had their rights stolen.

Some of the lyrics seem borrowed from a mainline pulpit:

Playing God, aw nah here we go:
America the brave still fears what we don't know.
And "God loves all his children" is somehow forgotten,
But we paraphrase a book written thirty-five-hundred years ago.

On the other hand, in [that same conversation with *Interview*](#), Macklemore says this:

I've never been a religious person. I've been a spiritual person since I was about 15, 16, when I was first introduced to Psilocybin [mushrooms]. That really opened me up to thinking about the universe in a different way, and coming to significant realizations about my connection to something greater than me.

And in another recent interview, [with *SwaysUniverse*](#):

Music is the way I connect to God. And I have connected to God. When music is in its purest form, you are just a conduit for something greater than yourself.

[In a 2009 track](#), Macklemore and Geologic trade jabs about the church's inability to connect on a spiritual level:

The word of our God is manipulated and twisted by the same system
That has infiltrated and falsely interpreted Jesus.
One life, one love, one God, it's us, treated your neighbor how you would want to be treated.
The universal laws of God, don't look too far, it's right here, us human beings.
The spirit's right here and I don't have to see it.
Now every time I want to connect with God I put my headphones on. . . .
All right see, I be going to Sunday school every week
In the back trying to read, but see that something was off.
Maybe it was cause I was trying to huddle in the yard.
Preacher didn't connect when he would mumble the Psalms.

So how could we categorize Macklemore's theology? Ethical humanism with a tinge of anthropomorphic universalism?

Maybe it's best we don't. At one point he calls rap "an accurate representation of who people are as individuals and the environment that they grew up in." The same may be true of Macklemore's theology: it's an accurate representation of a culture of seekers, the spiritual but not religious, the label repellent. They use traditional language to speak of new forms and subjective reality. They prefer a bar to a

church. Because as Macklemore says in "[Neon Cathedral](#)," "Round here they sing broken hymns. /Their prayers flow better when they're soaked in gin."