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FROZEN II AND GIRLS' SPIRITUAL FORMATION:

HOW THE MUSIC OF AN ANIMATED MUSICAL
RESONATES WITH GIRLS AND WOMEN

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FROZEN II AND GIRLS' SPIRITUAL FORMATION:
HOW THE MUSIC OF AN ANIMATED MUSICAL RESONATES WITH GIRLS AND
WOMEN

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of Perkins School of Theology
Southern Methodist University

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Pastoral Music

by

Cristen Renee Mitchell

B.M., Music Education, Radford University
M.M., Choral Conducting, James Madison University

April 16, 2024

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I am blessed to know and to have studied with the 2019 DPM cohort. These women have been inspirational in my career and spiritual journey. I am grateful for Dr. C. Michael Hawn and his teaching, conversation, and encouragement.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my daughter, Anna. She embodies the spirit of Queen Elsa, the tenacity of Queen Anna, and the joy of Olaf. She reminds me, every day, how to love stronger, be bolder, and live sillier.

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Frozen II and Girls' Spiritual Formation:

How the Music of an Animated Musical Resonates with Girls and Women

Advisor: Dr. C. Michael Hawn

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ABSTRACT

Frozen II (2019) is a popular Disney animated movie for children and depicts striking spiritual elements while weaving in feminist practices such as justice and equity, and feminist theology through representations of female spirits and connection to the earth. Through this movie, its themes, and the historical exclusion of women in the church, this thesis seeks to show that representation of women in the divine is an important, and necessary part of the spiritual and psychological development of girls and women. The methods of this thesis include exploring the following synchronicities:

1. Parallels between feminist issues in the church and Walt Disney Animation Studios
2. Parallels between the feminine dimensions of Christianity and *Frozen II*
3. The convergence of spiritual formation and psychological development of girls and women
4. Conversations around *Frozen II* and Spiritual formation with women and girls from Blacksburg, Virginia
5. The analysis of songs from *Frozen II*

Patriarchal and misogynistic values have been perpetuated in both Disney and the church, and this thesis shows the importance of inclusion of women, and the calling that women have in the church as leaders and disciples. While women have been working, whether behind the scenes, or in the spotlight, there is still work to do!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
CHAPTER 1	1
FEMINIST ISSUES IN WALT DISNEY ANIMATION STUDIOS AND THE CHURCH	1
Introduction.....	1
Feminist Issues in Walt Disney Animation Studios	2
A New, Feminist Princess.....	2
Leadership in Walt Disney Animation Studios	3
Historical Portrayal of Women in Disney Animation.....	4
Feminist Issues in the Church.....	10
Feminism and the Church.....	10
Leadership in the Church.....	11
Stereotypes and Subordination of Women	12
Women’s Experiences, Narratives.....	13
Conclusion	16
CHAPTER 2	18
FEMININE DIMENSIONS IN CHRISTIANITY AND <i>FROZEN II</i>	18
Christianity and Perpetuation of Patriarchy.....	18
Introduction.....	18
“Nature” of Men and Women.....	19
Non-Binary Nature of God	21
Resistance Against Patriarchal Culture: What Do We Do About It?	23
Feminine Dimensions	24
Wisdom Sophia.....	24
Holy Spirit.....	25
Ecclesia (Mother Church).....	26
Mary	28
Sámi, Spirits, and <i>Frozen II</i>	29
Sámi Culture and Spirituality.....	29
Spirit Symbols.....	32
The Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist	34

Conclusion	35
CHAPTER 3	36
THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF GIRLS AND WOMEN	36
Introduction.....	36
Psychological Development of Girls and Women.....	37
Gender Roles.....	37
Women and Relationships	40
Women and Time.....	41
Women and Body	42
Girls and Women in Ritual, Worship, and Religious Education	43
Imago Dei, Bible Stories, and Gender Roles	43
Women & Eucharist.....	45
Women & Leadership.....	46
Religious Education	48
Messaging Directed to Girls in the Media	50
The Intersection	52
Introduction to The Intersection.....	52
Feminist & Christian.....	52
Spirituality & Psychology.....	54
Relationship	54
Witches	55
Telling our Stories & Resisting our Time.....	56
<i>Frozen II</i>	56
Conclusion	57
CHAPTER 4	58
CONVERSATIONS ABOUT <i>FROZEN II</i> AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION.....	58
Mothers as Role Models	59
Leadership In the church.....	60
Listening Session Discussion.....	60
Women <i>Shouldn't</i> be in Leadership?	62
Why Women Don't Lead in the Church	64
Women in the Stead of Men	65
Women <i>Should</i> Be in Leadership	66
Spiritual Themes	68

Spirits and Spirituality	68
Calling.....	69
Transformation.....	70
Gender.....	71
God.....	71
Holy Spirit.....	72
Jesus	72
Imago Dei and Songs	73
<i>Imago Dei: Seeing God in Others, but not in Yourself</i>	73
Songs.....	74
Conclusion	75
CHAPTER 5	76
<i>FROZEN II</i> MUSIC ANALYSIS AND THE POWER OF STORYTELLING.....	76
The Songs and Stories in <i>Frozen II</i>	76
Christian Storytelling and Musicking.....	77
“All is Found”	81
“Some Things Never Change”.....	84
“Into the Unknown”	87
“Show Yourself”	89
“The Next Right Thing”	93
Conclusion	95
CHAPTER 6	97
CONCLUSION.....	97
1. Parallels between feminist issues in the church and Walt Disney Animation Studios.....	98
2. Parallels between the feminine dimensions of Christianity and <i>Frozen II</i>	99
3. The Intersection of spiritual formation and psychological development.....	100
4. Conversations around <i>Frozen II</i> and Spiritual Formation	100
5. Analysis of Songs from <i>Frozen II</i>	101
Areas for Further Study: Intersectionality and Eco-theology.....	102
Personal Reflection	103
APPENDIX A DISNEY PRINCESS MOVIES	104
APPENDIX B.....	106
FROZEN II MOVIE NIGHT AND LISTENING SESSION TRANSCRIPT.....	106
REFERENCES	129

CHAPTER 1

FEMINIST ISSUES IN WALT DISNEY ANIMATION STUDIOS AND THE CHURCH

Introduction

This thesis seeks to draw parallels between the church and *Frozen II* (2019) — For purposes of this thesis “the church” refers to the Christian institutions of the Catholic and Protestant church. Specifically, these parallels and synchronicities will show how the following are narratives that challenge the restrictive ideologies and actions intended to suppress women and undermine their significance within both the church and broader societal contexts:

1. Parallels between feminist issues in the church and Walt Disney Animation Studios
2. Parallels between the feminine dimensions of Christianity and *Frozen II*
3. The convergence of spiritual formation and psychological development of girls and women
4. Conversations around *Frozen II* and Spiritual formation with women and girls from Blacksburg, Virginia
5. The analysis of songs from *Frozen II*

While feminism aims for justice for women, as well as other marginalized groups, intersectionality recognizes the many ways in which marginalized groups might experience discrimination, and the ways that these forms of discrimination intersect.¹ This study has the potential for many other parallels, convergences, and synchronicities than the ones listed above. However, based on the specific context in which conversation partners were chosen, the demographics of those partners (a broad age range, with mostly Caucasian women and girls) and

¹ Feminism: belief in and advocacy of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes expressed especially through organized activity on behalf of women’s rights and interests; “Feminism,” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feminism> (accessed January 29, 2024); Intersectionality: describes the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other forms of discrimination ‘intersect’ to create unique dynamics and effects; “What is intersectionality,” Center for Intersectional Justice, <https://www.intersectionaljustice.org/what-is-intersectionality>.

the theme of *Frozen II*, I chose to focus on the previously mentioned parallels and convergences. The methodology for this thesis also takes a narrative approach looking at the stories told by women and the synchronicities found that often bridge the scope of time. While progress has been made, women's stories and findings from generations past illumine the stories we continue to tell. This chapter will focus on feminist issues in Walt Disney Animation Studios and the church. These include the portrayal of women and feminine attributes, data and details concerning female leadership and the stories from women in the respective fields.

Feminist Issues in Walt Disney Animation Studios

A New, Feminist Princess

Disney's new wave of princesses, including Tiana, Merida, Moana, Anna, and Elsa, support themes of transcending patriarchal expectations, rejecting domestication, appropriating masculine attributes and roles, and reframing the meaning of "true love."² The focus of this thesis explores princess Elsa and how her journey in *Frozen 2* (2019) supports these themes of feminism, and mirrors a feminist theology. Elsa mirrors a feminist theology through working for justice for her community and herself. She symbolizes a feminine God in her spiritual nature. Elsa and her mother, Queen Iduna, are portrayed as spiritual beings important to the way of life and survival of the indigenous Northuldra people. The church, with its many religious symbols and rituals, archetypally imagines God as male.³ However, as feminist theologian, Elizabeth A. Johnson states, "The holy mystery of God is beyond all imagining."⁴ Elsa symbolizes a feminine image of God when there are often only male images or female characteristics that are hesitantly

² Lauren Louie, and Steven Chen, "Marketing Feminism in Youth Media: A Study of Disney and Pixar Animation," *Business Horizons* 63, no. 5 (2020): 659–669, 664. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2020.05.001> (accessed March 1, 2024)..

³ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, [1992] 2017), 1666, Kindle.

⁴ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 1682.

applied to the male God.⁵ Our human experience has largely been dominated by the “patriarchal ordering of the world.”⁶ The church’s historical encounter with this ordering is paralleled by Disney’s encounter.

Leadership in Walt Disney Animation Studios

In October 1923 Walt Disney signed a contract to produce a series of “Alice Comedies” kicking off the creation of the Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio, the beginning of the Disney empire.⁷ One hundred years of princesses, magic, and music has transported children and adults alike to “happily ever after.” Throughout these last one hundred years the Disney princess has largely been conceived and operated by a series of men.

In June of 2018 Jennifer Lee was named Chief Creative Officer of Walt Disney Animation Studios.⁸ In an interview with Disney’s “Reimagine Tomorrow” YouTube channel, Lee states, “I was the first woman to direct a Disney Animated Feature, and it was 93 years into our history.”⁹ She was the first female director of a Walt Disney Animated Studios Feature Film, and the first female director of a feature film to earn more than one billion dollars in gross box office revenue.¹⁰ That film? *Frozen* (2013). Lee seeks to tell the “Stories of the World, by the People of the World,” noting the importance of diverse representation both on screen and in the

⁵ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 1754.

⁶ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 1674.

⁷ The Walt Disney Company, <https://thewaltdisneycompany.com/> (accessed May 11, 2023).

⁸ “Walt Disney and Pixar Animation Studios Name Chief Creative Officers,” The Walt Disney Company, June 19, 2018, <https://thewaltdisneycompany.com/walt-disney-and-pixar-animation-studios-name-chief-creative-officers/> (accessed May 11, 2023).

⁹ Reimagine Tomorrow, “Featured Stories – Reimagine Tomorrow – Jennifer Lee,” Posted September 14, 2021. video, 1:42, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MKKuXNpNQcM> (accessed March 15, 2023).

¹⁰ Maureen Dowd, “Jennifer Lee, Queen of the ‘Frozen’ Franchise: With.” *New York Times (Online)*. 2019: 2, <http://proxy.libraries.smu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/jennifer-lee-queen-frozen-franchise/docview/2312565275/se-2?accountid=6667> (accessed April 27, 2023).

creative process.¹¹ Disney Animation Studios has doubled their staff of directors and writers to include more women and people of color.¹² Lee expects the leadership teams and staff at Walt Disney Animation Studio to ask questions and be open, “invite conversation and uncomfortable spaces,” be adamant about a shift into inclusion, and the importance of hearing voices from the communities represented in the films.¹³ She emphasizes trusting the voices from these communities, noting that “Talent knows no gender. It knows no race.”¹⁴

Historical Portrayal of Women in Disney Animation

Jennifer Lee’s passion is storytelling. For almost a century, Disney has been telling the stories of fairy tale young women. While Lee has been instrumental in a shift to a more diverse, holistic, female character, the history of Disney’s female leads has been bleak. The stories that Disney has told over the last century have been stories that reflect the stereotypes perpetuated by the culture of the time in which they were produced. In this reflection, we see a hetero, cisgender lifestyle, with the endgame of marriage. *Snow White* (1937), *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), and *The Little Mermaid* (1989) are all examples of this lifestyle, propagating these character tropes — a slim, white, young woman as princess; an evil “stepmother,” and a muscular, white prince as the hero.¹⁵ To be female in these stories, is to either be seeking a male for fulfillment, or to be old, single (or widowed), and evil.

The “evil stepmother” or “evil queen” character that appears time and time again in Disney animated films, especially prior to the “Disney Renaissance” (1984–2005), begins to shift

¹¹ Reimagine Tomorrow, “Jennifer Lee,” video, 2:00.

¹² Reimagine Tomorrow, “Jennifer Lee,” video, 2:10.

¹³ Reimagine Tomorrow, “Jennifer Lee,” video, 2:53.

¹⁴ Reimagine Tomorrow, “Jennifer Lee,” video, 3:06; Dowd, “Jennifer Lee, Queen of the ‘Frozen’ Franchise,” 4.

¹⁵ Justine Elise Jarvie, “Our Own Stories: An Examination of Animated Disney Princess Storytelling through a Feminist Media Lens” (MA Thesis, Southern Connecticut State University, 2021), 19, 20.

starting with *Beauty and the Beast* (1991).¹⁶ In movies like *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), *Brave* (2012), and *Moana* (2016) the matriarchs play a more critical role in the story line, not serving to simply stand in the way of the princess's chosen trajectory of love and marriage, but to provide both substantial emotional and tangible support in the young women's lives. In *The Princess and the Frog*, Tiana's mother, Eudora, serves as a "voice of encouragement" throughout the film, teaching Tiana about the importance of hard work, family, and community.¹⁷ In *Brave*, Merida's mother, Queen Elinor, while taking on some characteristics of a classic Disney mother at the onset of the film develops throughout the film as Merida seeks to save Queen Elinor and her younger triplet brothers from a curse. Their relationship evolves when they work together to defeat the curse, and they both realize that they've taken each other for granted.¹⁸ Moana's grandmother, in *Moana*, plays a critical role in encouraging Moana to follow her "calling." While initially portrayed as somewhat eccentric, her peculiar adages come to fruition through Moana's adventure and eventual healing of the land that they call home.¹⁹ Queen Iduna from the *Frozen* (2013, 2019) empire can be added to this growing list of more holistic mothers. Queen Iduna, the mother of Anna and Elsa, develops in *Frozen 2* (2019) as a significant Character. In *Frozen* (2013) Anna and Elsa's parents are killed on a shipwreck when the children are young. In *Frozen 2*, the voice of the "siren" calling Elsa to the enchanted forest, and later to Ahtohallan, is Queen Iduna's spirit, revealing both herself and Elsa to be mystical spirit goddesses, significant to the native Northuldran people.²⁰ While these matriarchs flip the script

¹⁶ Jarvie, "Our Own Stories," 28.

¹⁷ Sarita McCoy Gregory, "Disney's Second Line: New Orleans, Racial Masquerade, and the Reproduction of Whiteness in *The Princess and the Frog*," *Journal of African American Studies* 14 (2010): 16, <https://rdcu.be/deId1> (accessed March 15, 2023).

¹⁸ Mark Andrews, Brenda Chapman, *Brave*, Disney/Pixar, 2012.

¹⁹ John Musker, Ron Clements, *Moana* (Walt Disney Pictures, Walt Disney Animation Studios), 2016.

²⁰ Chris Buck, Jennifer Lee, et al., *Frozen II* (Walt Disney Pictures, Walt Disney Animation Studios), 2019.

for Disney's classic films, films like *Tangled* (2010) perpetuate the "evil stepmother" trope with characters like Mother Gothel.²¹

Princesses in Disney films are also portrayed in a certain style visually. The stereotypical princess, developed by male animators, depicts a slender, white woman that fits neatly into the beauty norms that have pervaded American culture for over a century. While the 1920s "flapper" experienced a comfier, more relaxed style, she was expected to have a straight and slim silhouette.²² The 1930s brought a more conservative, covered up, style, but with the onset of the modern bra, women's curves were accentuated in new ways. Snow White, *Snow White* (1937), is depicted as slender, yet curvy, with perpetual red lips, and alabaster skin. Cinderella, *Cinderella* (1950), achieves a similar look, but with golden hair as opposed to Snow White's dark locks. Disney is guilty of "whitewashing" the women of color that have been added to the slate of Disney princesses. In film, "whitewashing" is "the practice of using only white actors, models, or performers, especially the practice of using a white actor to play a character who is not white."²³ The most recent controversy is the selection of Sydney Elizabeth Agudong to play the role of Noni in the 2024 live action *Lilo and Stitch*.²⁴ Social media has dominated the conversation claiming that Agudong does not represent the image of an indigenous Hawaiian, although Agudong was born and raised on the island of Kauai, Hawaii.²⁵ Princess Tiana, Disney's first black princess from *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) makes an appearance along with all of the other Disney princesses in *Wreck it Ralph 2: Ralph Breaks the Internet* (2018). In initial

²¹ Nathan Greno, Byron Howard, *Tangled* (Walt Disney Pictures, Walt Disney Animation Studios), 2010.

²² "The Insane History Of Beauty Standards Since 1900," *Evie Magazine*, <https://www.eviemagazine.com/post/the-insane-history-of-beauty-standards-since-1900> (accessed May 15, 2023).

²³ "Whitewashing," *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/whitewashing> (accessed May 15, 2023).

²⁴ "Disney Criticized for 'Whitewashing' Live Action 'Lilo and Stitch' Characters," *CE Noticias Financieras*, English ed. (April 19, 2023), <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2803889945> (accessed May 15, 2023).

²⁵ "Disney Criticized for 'Whitewashing.'"

animation releases of this scene the images of Tiana were praised for the depiction of her natural hair, however, the images were also scrutinized for giving Tiana a lighter skin tone and a slimmer nose.²⁶ Anika Noni Rose, the voice of the original Tiana, joined the conversation and requested that Disney make changes to the portrayal. Rose wrote on her Instagram about the importance of a more accurate image for Tiana in the 2009 film for girls and women who felt represented by her character.²⁷ Rose writes,

I was able to express how important it is to the little girls (and let's face it, grown women) who felt represented by her that her skin tone stay as rich as it had been, and that her nose continue to be the little round nose that Mark so beautifully rendered in the movie; the same nose on my very own face and on many other little brown faces around the world, that we so rarely get to see represented in fantasy.²⁸

The Little Mermaid (2023) was released on May 26, 2023. Social media did not shy away from the conversation on this princess! Halle Bailey, a young black woman, was hired to play the role of Ariel. Because Ariel had been historically portrayed as white, mostly white men have discussed how they feel about the portrayal of the ethnicity and appearance of the mermaid. In a Facebook post from Reuters News, Halle Bailey promotes the new Little Mermaid Barbie — “Halle Bailey grew emotional as she unveiled a mermaid Barbie doll created in her likeness.”²⁹ These comments are just a few that follow.

Jesse LaBossiere — “Gotta promo the shit outta this dumpster fire because you can only count on the blacks for a certain amount of revenue.”³⁰

²⁶ Essence Grant, “Princess Tiana Is In Wreck-It Ralph 2 And She Looks A Lot Different From How We Last Saw Her” (posted August 13, 2018), <https://www.buzzfeed.com/essencegrant/princess-tiana-natural-hair-skin-tone-wreck-it-ralph-2> (accessed May 12, 2023).

²⁷ Grant, “Princess Tiana Is In Wreck-it-Ralph 2.”

²⁸ Anika Rose, @anikaaroundtheworld, Instagram (posted September 24, 2018), https://www.instagram.com/p/BoIN9ZBhhbN/?utm_source=ig_embed&ig_rid=75b9d100-2861-449e-bf63-e736cde6968e (accessed May 16, 2023).

²⁹ “Halle Bailey gets her own ‘Little Mermaid’ Barbie,” Reuters, Facebook, (Posted April 25, 2023), <https://fb.watch/kAonijLFHr/> (accessed May 17, 2023).

³⁰ “Halle Bailey gets her own ‘Little Mermaid’ Barbie,” Facebook.

Erwin Young — “doesn't look like the original they should have given her a different name. they have [ruined] the movie”³¹

Todd Gaultier — “The old one is better sorry and I believe this movie is gonna flop.”³²

Tengku Zahasman — “Amazing soundtrack, visual and what a singing voice! But where's Ariel? What have they done to my Ariel?”³³

The Los Angeles Times posted an article on Facebook with this quote from Halle Bailey in the description, “If I would have seen a Black mermaid when I was younger, it would have changed my whole life. My whole perspective on how I feel about myself.”³⁴ Here are a couple of the comments:

Nicholas Smith — “If only we'd had “The Little Merman” growing up, my whole life would have been completely changed.”³⁵

Christian Guzman — “I wonder why she was so shocked. Could it be cause this is what Ariel really looks like.”³⁶ He posts a drawing of fictional Ariel and Eric with flounder and Sabastian. This drawing depicts Ariel as White with her traditional red hair, however, it's not a visual of the original Disney animation.³⁷

While scrolling through these posts, the comments are saturated with White men irate over a Black mermaid, and often White women taking an opportunity to defend the movie and Halle Bailey. Black women and men seem to have largely disregarded these comment sections due to the harmful statements. However, we see a poignant comment from Pastiche Graham:

I love Halle Bailey and I personally think she's beautiful and sings SO GOOD. I give her huge credit because Ariel is not an easy character to star as. But I do

³¹ “Halle Bailey gets her own 'Little Mermaid' Barbie,” Facebook.

³² “Halle Bailey gets her own 'Little Mermaid' Barbie,” Facebook.

³³ “Halle Bailey gets her own 'Little Mermaid' Barbie,” Facebook.

³⁴ “‘The Little Mermaid’ left Halle Bailey ‘tired’ and ‘isolated.’ And she thanked God for it,” *Los Angeles Times*, Facebook (posted May 12, 2023), <https://www.facebook.com/latimes/posts/pfbid0zvbXsr8Cm57t8rp3N6F6BKEbdZ6DEnLA6ksuEb79fSK9nX9gzMpw93mRTZvqqUI> (accessed May 17, 2023).

³⁵ “‘The Little Mermaid’ left Halle Bailey ‘tired’ and ‘isolated,’” Facebook.

³⁶ “‘The Little Mermaid’ left Halle Bailey ‘tired’ and ‘isolated,’” Facebook.

³⁷ Christian Guzman, Comment, Facebook (posted May 13, 2023), <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=6173758982678497&set=p.6173758982678497&type=3> (accessed May 17, 2023).

honestly feel (As a Biracial/BIPOC woman) that Disney NEEDS to start making more Black Disney princesses instead of remaking all princess films. Honestly, it would be nice if Disney could start being original and make actual black Disney princesses we've never seen yet. Right now, Disney only has Tiana. That's literally Only ONE black Disney princess. it's not enough. However again, if anyone has a huge problem with Halle being casted as Ariel because she wants to show little black girls that there can be more black Disney princesses, then for one don't watch the film if this upsets you so much. And number two, our culture is rapidly changing and becoming more inclusive. Get used to inclusion. It's Not always about you.³⁸

Graham highlights concerns beyond the skin color of the princesses and taps into the core issue that the stories of people of color have not been told in the same way that White stories have been told by Disney in the century that they have been producing animated films. While Disney Animated Studios has been intentional over the last five years to tell these stories from the points of view of people of color, it will take that continued intentionality to balance the scales.

The conversations highlighted in this section bring to the light the importance of whose stories we tell, and who tells the stories. This theme will be expanded throughout this thesis, especially in chapters 4 and 5. Stories of white women, told by white men have pervaded Disney.³⁹ Voices of marginalized groups, like women, and people of color have risen through a variety of platforms, most recently social media platforms.⁴⁰ These groups, while demanding justice and equality through these platforms, are met with the gamut of "isms," as seen in this section. Disney seeks to tell the stories of these voices through continued seeking of equality through leadership, expansion of story, musical genre, culture, animation, and actors.⁴¹ Disney faces critiques from people groups who have been privileged to hear and know their stories for

³⁸ "'The Little Mermaid' left Halle Bailey 'tired' and 'isolated,'" Facebook.

³⁹ Jarvie, "Our Own Stories," 7.

⁴⁰ W. Ian O'Byrne, "Educate, Empower, Advocate: Amplifying Marginalized Voices in a Digital Society," *CITE Journal* 19 no. 4 (2019), 640, <https://citejournal.org/volume-19/issue-4-19/english-language-arts/educate-empower-advocate-amplifying-marginalized-voices-in-a-digital-society> (accessed October 17, 2023).

⁴¹ Reimagine Tomorrow, "Jennifer Lee," video, 2:00–3:06.

centuries. However, Disney continues, in resistance, producing the stories of voices seeking to be heard, and listening to the critiques of those voices.

Feminist Issues in the Church

Feminism and the Church

The church been a foundation for subordination of women.⁴² However, Gina Messina-Dysert, co-editor of *Feminism and Religion in the 21st Century*, states that “women subordination and patriarchy are distortions of faith.”⁴³ She says that we must move away from the overtly male image of God because we are all made in the image of God, and “God can be found in all humanity.”⁴⁴ Women have claimed *imago Dei*, “awakening to their own human worth,” through feminist movements and female experience.⁴⁵ Elizabeth A. Johnson discusses speaking of God in male language. She suggests that when we aim to be more gender inclusive in talking about God, but only concede to God being fully male, with a few highlighted feminine traits, then we do not prevent inequality, but further it.⁴⁶

The feminine is therefore the enhancement of the male, but not vice-versa: there is no mutual gain. Actual women are then seen as capable of representing only feminine traits of what is still the male-centered symbol of God, the fullness of which can therefore be represented only by a male person. The female can never appear as icon of God in all divine fullness equivalent to the male. Inequality is not redressed but subtly furthered as the androcentric image of God remains in place, made more appealing through the subordinate inclusion of feminine traits.⁴⁷

⁴² “The new feminist revolution in religion | Gina Messina-Dysert | TEDxUrsulineCollege,” YouTube, TEDx Talks, (posted November 18, 2014), video, 3:02, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMb1UkkZsR8> (accessed April 27, 2023).

⁴³ “The new feminist revolution,” YouTube, 5:22.

⁴⁴ “The new feminist revolution,” YouTube, 2:44.

⁴⁵ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 2017, 2028.

⁴⁶ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 1772.

⁴⁷ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 1772.

However, Messina-Dysert understands Christianity to have the potential for feminism because Jesus’s movement was founded on “love, inclusion, liberation, and social justice—all consistent with feminist practice.”⁴⁸ She states that feminism is the “eradication of sexism and all oppressions. All of these “isms” are deeply intertwined, and if we are going to interrupt these oppressions they need to be uprooted wherever they exist. Including within religion.”⁴⁹ Through true speech about God and sharing women’s stories we can continue to live into this awakening. Elizabeth A. Johnson says, “Through memory, narrative, and solidarity a positive acknowledgment of women’s beauty and power as active subjects of history also begins to come to speech. While consistently subordinated in official practice, women have in fact always been there, acting in myriad creative ways to live their own lives and bring about the good of others in the light of the gospel.”⁵⁰

Leadership in the Church

A 2020 study of trends in composition and compensation for United Methodist Church (UMC) clergy shows that full-time clergy are made up of sixty-eight percent men and thirty-two percent women in the United States.⁵¹ Women clergy in the UMC are paid less across the board than male clergy. “Gender was still a significant predictor of 2020 salary, even when length of service, age (at the time of report), and membership type were held steady” in the US jurisdictions that were studied.⁵² Throughout the history of the church women have been

⁴⁸ “The new feminist revolution,” YouTube, 5:10.

⁴⁹ “The new feminist revolution,” YouTube, 4:44.

⁵⁰ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 2053.

⁵¹ Magaela C. Bethune, “2020 Geographic Trends of Gender Disparities in Composition and Compensation for UMC Clergy,” Resource UMC, <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/partners/gcsr/home/content/2020-geographic-trends-of-gender-disparities-in-composition-and-compensation-for-umc-clergy> (accessed May 18, 2023).

⁵² Resource UMC, “2020 Geographic Trends of Gender Disparities.”

excluded “in ecclesial creeds, doctrines, prayers, theological systems, liturgical worship, patterns of spirituality, visions of mission, church order, leadership, and discipline.”⁵³

Stereotypes and Subordination of Women

The exclusion of women in the church is the maintenance of a long-standing tradition of subordination and control of women throughout history. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, an American feminist activist and editor of *The Woman's Bible*, said that “the Bible and the church have been the biggest stumbling blocks in the way of women’s emancipation.”⁵⁴ The church’s standard of male imaging of God has preserved the subordination of women in Western society and the church.⁵⁵ The subordination of women in society has even been upheld in scientific fields like psychology, neuroscience, and biology.⁵⁶ These scientific reports and findings are especially important to the public because “brain science [is] widely promulgated in the media and has an influence on parents, policymakers and professionals.”⁵⁷

As society began to move away from the teachings of the church and towards the teachings of science, the idea of female “inferiority” shifted to Darwin and Freud.⁵⁸ Scientific bias supported the church’s ideologies and attempted to perpetuate the stereotypical analytical and sexual prowess of men, even though these “findings” were changing so rapidly that “genetic explanations [did] not hold water.”⁵⁹ While Freud viewed women as “deficient beings,” Darwin

⁵³ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Mary Collins, eds., “Women: Invisible in Church and Theology,” *Concilium* 182 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985) in Johnson, *She Who Is*, 827.

⁵⁴ Wai-Yin Christina Wong, “Women Worldwide: Interplay between Church and Society and the Gender Paradox,” *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 46, no. 1 (2022): 38–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23969393211053436> (accessed Jan 17, 2022.)

⁵⁵ Wong, “Women Worldwide,” 38–39.

⁵⁶ Sheila Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women: Rethinking Change in Time* (Sussex: Routledge, 2015), 51, Kindle.

⁵⁷ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 52.

⁵⁸ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 48, 67.

⁵⁹ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 50.

viewed males as further evolved. However, many studies and ideas about women's development came from cultural stereotypes or studies done with men.⁶⁰ Carol Gilligan, American feminist, ethicist, and psychologist, stated, "When one begins instead with women and derives developmental constructs from their lives, then a different conception of development emerges."⁶¹ Psychoanalyst Karen Horney suggests that women are not envious of men's more evolved penis, as Freud would conclude, but instead of the status and resources afforded to them.⁶² While current findings and studies dismiss the typical male/female stereotypes, the ideas remain popular and are disseminated by media.⁶³

Women's Experiences, Narratives

Nicola Slee and Jan Berry explain how narrative and analogical research can be a spiritual practice and how women's stories are brought into the "framework of theological discourse."⁶⁴ My own story is an evolution of learning the supposed subordinate nature of women, then unlearning those falsities and realizing a "call" to music ministry, especially supporting the voices of women and children. As a young girl I learned that my place in the church was to be seen, and not heard, that only males had been blessed to be the true leaders in the church. Even now, there are some in my family who do not support my career since I work alongside men, and since I lead men and the broader worshipping community (including men) on a weekly basis. In

⁶⁰ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 71.

⁶¹ Carol Gilligan, "Woman's Place in Man's Life Cycle," *Harvard Educational Review* 49, no. 4 (1979): 431–46, in Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 71, <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.49.4.h13657354113g463> (accessed March 2, 2024).

⁶² Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 67.

⁶³ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 52; Fabrizio Santoniccolo, Tommaso Trombetta, Maria Noemi Paradiso, and Luca Rollè, "Gender and Media Representations: A Review of the Literature on Gender Stereotypes, Objectification and Sexualization," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 20, no. 10 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20105770> (accessed July 10, 2023).

⁶⁴ Anne Phillips, Fran Porter, and Nicola Slee, *The Faith Lives of Women and Girls: Qualitative Research Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2016), 14, 24.

a previous church position, I was bullied by the male organist. He told a member of the music ministry that I was “just a little girl who didn’t what she was doing.” He proceeded to have a conversation with me describing to me how I should do things differently, in ways that are quite contrary to common vocal and choral technique. In this same position, I heard a room full of men, who were apparently having an employee evaluation for me — without me having any knowledge of it, talk about how I was too young and immature to do the position that I was doing. The position where I was seeing noticeable success, in a myriad of ways, and had even been promoted in. In my current position, I have asked, multiple times throughout the years that I have worked there, about a certain audio issue being fixed in the sanctuary. Recently, that complaint was heard when a male volunteer brought the same issue forward. These are just a few of these experiences I’ve had as a woman working in the church.

During my research, I discovered a wealth of women’s stories in the *Fuller Studio*, a digital magazine from Fuller Seminary, in “The Story Table: Women” (2016), an article exploring the importance of female narrative. In the digital article, *Fuller Studio* brings together women leaders from various backgrounds and ethnicities on Fuller Seminary campus to a physical table to eat, fellowship, and tell their experiences. It was both refreshing and cathartic to read and relate to their stories. I could relate on some level to each experience shared.

Liseth Rojas-Flores, Associate Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy at Fuller Seminary, tells a story about having to pick up her sick two-year-old daughter from day care fifteen minutes before her class started.⁶⁵ She said,

That was the most intense, crazy class I ever had. I was going back and forth. I assigned things to the students to do, while I went with my daughter to the bathroom. I could see a couple of students giggling because they knew what was happening. They were mothers. Afterwards they came and said, “Thank you for

⁶⁵ Becky Still, Lauralee Farrer, and Michael Wright, eds., “Story Table: Women,” *Fuller Studio*, 2016, <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/story-table-women/> (accessed May 3, 2023).

bringing your child. I can do this. I don't have to be perfect. I just have to be me, a mother, who can teach, who can bring their kids." Whether they have diarrhea or not, it's a good thing.⁶⁶

I recalled all the times I have had to bring my daughter along—no babysitter, husband—at work. After completing classes on Zoom in January 2021, there were some complaints that one of our female professor's children were sometimes in the background. I was stunned that folks did not have more grace for this. If we are going to live in a world where women and children are not expected to just be quiet and get out of the way, then we also must have grace and openness for children in our communities—especially in the church.

Lauralee Farrer, who was a chief creative for "The Story Table," and is also a filmmaker, shared about a time that she had been "included" with the men.⁶⁷

Once I was at the Director's Guild of America for a film screening and panel, and we were watching a film and one of the organizers saw me in the audience, came up to me in the middle of the film—that's how late in the game it was—and said, "We're going to have a panel afterward. Will you be willing to be on the panel?" I thought, "Oh, you don't." I knew exactly what that was about. I thought, "Well, I can say no, because it feels humbling to me, possibly humiliating, or I can say yes because I know what it's like to be a woman sitting in the audience and to see no female faces up there,"—right? Nobody in the audience is going to know what it feels like for me behind the scenes, but I'm going to say "yes" because I care about the young woman in that audience, looking up at a panel of young men and wondering, "Is there a place for me as a director?" At that event there wasn't a chair for me. There wasn't a bottle of water for me. There wasn't a microphone for me. There were five guys comfortably ensconced, and me. Picture it: when I wanted to say something, I had to ask to borrow someone's mic. Isn't that perfect? I mean, just awfully perfect?⁶⁸

Working in a church, I find myself championing the other female staff and ministries that serve minorities. While our church staff is now primarily women, and we have had some female associate pastors, we have had a history of only white, male, lead or senior pastors. This dynamic

⁶⁶ "Story Table: Women," *Fuller Studio*.

⁶⁷ "Story Table: Women," *Fuller Studio*.

⁶⁸ "Story Table: Women," *Fuller Studio*.

of women in strictly seemingly lower positions, creates a power structure in which the work that these women are doing may be ignored, underfunded, underappreciated, or unfairly criticized. Often, I am having conversations with our lead pastor or congregation members to hoist and encourage the ideas and programs of the women who keep our church active both within our doors, and in the community. We are still teaching our congregation, and they are still learning, to listen to the voices of women, and realize the importance of their seat at the table.

Mari Clements, the first female Dean of the School of Psychology at Fuller, shared a conversation she had with a colleague.

At one point in my first year, I vividly recall asking a colleague whether he gets called Mr. rather than Dr. And he was shocked, asking “Why would anybody do that?” I thought, “Well, I get it a lot.” I still get it. I still get people calling me Mrs. Clements rather than Dr. Clements or Dean Clements. . . . But even though it’s not fair and I have been treated not well—I’m here and I need to do this, and do it well.⁶⁹

I have been in the presence of male colleagues, who do *not* have their doctoral degrees, but yet are called Dr. So-and-so to their face or plastered as such on advertisements for events. I had a professor once who happened to have the initials ‘DOC,’ and took that as a nick-name. Often, he was referred to as “doctor.” No one questioned it.

Conclusion

The importance of telling women’s stories is integral to both Christianity and Disney animated film. As stated before, Jennifer Lee seeks to tell the “stories of the world, by the people of the world.”⁷⁰ Justine Elise Jarvie states, “Elsa is all of us, learning to accept and love our gifts even

⁶⁹ “Story Table: Women,” *Fuller Studio*.

⁷⁰ Reimagine Tomorrow, “Jennifer Lee,” video, 2:00.

when the world tells us we do not fit in, and embraces individuality and personal power over how and when we use the gifts we possess.”⁷¹

Upcoming chapters will examine the representation of women in the church and look further into the symbols and culture of the Sámi religion portrayed in *Frozen II*. I will explore how girls are formed from the messages and images disseminated by entertainment and media, specifically Disney animated film, and how that parallels the messages and images included in Ritual and Worship. I will hear from girls and women in Blacksburg, Virginia, about how *Frozen II* has impacted them spiritually and what songs from the movie have affected them. The songs and story are powerful in *Frozen II*. I will analyze selected songs from the movie and investigate the power of communicating spiritual truths through music and storytelling.

⁷¹ Jarvie, “Our Own Stories,” 38.

CHAPTER 2

FEMININE DIMENSIONS IN CHRISTIANITY AND *FROZEN II*

Christianity and Perpetuation of Patriarchy

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the feminine dimensions celebrated in Christianity through the lens of second and third wave feminist theologians, as well as historical accounts of women mystics. The dimensions discussed in this chapter will be Wisdom Sophia, the Holy Spirit, Ecclesia, Mary, Spirit symbols in the church and *Frozen II* (2019), and the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. This study into these important feminine dimensions indicate one unfortunate, common theme: Christianity perpetuates patriarchy.

The feminine dimensions of Christianity, and the consideration of the perpetuation of patriarchy caused by Christianity is important to this study because society has been largely impacted by Christian culture, including previous Disney animated films.¹ The parallels between the feminine dimensions of Christianity and *Frozen II* highlight a shift toward the feminine in both the culture of the church and society.

Rosemary Radford Ruether, a pioneer in feminist theology, describes the relationship between God and Israel.² This relationship is described as husband and wife; however, Israel is continually represented as a promiscuous, disobedient wife.³ When Matilda Joslyn Gage discusses her theories of cultural change from matriarchal to patriarchal society she states that “masculine societies came about through Judaism and the continuation of its religious viewpoint

¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2005), 296, <https://doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520231467.001.0001> (accessed November 21, 2023).

² Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 80–85.

³ Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 80–85.

in Christianity.”⁴ Gage was also one of the first individuals to examine the correlation between the persecution of witches and “an attempt to destroy women’s culture.”⁵ Elizabeth Gould Davis, an American librarian and author of the feminist text, *The First Sex*, states that Christianity is infused with a “psychopathic determination to degrade the female and annihilate her soul.”⁶ Merlin Stone also believes that Christians are responsible for the perpetuation of a patriarchal society. She sees the Christian church as the vehicle for spreading patriarchy and male monotheism to the West.⁷ Carol Christ felt that Christianity “legitimated the subordination of and contempt for women.”⁸

“Nature” of Men and Women

From this Christian perpetuation of patriarchal society flowed misogynistic ideas about the “nature” of women and men. Elizabeth Johnson points out the dualistic idea of the “hierarchy of mind over body.”⁹ She describes the idea that men have been linked with the mind, reason, and the spiritual realm and that women have been linked with the physical realm, with earth.¹⁰ Since society has valued the mind over the body—though I believe popular culture is seeing a major shift in this thinking—this linking “translates into social structures of domination/subordination

⁴ Matilda Joslyn Gage, *Woman, Church, and State: A Historical Account of the Status of Woman Through the Christian Ages, with Reminiscences of the Matriarchate* (Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press, [1893] 1980), 21 quoted in Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 269.

⁵ Gage, *Woman, Church, and State*, 21, quoted in Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 267.

⁶ Elizabeth Gould Davis, *The First Sex* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1971), 202, 203, 241, 286–293, quoted in Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 275.

⁷ Merlin Stone, *When God Was a Woman* (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 160, 241, quoted in Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 276.

⁸ Carol Christ, *She Who Changes: Re-Imagining the Divine in the World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 143, quoted in Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 276.

⁹ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), location 93–126, Kindle.

¹⁰ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 93–126.

undergirded by the belief that man should rule over woman.”¹¹ This relationship is paralleled by the relationship that God is seen to have with the world, a relationship where God values the heart and spirit over the body and the physical.¹² Reuther notes that society has been governed by the perceived “natures” of men and women.¹³ That “These fixed gender natures assigned women to the dependent domestic sphere and men to the governance of both society and the family.”¹⁴ This assumption caused women to be permanently dependent of men. She expresses that “women were idealized and sentimentalized for their loving, self-giving spirit, even as many believed that these characteristics made them unfit for public political and economic life.”¹⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft, a British eighteenth-century advocate for women’s equality, notes how women were unable to attain “better-paid professions, property rights, and legal status as voting citizens” during her time because women had been denied education and other rights.¹⁶ Reuther points out that women in the nineteenth-century who attempted to defy these roles were attacked by all manner of philosophers, writers, and other thinkers.¹⁷ Auguste Comte felt that since women were defined to the home, that they were protected from the “rough and tumble of society.”¹⁸ In this space, they could really live up to their potential as “priestesses of humanity,” thus when they operated outside of this space they were *unnatural*.¹⁹ Controversial theologian Horace Bushnell said that women’s suffrage was “the reform against nature.”²⁰ Much like the

¹¹ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 93–126.

¹² Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 150.

¹³ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 249.

¹⁴ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 249.

¹⁵ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 250.

¹⁶ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (London: Dent, [1929] 1972), quoted in Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 250.

¹⁷ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 250.

¹⁸ August Comte, *A General View of Positivism*, trans. J. H. Bridges (London: Trubner, 1865), 253, quoted in Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 252.

¹⁹ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 252.

²⁰ Horace Bushnell, *Women’s Suffrage: The Reform Against Nature* (New York: Scribner, 1869), quoted in Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 252.

relationship to spiritual (men) and physical (women) that Johnson notes, Bushnell compares men to “the law” and women to “the gospel” arguing that men must use their given attributes to force and coerce sinners to comply and that women must use their “divine love” in practice, and since “women are more Christlike than men” women, therefore, cannot participate in law making here on earth, that would corrupt them.”²¹ Arthur Schopenhauer believed that women were weak, did not have any sense of judgment, and that men should have full control over women.²² Jane Ellen Harrison, also linking women to the earth, embraced women’s capacity for giving birth and celebrated her connection with nature. However, she still saw patriarchal culture as a necessary progression of society.²³

Non-Binary Nature of God

Among the many masculine symbols and dimensions in the church, there is theological thought that explores the androgynous nature of God. Rosemary Radford Reuther uses the language “androgynous,” though “non-binary” may be a more appropriate term. While “androgynous” refers to how someone presents their gender, “non-binary” refers to gender identity that is neither male or female.²⁴ This non-binary nature should help us to learn that we are all, regardless of gender, image bearers that are part of this grand design, and important players in it. Reuther says, “Our true nature is the spiritual nature by which we image God. This image exists equally in men and women and is not gendered. Gender is a temporary garb put on us in our historical existence,

²¹ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 253.

²² Arthur Schopenhauer, “On Women,” in *Essays: The Works of Schopenhauer*, ed. Will Durant (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1928), 449, quoted in Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 253–254.

²³ Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (New York: Meridian Books, 1903, 1955), 261–262, quoted in Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 261–262.

²⁴ Non-binary is a term that refers to any gender identity that isn’t male or female. Androgynous refers to an outward appearance of indeterminate gender. While some non-binary people may express themselves androgynously, it is a personal choice that is not a requirement of non-binary gender identity; “Gender Diverse 101,” A Gender Agenda, https://genderrights.org.au/faq_type/gender-diverse-101/ (accessed March 13, 2024).

but it will be discarded in the resurrection.”²⁵ Elizabeth Cady Stanton believed God to be androgynous and felt that the exclusion of the feminine aspects of God was a “cultural and moral disaster.”²⁶ She hoped for a time when men and women might live together in harmony and equality and recognize the non-binary nature of God.²⁷ Seventeenth-century French mystic Jeanne Chézard de Matel wrote, “the mystical experience of such a loving death taught me that love is as strong as death and that, by your omnipotence, two opposites are able to exist in the same subject.”²⁸ For Chézard de Matel there is proof in this paradox that both a masculine and feminine side of God exists.²⁹ While this belief of God as androgynous, or non-binary, is promising for feminist theology, the unfortunate fact is that female traits have taken the secondary role in many cases. Counterparts, or facets of God like Sophia, Mary, and the Holy Spirit are seen as simply minor traits, less intelligent, barely significant.³⁰ Carol Christ was hopeful for a time when we could rid ourselves of the dualistic thinking of men and women. She points out that men and women are not as different as culture has taught us, and that there is room for living in harmony with one another.³¹ Of course, we are now in and have been in, a cultural shift. Society is now aware of the many facets of gender that span beyond dualistic modes of masculine and feminine.³² Despite this, the chokehold that these ideals have had on society prevails in many ways.³³

²⁵ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 135.

²⁶ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman’s Bible*, pts. 1 and 2 (Seattle: Coalition Task Force on Women and Religion, 1895, 1898, 1974), 25, quoted in Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 270.

²⁷ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 270.

²⁸ Jeanne Chézard de Matel, *Complete Works: The Autographic Life, volume 1* (Rome: unknown, 1993), 24, quoted in Daniel F. Stramara, Jr., “Feminine Imagery of God According to Ven. Jeanne Chézard De Matel, Foundress of the Order of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament” *Magistra* 27, no. 2 (2021): 16–17.

²⁹ Stramara, “Feminine Imagery of God,” 17.

³⁰ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 226–248.

³¹ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 290–291.

³² Anne Emmanuelle Berger, *The Queer Turn in Feminism: Identities, Sexualities, and the Theater of Gender* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 12, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/southernmethodist/detail.action?docID=3239860> (accessed January 14, 2024).

³³ Berger, *The Queer Turn in Feminism*, 12.

Resistance Against Patriarchal Culture: What Do We Do About It?

Frederick Engels believed that socialism would send women into the workforce, making them equal to men, and solving the problem of patriarchy.³⁴ Merlin Stone also sought equality and hoped that women and men could reconcile and live in peace.³⁵ Gage was hopeful that society would move into a time of “investigation” and out of a time of “blind belief” causing men to see the inherent “divine element” in motherhood and women seen throughout all creation.³⁶

Elizabeth A. Johnson places importance on an ecological ethic due to the dualistic linking of men to intellect and spirit, and women to the earth. This dualistic thinking has taught society that humanity is more important than nature, and disconnected from it.³⁷ Thus, humanity has destroyed the earth, and we are experiencing a climate crisis. Johnson claims:

The Christian community needs to be transformed into a community of the discipleship of equals as a sacramental witness to the vocation of the whole world. In the face of centuries-long subordination of women and their concerns, therefore, feminist theology advocates women’s flourishing in all their dimensions and relationships as an essential element, missing to date, of the redeemed human community.³⁸

This entangling of ecological and women’s rights can lead to a feminist theology that seeks to understand and resist the wrongs that have permeated the church and society for centuries.³⁹

³⁴ Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, ed. Eleanor B. Leacock (New York: International Publishers, 1884, 1972), 144–146, quoted in Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 265.

³⁵ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 277.

³⁶ Gage, *Woman, Church, and State*, 23, quoted in Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 269.

³⁷ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 83.

³⁸ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 83.

³⁹ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 195–204.

Feminine Dimensions

Wisdom Sophia

Feminine imagery and plurality of the divine have been primarily rejected since the late second century.⁴⁰ Ruether seconds Johnson's dualistic thinking that "metaphorical masculinity became tied to intellect and divinity, while metaphorical femininity was linked to the nondivine world of sense knowledge and bodily nature."⁴¹ Regardless, feminine imagery and depictions of God have persisted.⁴² Wisdom Sophia is depicted as God's partner and co-creator and is described as "radiant life energy," similar to wind, fire, and water.⁴³ Comparably, wind, fire, and water are three of the five important spirit symbols in *Frozen II*.⁴⁴ As co-creator she played in the new creation, and delighted in it all, especially the humans!⁴⁵ Johnson points out that beyond the grammatical gender for wisdom being feminine (*hokma* in Hebrew, and *sophia* in Greek), is the fact that Wisdom is portrayed in many feminine modes—"sister, mother, female beloved, chef and hostess, teacher, preacher, maker of justice, and a host of other women's roles"—and, in each of these roles, "she renews all things."⁴⁶

There is also thought that Jesus was Wisdom incarnate and that Sophia transformed into Logos, and this thinking led to the repression of feminine imagery of the divine.⁴⁷ However, twelfth-century mystic Hildegard of Bingen reinstated Wisdom as female.⁴⁸ She believed that Wisdom was the creator, the Alpha and Omega, that Wisdom is the energy force behind life, and

⁴⁰ Ruther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 137.

⁴¹ Ruther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 137.

⁴² Ruther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 137.

⁴³ Ruther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 93–94, Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 436.

⁴⁴ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

⁴⁵ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 477.

⁴⁶ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 446–448; Wisdom 7:27.

⁴⁷ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 132.

⁴⁸ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 167.

dwells in God and creation.⁴⁹ She understood Wisdom to be the wife of God, caring for, and teaching God's children.⁵⁰ Hildegard taught balance, the importance of both feminine and masculine forces, and that this is what was needed to achieve a mending of soul and body together, Wisdom together with and part of God.⁵¹

Holy Spirit

Ruah, Hebrew for Holy Spirit, is grammatically feminine, however, there are ample feminine symbols for the Holy Spirit.⁵² Like Wisdom, The Holy Spirit is described as a mother, often a mother-bird, caring for and nursing her children.⁵³ In Collection I of the *Macarian Homilies* (c. fourth century) Christ is described as a mother bird, while the Spirit is described as the wings of the bird, protecting the young, and aiding them in flight.⁵⁴ The Holy Spirit is portrayed as being as essential as the air in St. Ephrem's (c. 306–373) *Hymns of Paradise*.⁵⁵ The air is always here, always moving, with us and surrounding us, and we are dependent on her, just as the mother bird is dependent on her wings to protect her young.⁵⁶ The Holy Spirit is also described as carrying creation in her womb, giving birth, and nursing, all uniquely female roles.⁵⁷ Not only do we see the feminine in the Holy Spirit, but also in the other dimensions of the Trinity, the Father and the Son.⁵⁸ In the *Macarian Homilies* the Holy Spirit is described as “leading the soul of the Heavenly

⁴⁹ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 167.

⁵⁰ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 168–170.

⁵¹ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 170.

⁵² Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 132–134.

⁵³ Julie M Hopkins, “The Wings of the Spirit” *Exploring Feminine Symbolism in Early Pneumatology: A Reassessment of a Key Metaphor in the Spiritual Teachings of the Macarian Homilies in the Light of Early Syriac Christian Tradition*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2020), 31.

⁵⁴ Hopkins, “The Wings of the Spirit,” 39.

⁵⁵ Hopkins, “The Wings of the Spirit,” 43.

⁵⁶ Hopkins, “The Wings of the Spirit,” 43.

⁵⁷ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 132–134; Isa 42:14; 49:15; 1 Cor 3:1–2; Luke 1:41.

⁵⁸ Stramara, “Feminine Imagery of God,” 28.

Father.”⁵⁹ Epiphanius (c.315-430) describes the Holy Spirit to be like Christ, too, except “She is a female being.”⁶⁰ The commingling of the feminine and masculine are beautiful, and we are a more full version of ourselves in spirit when we can accept both and all that is in between throughout the spectrum. Daniel Stramara Jr. says, “The undying love of God in all its dimensions—masculine, feminine, non-gendered, etc.—embraces finitude and death, and brings forth life eternal. Each facet of the myriad mystery is worth contemplating regarding the spiritual life.”⁶¹

Ecclesia (Mother Church)

Like Wisdom and the Holy Spirit, Ecclesia — the bride of Christ — is portrayed as a mother, “Mother Church” (Augustine) or “Lady Church” (Hermas), and she “bears the children of Christ through the womb of baptism.”⁶² This idea, though, that the church, Ecclesia, is female, continues to place women in lower regard than men. If Christ is male, and Ecclesia is female, then males—aligned with Christ—are at the top of the hierarchy.⁶³ This has led to male-only ordination.⁶⁴ Lora Walsh in her article, “Ecclesia Reconsidered,” considers two viewpoints on Ecclesia in the second-century text, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, and the observations of Catherine of Siena (1347-1380).⁶⁵ In *The Shepherd of Hermas* Ecclesia gives “the shepherd” four visions so

⁵⁹ Hopkins, “*The Wings of the Spirit*,” 44.

⁶⁰ Johannes Van Oort, “The Holy Spirit as Feminine: Early Christian Testimonies and Their Interpretation,” *Hervormde Theologische Studies* 72, no. 1 (2016): 2, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i1.3225> (accessed November 21, 2023).

⁶¹ Stramara, “Feminine Imagery of God,” 29.

⁶² Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 136–146.

⁶³ Lora Walsh, “Ecclesia Reconsidered: Two Premodern Encounters with the Feminine Church.” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 33, no. 2 (2017): 74, <https://doi.org/10.2979/jfemistudreli.33.2.06> (accessed November 21, 2023).

⁶⁴ Walsh, “Ecclesia Reconsidered,” 75.

⁶⁵ Walsh, “Ecclesia Reconsidered,” 73.

that the shepherd will realize his sins, repent, and grow in his Christian faith.⁶⁶ These visions are given to a *shepherd* though, not a bishop or a presbyter, and through him “She delivers messages of economic justice and ecclesiastical reform.”⁶⁷ When Ecclesia speaks of Justice she tells the shepherd to stop concentrating on his sins, and worry about injustice instead.⁶⁸ The two main topics that Ecclesia addresses in these visions to the shepherd concern economic inequality and clerical corruption.⁶⁹ Specifically, Ecclesia addresses wealth discrepancies, encouraging God’s children to help one another, not just help themselves, and iniquitous church leaders who are hypocritical. The author holds them accountable to God.⁷⁰ Walsh claims that “Her origins and allegiances are not among the sanctioned patriarchs; rather, they are found in a longer and wider history of revelation and the earliest act of creation.”⁷¹

Catherine of Siena was not pleased with the male leadership of the church during her time.⁷² When describing Catherine’s concern in comparison to Ecclesia as a mother, Lora Walsh says, “These ministers (Catherine’s preferred term for ecclesiastical leaders) have used the ecclesiastical body to enrich themselves and to enhance their power at the expense of Ecclesia’s children, and thus she is unable to feed them and bring herself relief.”⁷³ This is substantial, a description that only a mother could empathize with, a separation from her children that brings her not only emotional but physical pain.

The feminine Ecclesia as mother of the church, and as the church herself, brings forward the hurt of the injustices done to her people, and the agony that Christ must feel when her

⁶⁶ Michael J. Svigel, Caroline P Buie, and Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas: A New Translation and Commentary*, (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2023), 213.

⁶⁷ Walsh, “Ecclesia Reconsidered,” 78.

⁶⁸ Walsh, “Ecclesia Reconsidered,” 80.

⁶⁹ Walsh, “Ecclesia Reconsidered,” 80.

⁷⁰ Walsh, “Ecclesia Reconsidered,” 80–81.

⁷¹ Walsh, “Ecclesia Reconsidered,” 82.

⁷² Walsh, “Ecclesia Reconsidered,” 84.

⁷³ Walsh, “Ecclesia Reconsidered,” 85.

children are neglected and harmed from inside of her foundation. Ecclesia challenges the men who have so often “led” the church while using and abusing women and depicting them as subordinates in their scheme.⁷⁴

Mary

Carl Jung, in his quaternity thinking, added Mary as the fourth person of the Trinity.⁷⁵ According to Jung, Mary was like Ecclesia and like Christ, “Queen of the universe, universal mediator, Lady of heaven and earth, and co-redeemer along with her son.”⁷⁶ Mary is regarded as a goddess and seems to adopt the same qualities as goddesses of other faiths.⁷⁷ “She took on the presence and stature of previous goddesses before her: Inanna and Ishtar, Astarte, Isis, Hathor, Aphrodite, Demeter, Cybele.”⁷⁸ She’s so similar that images and rituals used in other religions continued to be used in cathedrals and sanctuaries through the fifth century.⁷⁹ The juxtaposition of Mary’s divinity and humanity is also one of debate. In Galatians 4, Paul confirms the “double nature” of Christ.⁸⁰ Like Christ, is Mary somehow both human and divine?⁸¹ And, if she is divine, then, does this mean that she remained a virgin? For the early church, sexuality was a terrible sin.⁸² Thus, if she is somehow divine, or free from original sin, then she must have been free from sexuality.⁸³ While the amplification of Mary to near-equality with Father, Son, and Spirit is notable, she is

⁷⁴ Walsh, “Ecclesia Reconsidered,” 89.

⁷⁵ Sonia Kraemer, “The Divine Feminine in Christianity,” *Feminist Theology* 32, no. 1 (2023): 37, <https://doi.org/10.1177/09667350231183068> (accessed November 21, 2023).

⁷⁶ Kraemer, “The Divine Feminine in Christianity,” 37.

⁷⁷ Kraemer, “The Divine Feminine in Christianity,” 32–33.

⁷⁸ Kraemer, “The Divine Feminine in Christianity,” 32.

⁷⁹ Kraemer, “The Divine Feminine in Christianity,” 33.

⁸⁰ Kraemer, “The Divine Feminine in Christianity,” 34.

⁸¹ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 152–153.

⁸² Kraemer, “The Divine Feminine in Christianity,” 35.

⁸³ Kraemer, “The Divine Feminine in Christianity,” 35.

qualified by perpetual virginity paired with motherhood. Sonia Kraemer, in her article “The Divine Feminine in Christianity,” claims,

Thus, a significant qualitative leap is made from the fact of virginal birth to virginity as a moral doctrine that transformed the virgin mother into divine grace according to Christian orthodoxy, and into an instrument of asceticism and feminine subjection, according to its detractors.⁸⁴

Mixed information is constantly given to women, that it is best to be a virgin, it is best to be a mother, and best to be dominated by a man. All of these are contradictory, yet, with Mary as the example, seemingly expected. Mary’s permanent virginity is said to cancel out the sins of Eve. Where Eve is disobedient and brings sin and death—as if Lucifer and Adam have nothing to do with it—Mary is obedient, virginal, and brings life into the world through Christ.⁸⁵ The elevation of Mary’s divinity seeks to balance the masculine tradition, however, I believe that stripping her of her humanness continues to diminish women. God chose a woman, by today’s standards, a girl, to bring the light of Christ into the world, to nurture and raise him, and to live a fully human life.

Sámi, Spirits, and *Frozen II*

Sámi Culture and Spirituality

The Northuldran people are fictional indigenous peoples portrayed in the movie *Frozen II* (2019). These people intended to represent the Sámi people indigenous to Norway and are depicted as living in an enchanted forest and having a strong relationship with nature.⁸⁶ During

⁸⁴ Kraemer, “The Divine Feminine in Christianity,” 36.

⁸⁵ Kraemer, “The Divine Feminine in Christianity,” 38.

⁸⁶ “The Sámi are the descendants of nomadic peoples who had inhabited northern Scandinavia for thousands of years. When the Finns entered Finland, beginning about 100AD, Sami settlements were probably dispersed over the whole of that country; today they are confined to its northern extremity. In Sweden and Norway they have similarly been pushed north. The origin of the Sámi is obscure; some scholars include them among the Paleo-Siberian

the making of *Frozen II* a team from Disney met with the Nordic Sámi Council and other Sámi representatives to create relationships with the people whose likeness would tell the story of Anna and Elsa and ensure a sense of authenticity represented by the Northudran people.⁸⁷

The importance of our earth and our connection to it is supported by Elizabeth Johnson and is echoed in the role that nature plays in Sámi culture, spirituality, and way of life. For Sámi people the earth is part of the culture, and the body is in relationship with how you act and move in nature.⁸⁸ “The boundary between the earthly and spiritual, the empirically ‘objective’ and the intuitive are porous.”⁸⁹ One way that the Sámi connect with the land is through yoiking, a type of traditional singing.⁹⁰ Yoiking dialect is unique for different groups and families of Sámi. This personal language between these family groups forms a special bond between the people and the various elements in nature—the waters, the land, and the reindeer.⁹¹

The relationship with the reindeer is a spiritual one, and Sámi who are in the reindeer husbandry industry has noted a shift from this spiritual nature to a capitalization of the industry which, in part, has led to a loss of yoiking.⁹² Other factors that contributed to the loss of this spiritual singing are the colonization of the Sámi by Norwegian farmers, German industrialization, and Læstadianism.⁹³ The Læstadian is a conservative, patriarchal sect of

peoples; others maintain that they were alpine and came from central Europe.” “Sami,” Britannica Academic, <https://academic-eb-com.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Sami/47172> (accessed Jan 10, 2024).

⁸⁷ Anne Kalvig, “Nature and Magic as Representation of ‘The Sami’-Sami Shamanistic Material in Popular Culture.” *Religions* (Basel, Switzerland) 11, no. 9 (2020): 453, 12, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11090453> (accessed January 6, 2024).

⁸⁸ Tuula Sharma Vassvik, “VUOIDDALASVUOHTA-Sami Spirituality, Yoik and Its Relations.” *Religions* (Basel, Switzerland) 11, no. 10 (2020): 2, 9, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11100512> (accessed January 6, 2024).

⁸⁹ Vassvik, “Voiddaluasvuahta,” 9.

⁹⁰ Vassvik, “Voiddaluasvuahta,” 14; For examples of yoiking [click here](#).

⁹¹ Vassvik, “Voiddaluasvuahta,” 14, 16.

⁹² Vassvik, “Voiddaluasvuahta,” 16.

⁹³ Mindy Eiermann, “The Coastal Sámi of Norway,” <https://www.laits.utexas.edu/sami/dieda/hist/nor-sami.htm#early> (accessed January 11, 2024).

Lutherans.⁹⁴ This sect prizes “asceticism and pietistic religiosity.”⁹⁵ The Læstadian taught women to deny themselves as a punishment for their sins, even to the point of poor hygiene, wallowing in their sins.⁹⁶ Women who wore the traditional Sámi brooches and silk scarves were called “silk whores,” and taught to dress in more drab and “modest” ways.⁹⁷ Yoiking was also discouraged by the Læstadian. One Sámi woman who had grown up Læstadian said, “I still break out in a kind of cold sweat if someone suddenly starts yoiking.”⁹⁸

Young Sámi people are now seeking to revive yoiking and reconnect with the land as a way to decolonize and heal.⁹⁹ This revival of yoiking is strengthening communities and strengthening relationships between Sámi people and nature.¹⁰⁰ Yoiking is part of embodying the Sámi way of life and their traditional consciousness connected with all elements of nature.¹⁰¹ These important symbols of Sámi culture are all represented heavily in *Frozen II*. The Northuldran people are shown to have a close relationship with the reindeer, the nature spirit symbols for earth, water, fire, and wind and beautifully shown in Queen Iduna’s scarf that Elsa cherishes and wears, and the song, “Vuelie” which is featured in both *Frozen* (2013) and *Frozen II* is a yoik. The Northuldran people gather and sing this yoik when Elsa reveals her and Anna’s relationship to them through Idunda.¹⁰²

⁹⁴ Sanna Valkonen, and Sandra Wallenius-Korkalo, “Embodying Religious Control: An Intersectional Approach to Sámi Women in Laestadianism,” *Culture and Religion* 16, no. 1 (2015):1–2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2015.1023813> (accessed January 6, 2024).

⁹⁵ Valkonen, “Embodying Religious Control,” 1–2.

⁹⁶ Valkonen, “Embodying Religious Control,” 6.

⁹⁷ Valkonen, “Embodying Religious Control,” 7–9.

⁹⁸ Valkonen, “Embodying Religious Control,” 8.

⁹⁹ Vassvik, “Voiddaluasvuahta,” 17.

¹⁰⁰ Vassvik, “Voiddaluasvuahta,” 19.

¹⁰¹ Vassvik, “Voiddaluasvuahta,” 17.

¹⁰² Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*, 41:53.

Spirit Symbols

In *Frozen II* five important spirits emerge from the enchanted forest: Earth, Fire, Wind, Water, and Ice. These spirits are featured to emphasize the Northuldra relationship with nature, akin to the Sámi's relationship with nature. In the movie, the Earth Spirits are pictured as stone giants, and their gender is unclear.¹⁰³ Elizabeth A. Johnson's perception of dualistic linking women to the physical and earth (and men to the mind) transfers to the neglect, exploitation, and capitalization of nature.¹⁰⁴ She highlights three types of relationships that faith tradition has with the earth: 1) The "kingship model," where humans have absolute dominion over the earth, 2) the "stewardship model," where humanity is at the top of the pyramid as caretaker, protecting and preserving what seems weaker and more vulnerable, and 3) the "kinship attitude," where humans are "interrelated parts and products of a world that is continually being made and nurtured by the Creator Spirit."¹⁰⁵ Johnson quotes John Seed:

I try to remember it's not me, John Seed, trying to protect the rainforest. Rather, I am part of the rainforest protecting myself. I am that part of the rainforest recently emerged into human thinking.¹⁰⁶

We are all part of each other, Rev. Selena Fox, a pagan, and leader of the Circle Sanctuary of Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin, says "I am part of Nature and Nature is part of me. My understanding of Nature's inner mysteries grows as I journey on this spiritual path."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

¹⁰⁴ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 159–171.

¹⁰⁵ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 243–263.

¹⁰⁶ "John Seed is the founder of the Rainforest Information Centre and has dedicated his life to the protection of rainforests and their biodiversity since 1979." "John Seed," Rainforest Information Centre, https://www.rainforestinformationcentre.org/john_seed (accessed January 14, 2024); Ruth Lechte, "Partnership for Ecological Wellbeing," *The Ecumenical Review* 42 (April 1990), 158, quoted in Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 318.

¹⁰⁷ "About Rev. Selena Fox," Circle Sanctuary, <https://www.circlesanctuary.org/about-us/About-Selena-Fox>, (accessed January 15, 2024); Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 294–294.

Fire, wind, and water are all intertwined as symbols of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁸ In *Frozen II* the fire spirit is Bruni, a Salamander, and their gender is unclear.¹⁰⁹ The fire of the Holy Spirit brightens the dark, and sets elements ablaze, and like the burning bush, and the pillar of fire— identifies those who bring good news.¹¹⁰ Hildegard of Bingen revealed:

I, the highest and fiery power, have kindled every living spark and I have breathed out nothing that can die. . . I flame above the beauty of the fields; I shine in the waters; in the sun, the moon, and the stars, I burn. And by means of the airy wind, I stir everything into quickness with a certain invisible life which sustains all. . . I, the fiery power, lie hidden in these things and they blaze from me.¹¹¹

The wind spirit in *Frozen II* is “Gale,” imagined as female. Like Gale and *Ruah*, who are breath and air, the creator spirit is like the Native American “Old Wind Woman.”¹¹² “She spirals, uncoiling and recoiling, leaving and returning to her source; her spirit evolving, involving the entire universe.”¹¹³

The water spirit in *Frozen II* is “Nokk,” a male horse. Elsa is in a special relationship with this horse as she can freeze the horse, symbolically taming him. Johnson points out that water is essential for all life and is received through the spirit.¹¹⁴ Second century bishop Irenaeus says:

Just as dry wheat cannot be shaped into a cohesive lump of dough or a loaf held together without moisture, so in the same way we many could not become one. . . without the water that comes from heaven. As dry earth bears no fruit unless it receives moisture, so we also were originally dry wood and could never have borne the fruit of life without the rain freely given from above. . .[we] have received it through the Spirit.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 52–64.

¹⁰⁹ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

¹¹⁰ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 404–415.

¹¹¹ Fiona Bowie, Oliver Davies, eds., *Hildegard of Bingen: Mystical Writings*, (New York: Crossroad 1990), 91–93, quoted in Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 415.

¹¹² Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 392.

¹¹³ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 392.

¹¹⁴ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 415.

¹¹⁵ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* Book 3, chap. 17, 2; quoted in Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 426.

Elsa bridges magic and humanity with ice. She transforms the water into something new, and like Sophia, she is a creator. Elsa is baptized in water but also receives baptism in ice as she dies and is resurrected by it. The following section will discuss Elsa in terms of the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist.

The Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist

In Baptism, we are buried and resurrected with Christ.¹¹⁶ Jeanne Chézard de Matel equates the water that flowed from Jesus's side to the same body and blood of Christ that nourishes the church.¹¹⁷ She also compares Christ to a mother, like Ecclesia, when giving his body and blood for us, like a mother nursing her baby, as Mary had once nursed Jesus.¹¹⁸ Christ's desire is like Ecclesia's, when a mother nurses her baby, she is also forming a bonded relationship.¹¹⁹

These feminine aspects of Baptism and Eucharist are also discovered in Elsa. Walsh notes that "In some medieval traditions, tears are associated specifically with ecclesiastical reform; tears also take on the sacramental functions of conversion and transformation." Elsa cries when she meets with her mother in spirit at Ahtohallan, and she learns about the significance of the Northuldran people to her mother.¹²⁰ When Elsa sends the snow to show Anna what has happened, Anna cries when she realizes that Elsa has died, and then witnesses Olaf's death.¹²¹ These tears begin the reform of the relationship between the Northuldran and Arendelle people. Anna, with the earth spirit's help, destroys the dam, baptizing the forest in the spiritual waters

¹¹⁶ J. P. Burns, "Baptism as Dying and Rising with Christ in the Teaching of Augustine." *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 20, no. 3, (2012): 408.

¹¹⁷ Stramara, "Feminine Imagery of God," 18.

¹¹⁸ Stramara, "Feminine Imagery of God," 19–25.

¹¹⁹ Walsh, "Ecclesia Reconsidered," 85.

¹²⁰ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*, 1:06:24.

¹²¹ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*, 1:13:49.

that had been denied to the Northuldran people for thirty-four years.¹²² Elsa's relationship with the waters of Ahtohallan and Northuldra brings her back to life and saves the Arendelle people when Elsa freezes the waters released from the dam before they can endanger their beloved community.¹²³ Elsa dies and is resurrected, her eucharistic meal is her blood—the water, and her body—the snow. She has used the water to give life to the two communities (Arendelle and Northuldra), and her snow, symbolized in Olaf, is broken, then reemerges when Elsa is resurrected.¹²⁴ This symbolism is understood in a childlike way, making a meal of snow cream on a blistery winter day.

Conclusion

Feminism embraces social justice, inclusion, liberation, and love — like Christ.¹²⁵ Social justice issues like patriarchy, misogyny, and colonization are counter to the teachings of Christ, yet often perpetuated under the guise of Christianity. The feminine dimensions of Christianity draw attention and extend importance to these qualities. Lora Walsh points out, “Feminine divinities do not automatically enhance the power and possibilities of human women. Yet, resourcefulness and vision can reveal the fuller potential of Ecclesia.”¹²⁶ Like Elsa, refreshed by her mother's spirit, women can live into their callings, seeing their image in Sophia, The Holy Spirit, Ecclesia, Mary, and the plentiful feminine divine imagery of Christ.

¹²² Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

¹²³ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*, 1:22:04.

¹²⁴ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*, 1:26:13.

¹²⁵ “The new feminist revolution,” YouTube, 5:10.

¹²⁶ Walsh, “Ecclesia Reconsidered,” 90.

CHAPTER 3
THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF GIRLS
AND WOMEN

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the spiritual formation of girls and women based on: 1) the psychological development of women, 2) the inclusion of girls and women in ritual, worship, and religious education, 3) messaging in Disney and the media, and 4) the convergence of these components. I will refer primarily to Sheila Greene’s research for the psychological development. Sheila Greene is the co-founder and director of the Children’s Research Centre, part of the Open University in The United Kingdom. The following captures the swirl of elements that influence generations of girls and women:

From childhood they hear fairy stories that end when the heroine secures the prince and the couple “live happily ever after.” The remainder of life in fairy stories is a blank, the excitement finished. Girls’ comic books and magazines focus relentlessly on “getting a man” as the be all and end all in terms of life goals. Contemporary magazines for girls may talk about boys as sex objects and sexual partners in ways that would have been unacceptable a generation ago but the emphasis is still on being attractive to the opposite sex.¹

I acknowledge that gender is largely a social construct and that some identify as non-binary, or whose gender identity is distinct from the sex assigned at birth.² Furthermore, differences appear between the development of females and males throughout different stages of their lives. Some of these differences are consistent and science-based, while others are misogynistic.³ Greene

¹ Sheila Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women: Rethinking Change in Time* (London: Routledge, 2003, 2015), 149, Kindle.

² Padma Mohapatra, “Gender as a Social Construct,” Study.com, <https://study.com/learn/lesson/gender-identity-overview-history.html> (accessed January 27, 2024).

³ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 47, 48.

states, “In this way, a person’s identity as a woman may be both distinctive and, in some sense, identical to that of other women through shared membership of the category ‘woman.’”⁴

Psychological Development of Girls and Women

Gender Roles

Gender roles are “culturally and socially determined sets of expected behaviors, attitudes, and characteristics based on concepts of masculinity and femininity,” and they continue to evolve.⁵

While these expected behaviors feel archaic, media and culture continue to promote psychological findings through a misogynistic lens.⁶ Sheila Greene views psychological development as “emergent not given, historically and culturally contingent not universal,” acknowledging the societal influence and misogynistic undertone in traditional psychology.⁷

Rosemary Radford Ruether notes the “permanent dependance” of women on men due to the set gender roles assigned to women in the home, and men in the workforce and broader society.⁸ Greene discusses the evidence that parents and other caregivers reinforce these gender roles from early childhood.⁹ Girls are usually encouraged in games involving dolls and dress up, and boys in rougher play like “jumping and climbing.”¹⁰ While boys and girls are both largely spending time with women as caregivers—mothers, babysitters, preschool teachers, etc.—these gender roles are still reinforced.¹¹ However, it is also noted that “cross sex-typed behavior” may

⁴ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 115.

⁵ “Gender Role,” Britannica Academic, <https://academic-eb-com.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/levels/collegiate/article/gender-role/639940> (accessed April 26, 2024).

⁶ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 52.

⁷ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 24.

⁸ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2005), 249, <https://doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520231467.001.0001> (accessed November 21, 2023).

⁹ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 54.

¹⁰ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 54.

¹¹ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 54.

be encouraged in girls, but not in boys.¹² Enter, the “tomboy.” Girls are rewarded when taking on boys’ gender roles, and may do so throughout adolescence, and then they are expected to flip a magical switch and become completely “female” at the onset of puberty.¹³ Boys, on the other hand, are reprimanded for enacting feminine gender roles. This stereotype encourages an underlying principle that women are “second-class citizens,” and as such, boys should not strive to be women, though it is acceptable for girls to do “boyish” things as long as they stop before adulthood.¹⁴

Young women are expected to desire men sexually, but not *too much*. They should show interest, but not at the elimination of dressing in “modest” fashion.¹⁵ They should fit the beauty mold in body type and appearance.¹⁶ Greene says that this is “a tyranny that must be resisted.”¹⁷ She cites Jack Martin, Jeff Sugarman, and Sarah Hickenbottom in observing that the making of a human involves many factors that are not reducible to biological sex.¹⁸ Regardless of this, girls are faced with “exploitation, harassment, manipulation, and abuse.”¹⁹ Thus, it is important to analyze how these gender roles perpetuate this “systemic marginalization.”²⁰ After all, culture and society conditions largely determine our realized gender roles.²¹ In addition, “gender identity is clearly but one aspect of identity and it is also likely to vary considerably in salience from person to person and also from time to time in the same person.”²² Greene mentions the term

¹² Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 94.

¹³ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 126.

¹⁴ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 126.

¹⁵ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 102.

¹⁶ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 101.

¹⁷ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 101.

¹⁸ Jack Martin, Jeff Sugarman, and Sarah Hickenbottom, *Persons: Understanding Psychological Selfhood and Agency*, (New York: Springer, 2010), 9 in Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 118.

¹⁹ Sheryl A Kujawa-Holbrook, “Courage and Resistance: Spiritual Formation and Mentoring Girls for Religious Leadership,” *International Journal of Children’s Spirituality* 6, no. 3 (2001): 300, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13644360120100478> (accessed January 16, 2024).

²⁰ Kujawa-Holbrook, “Courage and Resistance,” 300.

²¹ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 54.

²² Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 122.

“soft assembly” used by Esther Thelen and Linda B. Smith.²³ This term is akin to “hard-wired,” meaning that instead of humans already having a determined set of roles laid out for them based on their biological sex, humans are, instead, “soft-assembled.” There are variables that enter the human’s self-making based on biological sex, that is only one among a myriad of factors.²⁴

Traditional psychology has taken a misogynistic view. Darwin saw women as “less evolved,” and Lacan, Freud, Erikson, and Piaget made negative assertions about women and their development based on studies done on men.²⁵ However, some studies show that girls and women are defying these given roles and attributes at such an accelerated rate that “genetic explanations do not hold water.”²⁶

Where these psychologists were firm in their misogyny, psychologists like Karen Horney flipped the script and claimed that women were not inherently jealous of men, but that men were intrinsically jealous of women’s birthing and mothering capabilities.²⁷ Carol Gilligan pointed out that the previously mentioned male psychologists would base their theories on men and boys, and she also notes how they often saw girls and women as being “developmentally inadequate.”²⁸ She suggested that if you start with women and girls, then a “difference conception of development emerges.”²⁹ Gilligan believes that the disregarding of adolescent girls is a “response to the patriarchy,” done on purpose to justify the theories about gender roles without needing to have any hard evidence.³⁰

²³ Esther Thelen and Linda B. Smith, *A Dynamic Systems Approach to the Development of Cognition and Action*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 150 in Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 84.

²⁴ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 84.

²⁵ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 48, 71.

²⁶ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 50.

²⁷ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 66.

²⁸ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 71.

²⁹ Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 44 in Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 71.

³⁰ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 72–73.

Women and Relationships

Gilligan also advocates for the relationship between girls and women as a form of resistance.³¹ I identify with this point of view, as the strong relationship that I have to my own mother and grandmother has revealed to me the misogynistic understandings of society through ways in which they resist and conform to their views. This mother-daughter relationship is of especially important focus to some psychologists. Paula Caplan sought to detail the psychological problems of women in connection to their relationship with their mother.³² However, this view did not consider the other relationships girls might have in their lives that could also cause problems for them.³³ Nancy Chodorow's theory suggested that girls had a special relationship with their mothers, but there is not significant evidence to imply that girls have any more of an important relationship with their mothers than boys do.³⁴ Even though, there is still a feminist principle placing importance on the mother-daughter relationship.³⁵ Chodorow and Gilligan agree that women's personalities are more relationship-focused than men's, and because of this, women have a greater capacity for empathy.³⁶ Ellin Scholnick points out that when "masculine" characteristics are used to define the hierarchical high point of development, then women are not recognized for their worth. She suggests four "feminine metaphors of development—friendship, conversation, apprenticeship, and narrative."³⁷ These metaphors are seen more often in feminist scholarship, and certainly in this study on the importance of *Frozen II*.³⁸

³¹ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 73.

³² Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 164.

³³ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 164.

³⁴ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 69.

³⁵ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 81.

³⁶ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 69.

³⁷ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 158.

³⁸ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 159.

Women and Time

Time also plays an important role in psychology. In general, time is important to human development because of the finite nature of our lives.³⁹ Of course, many religions, including Christianity, provide a caveat to this limitation in offering life after death.⁴⁰ Rollo May felt that one could not truly live life to the fullest unless they were aware of this “finitude.”⁴¹ This finitude enhances the idea of aging and the social clock. From the time we are little, parents ask us what we think we might be when we grow up, causing us to look into our future. Teen girls seek to find identity in their imagined, future self and through this they understand more about their “actual self,” and their “ideal self.”⁴² As we grow older, we remember the things we did and liked as a child. This type of thinking—viewing ourselves in the past, present, and future—is coined as “spatiotemporal fluidity,” by Martin and Sugarman.⁴³ The important realization is that “spatiotemporal fluidity,” is just that, *thinking*, since Green suggests that we can only truly interact with the present time.⁴⁴

The “social clock” is particularly influential for women. The social clock is society’s perception of an “expectable life cycle”—*When* along our timeline we should attain certain social standards like graduating from high school or college, getting married, or having children.⁴⁵ For women it is apparent when she has departed from her given social clock. For example, a fourteen-year-old girl who is pregnant would be perceived as being ahead of schedule

³⁹ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 89.

⁴⁰ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 153.

⁴¹ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 89.

⁴² Kaili Chen Zhang and Charlene Tan, “Exploring the Spiritual Needs of Adolescent Girls,” *Religion & Education* 37, no. 2 (2010): 151–152, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15507394.2010.486369> (accessed January 16, 2024).

⁴³ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 127–128.

⁴⁴ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 153.

⁴⁵ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 144.

in a way that is undesirable.⁴⁶ Men are also subject to a social clock, one in sync with industrialized society (i.e. time = money), while the contemporary woman's clock is working to keep up with both society and biology with little to no support, whether it be from their partners, the government, or their employers.⁴⁷

Women and Body

Women are thought to have a special relationship with time due to their bodily cycles.⁴⁸ They are caught between a rock and hard place due to their tie to these cycles, and the fact that society is not built to support these cycles. "Schools and workplaces are not structured to support menstruating girls and women."⁴⁹ Girls and women are criticized for their "raging hormones," and old stereotypes teach that women are "less capable of functioning efficiently when menstruating."⁵⁰ In opposition of these stereotypes, some feminists have upheld that menstruation has little effect on girl's and women's lives, and studies have shown that cognition is not diminished during menstruation.⁵¹ While it may be true that women are certainly capable both cognitively and physically do their jobs while menstruating, the truth is that women do deal with pain and other issues while menstruating. This makes working in environments where it is expected that menstruation should be kept invisible difficult and at times embarrassing.⁵²

⁴⁶ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 146.

⁴⁷ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 140, 148.

⁴⁸ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 91–97.

⁴⁹ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 101.

⁵⁰ M. B. Parlee, "The premenstrual syndrome," *Psychological Bulletin* 83 (1973):454–465 in Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 101.

⁵¹ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 101.

⁵² Katherine Sang, Jen Remnant, Thomas Calvard, and Katriona Myhill, "Blood Work: Managing Menstruation, Menopause and Gynaecological Health Conditions in the Workplace," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 4 (Feb 17, 2021), 6–10.

Pregnant women are compared to animals, an “incubator [and] egg.”⁵³ This is not unlike the connection discussed in Chapter 2 about women’s perceived connection with nature. A woman who’s had her first child will likely feel disgraced by her new body and will feel challenged to suddenly take on all of the traditional “women’s roles,” that, if she’s heterosexual, she once shared with her male partner.⁵⁴ As women age, and enter menopause they are shamed for not keeping up a “youthful appearance,” and once again reprimanded for their hormones, only now, instead of hormones raging, the hormones are depleting and cause her to be “irrational,” and “depressed.”⁵⁵ Women’s bodies are in constant tension, due to threat of bodily harm. They are caught between the responsibility to be consistently polite and respectful, while at the same time feeling that they should protect their own body, which somehow also feels like the object of others.⁵⁶ Women continue to fight for their rights and for a broader understanding of what it means to be female. While progress has been made, there is still work to do both in supporting women and studying their developmental psychology. Sheila Greene closes her book by saying:

It is therefore vitally important to us as women and full human beings that the theories that impinge on our lives and that instruct us about our lives reflect both our complexity and diversity and our potential for change throughout the life course.

Girls and Women in Ritual, Worship, and Religious Education

Imago Dei, Bible Stories, and Gender Roles

Children begin to develop their sense of Christian identity based on their perception of their connection to the *imago dei*, their understanding of the stories and rituals of the church, and their

⁵³ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 104.

⁵⁴ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 104, 129.

⁵⁵ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 112, 91.

⁵⁶ Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 98–100.

relationship with their congregation and family.⁵⁷ For girls, the connection to the *imago dei* is more difficult because the bulk of Bible stories are about men or boys.⁵⁸ Through these stories, “the boy sees in God a point to attain; the girl sees a relationship to realize.”⁵⁹ Girls and women are thought to value relationship over boys (this is largely propagated by the psychology cited earlier in this chapter), and are taught to be dependent on men “both inside and outside of religious institutions.”⁶⁰ In a study on sermons in *the church of God of Prophecy*, Deseta Davis analyzed eighteen sermons, given by both men and women preachers. In these sermons, women were practically “invisible.”⁶¹ She notes how in sermons, women are often portrayed as prostitutes, even when the biblical text does not specify this detail, and if not a prostitute, imagined as “helpless, diseased and in need of a cure.”⁶² One sermon she analyzed did not even acknowledge Jesus’s appearance to the women at the tomb, but rather emphasized how he changed the lives of “more than five hundred of the brothers.”⁶³ Davis notes, “It was . . . disappointing to find that the women preachers in my study used the same gender-exclusive language as men, appearing to have no awareness that this disempowered themselves as well as other women.” I was not at all surprised to hear this. My Southern Baptist, Independent Baptist, and Church of God upbringing taught me that my role was to be seen and not heard and that I

⁵⁷ Karen-Marie Yust, “Cultivating Christians: North American Family Cultures and Religious Identity Formation,” *International Journal of Children’s Spirituality* 22, no. 3–4 (2017): 261, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1364436X.2017.1363721> (accessed January 16, 2024).

⁵⁸ Anne Phillips “God Talk/Girl Talk: A Study of Girls’ Lives and Faith in Early Adolescence, with Reflections of Those of their Biblical Fore-sisters” in *The Faith Lives of Women and Girls*, ed. Anne Phillips et al. (London: Routledge, 2016), 77, Kindle.

⁵⁹ P. Babin, *Faith and the Adolescent* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1965), 47–48 in Sheryl A Kujawa-Holbrook, “Courage and Resistance: Spiritual Formation and Mentoring Girls for Religious Leadership,” *International Journal of Children’s Spirituality* 6, no. 3 (2001): 300–301, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13644360120100478> (accessed January 16, 2024).

⁶⁰ Kujawa-Holbrook, “Courage and Resistance,” 302.

⁶¹ Deseta Davis, “The Use of Patriarchal Language in the Church of God of Prophecy: A Case Study” in *The Faith Lives of Women and Girls*, ed. Anne Phillips et al. (London: Routledge, 2016), 124, Kindle.

⁶² Davis, “The Use of Patriarchal Language,” 125.

⁶³ Davis, “The Use of Patriarchal Language,” 125.

should be submissive to all males in my life as they were called to be the leaders of the church. For much of my young life, I grew up believing that all Christians understood this to be true, and even felt uncomfortable when I began working in churches with female pastors. Fortunately, I was guided in ways by family, friends, and the Holy Spirit, that helped me to understand my own vocation, and worth in the sight of God.

Thus, when girls are taught from the pulpit that they are to be dependent and subordinate of males, they learn that they are not valued, either in society, or in the church.⁶⁴ These teachings are compounded by use of patriarchal terms (“man” for all human beings, “brethren” for the entire church family, “He” for God) and by the stories told that emphasize the men, and belittle the women.⁶⁵ Biblical passages that teach “dying to self” can even be abusive when paired with other teachings, suggesting that girls should continually be giving of themselves regardless of male or leadership intentions.⁶⁶ As girls develop spiritually they are convinced that they are not worthy of the church or the world, that their gifts won’t make a difference in their communities. The church can be seen as a threat to women and should recognize its need to nurture the lives of women, to see themselves in the image of God.⁶⁷

Women & Eucharist

In the article, “Being in Communion: Patters of Inclusion and Exclusion in Young Lay Women’s Experiences of Eucharist in the Church of England,” Kim Wasey explores the inclusion and exclusion of women in the Eucharist through their stories. These stories are important because

⁶⁴ Davis, “The Use of Patriarchal Language,” 121.

⁶⁵ Davis, “The Use of Patriarchal Language,” 121, 126.

⁶⁶ John 11:25; Phillips, “God Talk/Girl Talk,” 82; Kim Wasey “Being in Communion: Patterns of Inclusion and Exclusion in Young Lay Women’s Experiences of Eucharist in the Church of England” in *The Faith Lives of Women and Girls*, ed. Anne Phillips et al. (London: Routledge, 2016), 69, Kindle.

⁶⁷ Wasey, “Being in Communion,” 69.

they reflect how women are treated beyond the sacrament of the Eucharist. Wasey shares how one woman noticed the exclusion of children during communion when she was eleven and, in her context, children could not be confirmed, and therefore could not take part in communion, until they were fourteen.⁶⁸ Another woman spoke of how she didn't feel "holy enough" to serve communion.⁶⁹ Another woman in her study framed communion around consent. This woman sensed that consent to take communion was assumed, and instead was resolute in her self-exclusion in the eucharist.⁷⁰ Other women in the study felt anger and sadness when they, or family members, had been refused communion.⁷¹ One woman was refused communion when visiting a church. She is of shorter stature and the servers assumed that she was a child.⁷² I deeply resonated with this story because throughout much of my young adult life I have been mistaken as markedly younger than I am, or simply treated as such. Some in leadership at churches where I worked made assertions that I was "childish," I was spoken to as if I was a child, and referred to in terms that did not capture the scope of my leadership or position. Even now, I still often feel "small" in the room. In certain leadership or employment situations my self-assuredness dwindles in response to assumptions, comments, or treatment by colleagues or even those who are not particularly granted authority in certain situations.

Women & Leadership

Female leadership in the church has been restricted in many areas, and in some traditions the women who have sought out these leadership roles have been considered evil.⁷³ All provinces in

⁶⁸ Wasey, "Being in Communion," 67.

⁶⁹ Wasey, "Being in Communion," 70.

⁷⁰ Wasey, "Being in Communion," 71–72.

⁷¹ Wasey, "Being in Communion," 73–74.

⁷² Wasey, "Being in Communion," 73–74.

⁷³ Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 223.

the Anglican Communion ordain women as deacons, but only select providences ordain woman as either priests or bishops.⁷⁴ While many dioceses are now supportive of women in these roles, women still face difficulties obtaining them.⁷⁵ Legislation is still in place allowing parishes to “opt out” of allowing women priests in their setting.⁷⁶ A female priest shares her story about initially planning to be a deaconess. She says that she was not “totally convinced of women’s ordination as priests,” but it did not take long for her to change her mind when she was “converted by the men who were anti-women.”⁷⁷ Clearly her righteous anger led in her understanding, and eventual calling as a priest.

As girls embrace their spirituality this becomes the way in which they understand their relationship with “God, people, and the world.”⁷⁸ In the study “Girls and Religious Leadership,” many of the young women reported that they felt unsupported in leadership endeavors, and that if they became “too spiritual,” then this would conflict with their roles as “daughter, wife, [and] mother.”⁷⁹ This sort of reaction to the narrow teaching of girl’s and women’s roles pigeonholes girls into determining that they do not have a seat at the table. While boys and girls alike are taught that leadership is an important quality to possess, girls who are leaders are often seen as “unfeminine or pushy.”⁸⁰ Throughout my childhood my mom has called me “bossy.” She has even done this in my adulthood when she has seen me at work on numerous occasions. I remind her (albeit tongue-in-cheek) that I am, in fact, “the boss.” Even now, it is difficult for women to

⁷⁴ “Anglicanism,” Britannica Academic, <https://academic-eb-com.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Anglicanism/109449> (accessed January 30, 2024).

⁷⁵ Sarah-Jane Page, “Feminist Faith Lives? Exploring Perceptions of Feminism Among Two Anglican Cohorts,” in *The Faith Lives of Women and Girls*, ed. Anne Phillips et al. (London: Routledge, 2016), 53, Kindle. Page, “Feminist Faith Lives,” 53.

⁷⁶ Page, “Feminist Faith lives?” 54.

⁷⁷ Page, “Feminist Faith lives?” 56.

⁷⁸ Kujawa-Holbrook, “Courage and Resistance,” 302.

⁷⁹ Kujawa-Holbrook, “Courage and Resistance,” 302.

⁸⁰ Kujawa-Holbrook, “Courage and Resistance,” 307, 308.

lead. In the book *Choosing to Lead: Women and the Crisis of American Values* (1996), the author, Constance H. Buchanan (1947–2020) states, “women must overcome the deep cultural barrier that still keeps many from authoritative public action—from choosing to lead.”⁸¹ I would argue that this statement holds true nearly thirty years later. Kim Wasey also points out that having a female priest doesn’t automatically help women to understand their inclusion, the inclusion of women must permeate everything in the church.⁸²

Religious Education

One place to start in combating the cultural barriers that keep girls and women from learning their worth, and moving into leadership is religious education. For starters, it is important to meet children, regardless of gender, where they are. Rather than simply teaching “correct answers” like a standardized test, leaders and teachers can help students to analyze texts (in ways appropriate for the development and age level), and use resources that include “real life dilemmas, using drama, art, movement, visualization.”⁸³ They can “engage in experimental God-talk rather than the more definitional God-talk embedded in most church school curricula,” and help children transfer the word of God onto the matters of today’s world, and in their own lives.⁸⁴

Children can also learn through presence in worship. Karen-Marie Yust gives an example of a young girl using her hymnal and even though she can’t read yet, she is making up her own text, and when she happens to sing the correct text, she excited to do so!⁸⁵ This reminds me of my own daughter, Anna. After hearing the doxology on numerous occasions during worship,

⁸¹ Constance H. Buchanan, *Choosing to Lead: Women and the Crisis of American Values*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996), 200 in Kujawa-Holbrook, “Courage and Resistance,” 309.

⁸² Wasey, “Being in Communion,” 75.

⁸³ Yust, “Cultivating Christians,” 266.

⁸⁴ Yust, “Cultivating Christians,” 265.

⁸⁵ Yust, “Cultivating Christians,” 264.

“Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow,” to the tune LASST UNS ERFRUEUN, she proceeded to claim this song as her “favorite” and added her own text: “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here below: Holy moly, Holy moly . . .”

Another tool that religious leaders and teachers can use is teaching children to *listen* in the “silence of their hearts and minds.”⁸⁶ This allows children to connect with their own spirituality and the Holy spirit.⁸⁷ Yust also notes that it is simply important for adults to connect with children along their journey, that children need the relationship of more than just a few close relatives or friends to light their way. They should be welcomed and celebrated on every turn of their journey.⁸⁸

Studies on teenage female brains do reveal differences between their brains and teenage boy’s brains.⁸⁹ For example: 1) female teens brains have more gray matter, allowing for more efficiency of thought process and multitasking, 2) the hippocampus grows faster, allowing girls to excel in socialization and relationship, 3) the hypothalamus is smaller, allowing girls to be less physically aggressive than boys, 4) the Corpus Callosum is larger, allowing for females to transfer more information between the two hemispheres of the brain, and 5) the Anterior Cingulate Cortex is larger, allowing for more skilled discission making.⁹⁰ These important factors should not be ignored when engaging with girls spiritual development.⁹¹ In order to employ what we know about brain science, Dori Baker and Ned Edwards suggest a method referred to as “Girlfriend Theology.” Through this method, girls gather, lighting a candle, “inviting deep, calm,

⁸⁶ Yust, “Cultivating Christians,” 268–269.

⁸⁷ Yust, “Cultivating Christians,” 268–269.

⁸⁸ Yust, “Cultivating Christians,” 271–272.

⁸⁹ Dori Baker and Ned Edwards, “What Would Catherine of Sienna Do? Spiritual Formation And The Brains Of Adolescent Girls,” *Religious Education* 107, no. 4 (2012): 372–373, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2012.699406> (accessed January 16, 2024).

⁹⁰ Baker and Edwards, “What Would Catherine of Sienna Do?,” 378–379.

⁹¹ Baker and Edwards, “What Would Catherine of Sienna Do?,” 372–373.

steady breathing,” and share stories of their lives with one another. They share how these stories make them feel, especially how it makes their *body* feel, then they seek to find God in the story, and how they can apply what they have learned to their everyday lives and to the world.⁹²

In using methods like “Girlfriend Theology,” or other curriculums, it is important that adults advocate for children and understand that they are capable of talking about God, and their own spirituality.⁹³ If you pay attention, you can discern that girls are talking about, wrestling with, and understanding, concepts that are central to theology.⁹⁴ They use their skills to question their understandings of the Bible and science, to ponder the Trinity and their experience of the Holy Spirit, and grasp how Jesus might respond in a particular situation.⁹⁵ It is church leaders, teachers, and other adults in the church’s responsibility to foster relationship and encourage girls to live into their full potential as *imago dei*, and children of God.

Messaging Directed to Girls in the Media

“White men have created 95% of the cinematic images we’ve ever seen.”⁹⁶ What a stunning, but not surprising, statistic. Men continue to control these images, which often communicate that either, “She is beautiful and worthy,” or “She is bad and ugly.”⁹⁷ Disney is certainly not exempt from this statistic.⁹⁸ Older Disney Princess films like *Snow White* (1937) and *Cinderella* (1950)

⁹² Baker and Edwards, “What Would Catherine of Sienna Do?,” 373–374.

⁹³ Phillips, “God Talk/Girl Talk,” 80.

⁹⁴ Phillips, “God Talk/Girl Talk,” 83.

⁹⁵ Phillips, “God Talk/Girl Talk,” 83–84.

⁹⁶ Naomi McDougall Jones, *The Wrong Kind of Women: Inside Our Revolution to Dismantle the Gods of Hollywood*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2020), in Justine Elise Jarvie, “Our Own Stories: An Examination of Animated Disney Princess Storytelling through a Feminist Media Lens,” (Master’s Thesis, Southern Connecticut State University, 2021), 6,

https://smu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01SMU_INST/12013t3/cdi_proquest_journals_2572610387

(accessed January 11, 2022).

⁹⁷ Jarvie, “Our Own Stories,” 32, 38.

⁹⁸ Jarvie, “Our Own Stories,” 24.

featured women in traditional women's roles.⁹⁹ Older women were often presented as ugly and evil. In *Cinderella* (1950) they do not tell us much about her birth mother, but instead focus on the stepmother who is not given a name or occupation.¹⁰⁰ Through images like these, women's bodies are sexualized and curated for consumption.¹⁰¹

Fortunately, there are others who are taking control of the images that we see via social media. Lakisha Renee Odlum, in her dissertation, "Crafting Digital Narratives: Black Girls' Literacies, Social Media, and Identity Formation," discusses how Black girls are taking matters into their own hands and educating individuals all over the world via TikTok. Two of the girls that she focuses on are Taylor Cassidy and Jackie James.¹⁰² These Black girls are lifting up the histories of Black women and championing social justice through their TikTok accounts and their exposure continues to broaden.¹⁰³ Taylor Cassidy was featured on other media through the "Women for Biden" TikTok account, and Jackie James participated in protests, and in "online movements to report racist White teenagers to their high schools and the colleges they planned to attend," as well as using her platform to acknowledge the difficulty that many young people have had with their mental health.¹⁰⁴ TikTok, and other forms of social media can serve as a "digital counter-public", a space that "enables new and transgressive forms of organizing, pedagogy and, ultimately, resistance."¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Jarvie, "Our Own Stories," 25.

¹⁰⁰ Elisabeth S Weigel, "Religious Rites and Female Spirituality in Cinematic Adaptations of Cinderella," *Journal of Comparative Literature & Aesthetics* 40, no. 2 (2017): 174, https://smu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01SMU_INST/12013t3/cdi_gale_lrcgauss_A597253075 (accessed January 16, 2024).

¹⁰¹ Page, "Feminist Faith lives?" 52.

¹⁰² Lakisha Renee Odlum, "Crafting Digital Narratives: Black Girls' Literacies, Social Media, and Identity Formation," (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2021), 13.

¹⁰³ Odlum, "Crafting Digital Narratives," 80–86, 93.

¹⁰⁴ Odlum, "Crafting Digital Narratives," 74, 98.

¹⁰⁵ Mark Lamont Hill, "Thank you, Black Twitter": State violence, digital counterpublics, and pedagogies of resistance. *Urban Education*, 53, no.2 (2018): 286-302 in Odlum, "Crafting Digital Narratives," 57.

The Convergence

Introduction to The Convergence

Within the three main categories explored here there are major connections that intersect between psychology, the church, and the media. The church has taught women that men are the “gateway to the real world.”¹⁰⁶ Visuals of the man in the business suit, the collar, or the robe, with women in their figure-flattering dresses signals to women that men are doing the true work of trade and church. Sexist comments from leaders like “no fat ugly chicks allowed,” along with the other messages women receive compound in ways that are deeply hurtful, harmful, and threatening to women.¹⁰⁷ Girls and women who have something to say, that seek to tell their stories, do so in an “act of courage and resistance,” transcending the feminine role of “being nice.”¹⁰⁸

Feminist & Christian

Merriam-Webster defines feminism as “belief in and advocacy of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes expressed especially through organized activity on behalf of women’s rights and interests.”¹⁰⁹ Christian women are caught up wondering, “can you be part feminist?”¹¹⁰ Feminism has become taboo in Christian circles, often with a misunderstanding of the term, or flat-out refusal to align with equality and justice.¹¹¹ Sheila Greene notes that

¹⁰⁶ Manon Ceridwen James “Fat Chicks, Blue Books and Green Valleys: Identity, Women and Religion in Wales” in *The Faith Lives of Women and Girls*, ed. Anne Phillips et al. (London: Routledge, 2016), 103, Kindle.

¹⁰⁷ James, “Fat Chicks, Blue Books and Green Valleys,” 108.

¹⁰⁸ Kujawa-Holbrook, “Courage and Resistance,” 299.

¹⁰⁹ “Feminism,” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feminism> (accessed January 29, 2024).

¹¹⁰ Page, “Feminist Faith lives?” 61.

¹¹¹ Page, “Feminist Faith lives?” 62.

“Politically, feminism depends on a shared identity, i.e. the feminist identity — which does not and should not imply the neglect of other crucial differences between feminists.”¹¹² In some contexts feminism has taken on a markedly White hue, and thus, womanism may form a more holistic approach.¹¹³

Womanist theology draws extensively on Black women’s experience, culture and religion, especially as found in the narratives of their lives. Womanist understanding of oppression includes class, race and gender of all marginalized persons, both women and men, who have been victims of patriarchal dominance.

Gale Yee (b.1949), an Asian American Old Testament Scholar, recalls a meeting of feminist authors in 1989 that in which Black women called White women out for their racism, Yee lamented that in this situation she fit into neither group of women and felt like an outsider.¹¹⁴

In education there are women and minorities that are calling for curriculum reform to include voices besides those of White men.¹¹⁵ Recently, when preparing for our “Kids Worship Arts” group at Blacksburg United Methodist Church, I printed a set of composer flash cards with cute caricatures of composers, as I looked over the print outs I noticed that in a sea of white, male, composers, there was one female composer, and one Black composer. While I was planning on using this resource in a religious setting, as many of these composers have written a wealth of sacred music, the resource was purchased on a primarily secular education website, “Teachers Pay Teachers.” Since these resources are lacking Black women have often felt obligated to share their experiences and resources in order to educate people.¹¹⁶ While this obligation should not be necessary, I acknowledge their feelings, and commend their efforts.

¹¹² Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, 122.

¹¹³ Davis, “The Use of Patriarchal Language,” 123.

¹¹⁴ Joy A Schroeder and Marion Ann Taylor, *Voices Long Silenced: Women Biblical Interpreters through the Centuries*, (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2022) 586.

¹¹⁵ Odium, “Crafting Digital Narratives,” 126.

¹¹⁶ Odium, “Crafting Digital Narratives,” 119.

Spirituality & Psychology

Kaili Chen Zhang and Charlene Tan suggest in their article, “Exploring the Spiritual Needs of Adolescent Girls,” that spiritual development is essential for “the emotional and psychological needs of adolescents.”¹¹⁷ They propose that spiritual development should even be weaved into education, that the aspects of spiritual development that foster belonging and meaning are important in creating a positive sense of identity for adolescents.¹¹⁸ Baker and Edwards state that, “Communal spiritual practices of contemplation and narrative are interventions that allow mirror neurons to interact with real human brains for prolonged periods of time.”¹¹⁹ They continue by pointing out how this is useful for young people who have been consistently shaped by social media. They confirm that this is especially important for girls since their brains thrive on connecting and communicating, when their voices are restricted so are their self-image.¹²⁰

Relationship

One of the foundations of spiritual development is relationship.¹²¹ In Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook’s study with thirty-two young women, they reported relationships with other young women were important in their lives.¹²² They said that these relationships helped them to express their desired, work on problems, and heal from negative experiences.¹²³ The mother-daughter relationship is an important theme in psychology, as well as in fairy tale. In *The Glass Slipper*

¹¹⁷ Zhang and Tan, “Exploring the Spiritual Needs,” 150.

¹¹⁸ Zhang and Tan, “Exploring the Spiritual Needs,” 155.

¹¹⁹ Baker and Edwards, “What Would Catherine of Sienna Do?,” 382.

¹²⁰ Baker and Edwards, “What Would Catherine of Sienna Do?,” 382.

¹²¹ Zhang and Tan, “Exploring the Spiritual Needs,” 148.

¹²² Kujawa-Holbrook, “Courage and Resistance,” 303.

¹²³ Kujawa-Holbrook, “Courage and Resistance,” 303.

(1955), Ella is reconnected with her mother at the end of the story, rather than separated from her mother, strengthening a matriarchal theme in the story that is not represented in earlier adaptations.¹²⁴ In *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), Tiana breaks the stereotypes set up in other Disney animated films, by actually having an overall positive relationship with her mother.¹²⁵ Of course, Elsa has her own special relationship with her mother, Queen Iduna, which I will touch on at the end of this chapter. The fairy godmother character is one who cares for the daughter when the biological mother cannot.¹²⁶ This “goddess” is not unlike witches who connect with, and use the powers of nature and heaven.¹²⁷

Witches

In Disney princess stories witches are “sexually mature, self-possessed, and malevolent, while the heroine is young, naïve, and innocent.”¹²⁸ “Witch” invokes Women’s magical connection with nature, her bodily connection with the earth through the fecundity of child bearing.¹²⁹ “The term ‘witch’ has traditionally denoted danger and fear of women, and is linguistically powerful in securing negative connotations.”¹³⁰ At a WATCH (Women and the Church) support seminar in 1992 one man said about female priests, “You’re like a bunch of witches, they should call it WITCH not WATCH.”¹³¹ While the deadly history, steeped in sexism and misogyny, of burning witches (women) certainly carries a negative connotation, women are taking back the term. In

¹²⁴ Weagel, “Religious Rites and Female Spirituality,” 178.

¹²⁵ Sarita McCoy Gregory, “Disney’s Second Line: New Orleans, Racial Masquerade, and the Reproduction of Whiteness in ‘The Princess and the Frog.’” *Journal of African American Studies* 14, no. 4 (2010): 444, 445, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-010-9138-x>, (accessed March 15, 2023).

¹²⁶ Weagel, “Religious Rites and Female Spirituality,” 176.

¹²⁷ Weagel, “Religious Rites and Female Spirituality,” 177.

¹²⁸ Amy M. Davis, *Good Girls & Wicked Witches: Women in Disney’s Feature Animation*, 1st ed, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 202.

¹²⁹ Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 261.

¹³⁰ Page, “Feminist Faith lives?” 59.

¹³¹ Page, “Feminist Faith lives?” 59.

the song “W.I.T.C.H.” by Devon Cole (b.1998), she identifies a witch as a “woman in total control of herself.”¹³²

Telling our Stories & Resisting our Time

Sheila Greene says that “The writing or telling of one’s own life story can be a creative way of resisting time.”¹³³ Taylor Cassidy warps time and tradition in using a sacred African-American call and response on TikTok.¹³⁴

Taylor combines traditional words of affirmation with contemporary affirmations that are rooted in Black women’s hip hop culture (“I’m a bad b”) and Black gay culture (“Period sis”). The multiplicity of Black languages that Taylor espouses are her way of engaging and connecting with her followers. While the traditional affirmations are uplifting, she understands the impact of the Black vernacular affirmations on solidifying her message to her audience, especially her Black followers. Moreover, by concluding the Morning Manifestation with an “Amen,” Taylor reminds her audience that they are all engaging in spiritual work.¹³⁵

Through this important work Taylor Cassidy is able to merge the timelines of Black culture and tell an important story about the worth and work of Black girls.

Frozen II

The story of *Frozen II* weaves together strong, young, spiritual women; indigenous people who have magical connections with nature; and wholesome men who are *not* the hero. As adolescent girls navigate their lives and relationships, they “find encouragement to defy the social and moral norms of their families and communities.”¹³⁶ This is exactly what Elsa and Anna do! They are

¹³² Devon Cole, “Devon Cole – W.I.T.C.H. (Lyric Video),” YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9oazB7lWRw> (accessed January 23, 2024).

¹³³ Greene, *The Psychology of Girls and Women*, 154.

¹³⁴ Odium, “Crafting Digital Narratives,” 67.

¹³⁵ Odium, “Crafting Digital Narratives,” 68.

¹³⁶ Zhang and Tan, “Exploring the Spiritual Needs,” 152.

heroes, activists, and spiritual leaders. Elsa's biological mother, Queen Iduna, takes on the role of fairy godmother when she calls Elsa, and as Elsa's power is revealed Iduna can take a backseat in the story.¹³⁷ While early Disney princess films have had some hidden themes of female power and spirituality, Elsa, Anna, and Iduna symbolize a much more overt female spirituality.¹³⁸ Elisabeth S. Weigel makes the following comment about Cinderella, but it applies beautifully here to Elsa: "She is everywoman. Just as with her, it is within the power of each woman to create a positive female-to-female community, seek out the divine, and thereby become divine herself."¹³⁹

Conclusion

Women are doing everything that early psychologists, church leaders, and society said that they could not or that they should not do. They, like Elsa, are bending the gender roles, and defying the social norms. Girls *can* and *should* do the things that they are called to do, and church leaders have the responsibility and the opportunity to nurture them as they seek out all they are entitled to be.

¹³⁷ Weigel, "Religious Rites and Female Spirituality," 179.

¹³⁸ Weigel, "Religious Rites and Female Spirituality," 181–182.

¹³⁹ Weigel, "Religious Rites and Female Spirituality," 173.

CHAPTER 4

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT *FROZEN II* AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Introduction: *Frozen II* Move Night and Listening Session

On Wednesday, July 12, 2023, a group of fifteen girls and women and one man gathered to watch *Frozen II* (2019) and discuss questions centered around 1) feminist issues in Walt Disney Animation Studios and feminist issues in Christian Communities, 2) religion and spiritual formation related to *Frozen II*, 3) the songs of *Frozen II*. Multiple strong themes occurred throughout the evening that will be discussed in this chapter: 1) mothers as role models, 2) female leadership at Blacksburg United Methodist Church (BUMC) and in other contexts, 3) religious themes of spirits and spirituality, calling, and transformation, 4) the gender of God, the Holy Spirit, and the male and female characteristics of Jesus, 5) seeing God in others, but not yourself, and 6) particular reference to the songs “Vuelie,” “The Next Right Thing,” and “Show Yourself.”¹ Rosemary Radford Ruther states that “theology begins with experience.”² Having this conversation with these girls and women about their experiences was both eye-opening and confirming of my own experiences and the experiences of other women depicted in this thesis. All names of are pseudonyms for confidentiality purposes.³

¹ The process for this movie night and listening session was approved by the Internal Review Board for expedited protocol at Southern Methodist University on May 15, 2023. All women and girls signed informed consent forms, and additional verbal consent and rights were described and gained at the session on July 12, 2023.

² Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2005), 286, <https://doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520231467.001.0001> (accessed November 21, 2023).

³ All names are pseudonyms. Elaine: a White girl in second grade; Renee: a Black girl in first grade; Abby: a White girl in ninth grade; Jennifer: a White girl in fourth grade; Josie: a White girl in sixth grade; Harmony: a girl of color in late elementary school; Lisa: a White woman in her early fifties; Rachel: a White, middle aged woman; Stephanie: a White woman in her late forties; Kim: a White, middle aged woman; Melissa: a White woman in her early fifties; Maria: a White middle aged woman; Heather: a White woman in her late forties; Robert: an older White man; Carol: an older White woman; Shannon: a White woman in her late forties.

Mothers as Role Models

Elaine, Lisa, and Jennifer, all mentioned that their mothers were their role models, and Harmony named her “Oma” (grandmother) as her role model.⁴ Adrienne Rich states that,

All human life on the planet is born of woman. The one unifying, incontrovertible experience shared by all women and men is that months-long period we spend unfolding inside a woman’s body. Because young humans remain dependent upon nurture for a much longer period than other mammals, and because of the division of labor long established in human groups, where women not only bear and suckle but are assigned almost total responsibility for children, most of us first know both love and disappointment, power and tenderness, in the person of a woman.⁵

Most individuals have a special and intense relationship with their mothers, even if it is a positive or negative relationship. The mother-daughter relationship is regarded as important to psychologists for the development of women’s personalities and other relationships.⁶

Heather, Rachel, and Abby each highlighted Anna and Elsa’s mother in *Frozen II*, Queen Iduna.⁷ Queen Iduna is revealed as a spiritual being at the end of *Frozen II*, and Heather notes how Queen Iduna is inspirational because of how she helped Anna and Elsa’s father, King Agnarr when they met as children.⁸ Rachel points out how Queen Iduna was “the bridge” from one community to another, and Abby points out how the relationship between Elsa and Iduna helps Elsa to understand her spirituality and her calling.⁹

⁴ Elaine, “*Frozen II* Movie Night and Listening Session,” interview by author, (July 12, 2023,) audio, 4:23; Lisa, “Listening Session,” 5:40, 5:51; Jennifer, “*Frozen II* Questionnaire” (January 21, 2024); Harmony, “Listening Session,” 4:35.

⁵ Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986), 11, in Heather A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, [1992] 2017), 4452, Kindle.

⁶ Sheila Greene, *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women: Rethinking Change in Time* (London: Routledge, 2003, 2015), 81, Kindle.

⁷ Heather, “Listening Session,” 7:12; Rachel, “Listening Session,” 7:41, 7:43; Abby, “Listening Session,” 51:23.

⁸ Heather, “Listening Sessions,” 7:12.

⁹ Rachel, “Listening Session,” 7:41, 7:43; Abby, “Listening Session,” 51:23.

Renee, a first-grader, first talked about her father as a role model because he “takes care of her very well,” after mentioning her father, she also mentioned her mother.¹⁰ For Renee, this was an interesting response because her mother is her sole caregiver, and her father is incarcerated for abuse towards Renee and her mother. In some ways, I relate to Renee. I did not have an abusive father, but my father was absent from my childhood. Twenty-one percent of children in America live in households with their mothers only.¹¹ Our examples of fathers are either abusive or nonexistent. In some cultures, men who abuse their wives and children are protected by church leadership, women feel trapped and isolated in relationships for the sake of their children, and the security of shelter and food.¹² When we think of God as “mother-creator,” we think of women who risk their well-being or lives for their children.¹³ “The fiercely loving [mother’s] desires model God the Mother’s own will that everyone live and have enough bread. The experience of these women generates insight into the kind of love poured out by God as mother, standing for justice with a passion born of compassion for all her children.”¹⁴

Leadership In the church

Listening Session Discussion

At the listening session, the participants were asked, “When you think about a Pastor, do you think about a man, woman, or someone else? When you think about other leaders at church, do

¹⁰ Renee, “Listening Session,” 3:48, 4:03.

¹¹ Paul Hemez and Chanell Washington, “Percentage and Number of Children Living with Two Parents Has Dropped Since 1968,” United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/number-of-children-living-only-with-their-mothers-has-doubled-in-past-50-years.html> (accessed Feb 13, 2024).

¹² Augustus Nzioki Muthangya, Stephen Muoki Joshua, Tsawe-Munga Chidongo, and Francis Gikonyo Wokabi, “Religious and Patriarchal Beliefs That Influence Christian Women to Persevere in Abusive Relationships: With Reference to Giriama People, Kenya.” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 48, no. 3 (2022): 9, 12, <https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/10231> (accessed February 1, 2024).

¹³ Heather A. Johnson, *She Who Is*, 4672, 4701.

¹⁴ Heather A. Johnson, *She Who Is*, 4701.

you think about men, women, or someone else?” I was struck by the first answer to this question from Abby, a ninth-grader:

I'm going to be totally honest, Cristen. When I think of one of the main leaders in the church, I automatically think of you because the way that I see it is, yes, Brad is a pastor, or my grandpa is a pastor. I know other pastors, but growing up in a church specifically this one, I mean, I've been here. . . fourteen years and I'm not going anywhere. I mean, growing up here and seeing how long some certain women have been in position and have just genuinely held people together while there are different transitions and jobs throughout the church really amazes me because that's such a hard thing to do. I've seen other times where leadership will change and because there's no one there to hold everyone together, it can just sort of crumble. And so, I really appreciate having someone like you here because I feel like, okay, if the pastoral role changes or if one day there's just no one to do sound, I feel secure in the knowledge of, oh, it'll be okay. After all, . . . maybe Cristen will be stressed or whatever, but I know that she will find a way to make it happen. And I know that this whole church, because she's such a good leader and because we have other great leaders in the church too, that I know, okay, maybe it's a thing to worry about, but I know we'll be okay.¹⁵

Hearing Abby affirm the leadership that I have at BUMC was both greatly meaningful and seriously shocking! My relationship with her is not as strong as it is with other girls in the church who participate more in the music ministry, and I did not realize how much she had been paying attention to the work that I do. Female mentorship is extremely valuable to women and knowing that this girl is watching what I and other female leaders in our church do is heartwarming. It is a confirmation that we are doing something right! While we are moving in the right direction at BUMC, and in the larger United Methodist Church (UMC), there is still work to do. During the listening session I mentioned how, at BUMC, while the majority of staff have been women, the lead pastor has always been male.¹⁶ Josie, a sixth-grader, and Jennifer, a fourth-grader, both mentioned thinking of men as pastors but noted women as leaders in the church listing those who work closely with them at BUMC.¹⁷ Carol, an older woman, pointed out the new bishop for the

¹⁵ Abby, “Listening Session,” 16:21–18:08.

¹⁶ Cristen Mitchell, “Listening Session,” 18:09.

¹⁷ Jennifer, Josie, “*Frozen II* questionnaire.”

Virginia Conference of The UMC, Rev. Sue Hauptert-Johnson, and Abby mentioned how she felt encouraged that both men and women could serve in the UMC.¹⁸

Women *Shouldn't* be in Leadership?

During my independent Baptist upbringing, I was taught that women's leadership roles ought to be restricted in the church and at home, and that rule extended into school and work life. The key component was that women should not lead men; however, it was fine for women to lead children and other women. As I grew into adulthood, I understood this to be a universal Christian tenant, and I was shocked and confused after learning that someone in our congregation had a daughter who was attending seminary to become a pastor. In coverage during a Catholic women's protest, one woman said, "I feel that men are the owners of God."¹⁹ I certainly thought that was the case.

Christian teaching has, in general, used the following New Testament scriptures, among others, to assert the inferiority and "secondariness" of women: 1 Timothy 2:11–12, 1 Corinthians 12:34–35, 1 Corinthians 11:3.²⁰ In Paul's letter to Timothy, chapter 2 instructs women not to teach men, particularly their husbands, because of the circumstances in Genesis 3, when "woman was deceived and became a transgressor."²¹ In her book, *Gender Roles and the People of God* (2017), Alice Mathews offers the following insight on this passage: "The overall purpose of this letter to Timothy is to silence false teachers, not all teachers."²² She notes that in Paul's letter to

¹⁸ Carol, "Listening Session," 19:44, Abby, "Listening Session," 24:55.

¹⁹ Clément Melki, "Catholic Women Speak Up As "patriarchal" Church Debates Its Future," AFP International Text Wire in English (Washington: Agence France-Presse, 2023).

²⁰ David Zakarian, *Women, Too, Were Blessed: The Portrayal of Women in Early Christian Armenian Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 143; Alice Mathews, *Gender Roles and the People of God: Rethinking What We Were Taught about Men and Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017), 97, Kindle.

²¹ 1 Tim 2:14 (New Revised Standard Version).

²² Alice Mathews, *Gender Roles and the People of God : Rethinking What We Were Taught about Men and Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017), 102, Kindle.

Titus he “encourages older women to ‘teach what is good,’” and describes how Luke praised Priscilla for teaching Apollos, and how Paul greets her with respect in Ephesus.²³

The epistle writer commands that women should be silent in the church (1 Cor 14:34–35). Many scholars argue that these verses are quotations from a group in Corinth who disputed Paul and that in the following verses, Paul is opposing their assertion.²⁴ Additionally, “the principle of ‘prior gender,’” in Greek culture communicates that masculine forms can be used to address groups that “include men and women.”²⁵ So, throughout this letter, Paul is addressing men and women in his instruction to pursue spiritual gifts, prophesy, and lead worship.²⁶

Paul also says, “Now I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.” (1 Cor 11:3)²⁷ The standard interpretation taken from this passage is that this means Christ has “authority over” man, man has “authority over” woman, and God has “authority over” Christ.²⁸ However, this interpretation is problematic. In the Greek Culture of the day “head,” or *kephalé*, would have meant “provider of life and growth.”²⁹ In the context of the creation story, “Christ was the origin or provider of life and growth for the man (Gen 1–2); the man was the origin or provider of life and growth for the woman (Gen 2); and God was the origin or provider of life and growth for the incarnate Christ (John 1: 14).”³⁰ Using this chronological picture, patriarchal societies have used this as a “weapon to force women into subordination.”³¹ Instead, the purpose of this passage in 1

²³ Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 102, 104.

²⁴ Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 111.

²⁵ Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 107.

²⁶ Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 107.

²⁷ 1 Cor 11:3 (NRSV).

²⁸ Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 115.

²⁹ Gilbert Bilezikian in Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 118.

³⁰ Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 118.

³¹ Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 118; Lucy Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture’s Vision for Women: Fresh Perspectives on Disputed Texts* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 61, 70–71.

Corinthians 11 is to say that “whatever implications were drawn in the past from a male/female sequence in creation, such implications are now obsolete in Christ.”³² It is not important, the way we wear our hair or dress, as long as we are loving and respectful in our ways.³³

Why Women Don’t Lead in the Church

So, scripture is translated and twisted to ensure the subordination, and at times abuse of women. Lucy Peppiatt recalls hearing someone argue that the women’s testimony after finding the tomb empty, was not for everyone to hear, but specifically for the disciples to hear so that *they (the men)* could spread the word.³⁴ I was not surprised to read this, it sounds like something I would have heard during my upbringing. Women in leadership are forced to resist stereotypes like being “aggressive,” or “too pushy,” they are removed from leadership when men are suddenly available, and they have to deal with being ignored.³⁵ In traditions like the Latter Day Saints, women are taught to focus on motherhood, and that they do not want to have the burden of leadership that men carry.³⁶ Those who must place their focus outside of the home, like young women who don’t yet have families or mothers who need to work to support their families, compensate for this “non-compliance” with a strong verbal agreement to the values that they were taught.³⁷

³² Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 123.

³³ Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 123; Eph 5:2 (NRSV).

³⁴ Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture’s Vision for Women*, 48.

³⁵ Robert Brian Moores, “Developing Women in Senior Leadership: A Case Study of the Australian Christian Churches in South Australia,” *Pastoral Psychology*, 2023, 6–7, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-023-01102-x> (accessed February 1, 2024).

³⁶ Reid Leamaster, and Andres Bautista, “Understanding Compliance in Patriarchal Religions: Mormon Women and the Latter Day Saints Church as a Case Study,” *Religions* 9, no. 5 (2018): 2–4, 9, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9050143> (accessed February 1, 2024).

³⁷ Leamaster and Bautista, “Understanding Compliance,” 1–2.

In the Catholic context, girls can now participate as “altar servers,” and women can serve as “readers, communion servers, committee chairs, collection counters, and secretarial staff in parishes.”³⁸ However, many of these allowances, especially in the sanctuary and at the altar, are still at the “discretion of male clerics.”³⁹ The combination of strict gender roles for women enforced in some traditions, the wishy-washy allowance of girls and women in some roles, and a lack of clarity around these “rules” is discouraging and confusing for women and girls. This is particularly problematic for women who have sensed a call to some form of ministry and may even pray to have that call diminished for the sake of abiding by established church mandates.⁴⁰ Some women feel that they are a token in the larger scheme, being “allowed” to lead, having a seat at the table only as evidence that a woman was included.⁴¹

Women in the Stead of Men

During the listening session, Lisa, a woman in her early fifties, pointed out her experience with women stepping up to do “all the jobs,” standing in for men when they cannot or will not fulfill a role.⁴² In this way of thinking, women are justified in leadership roles when there are not men readily available. In the Catholic Church, some women have been permitted to administer the sacraments because male priests are not available.⁴³ Their leadership may not be connected to a sense of vocation, but only as a matter of convenience.⁴⁴ In addition to these practices, often

³⁸ Christine L. M. Gervais, *Beyond the Altar: Women Religious, Patriarchal Power, and the Church*, (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018), 119, https://smu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01SMU_INST/6ctoal/alma9952221463203716 (accessed February 1, 2024).

³⁹ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 120.

⁴⁰ Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 232.

⁴¹ Moores, “Developing Women in Senior Leadership,” 7.

⁴² Lisa, “Listening Session,” 20:27.

⁴³ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 130.

⁴⁴ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 130–131.

women have experienced “offloading” of responsibility—men dropping work in their lap—rather than genuinely sharing power.⁴⁵ Melissa, a woman in her early fifties, pointed out that she appreciates how, in the UMC, “women don’t *have* to stand up and lead, they *get* to stand up and lead.”⁴⁶ While in many ways this is true, there is still work to do. In my experience, even in denominations that formally endorse women to hold leadership positions, there is still a great deal of intolerance toward women who lead.

Women *Should* Be in Leadership

Women like Joanna, Mary Magdalene, and Susanna traveled with and monetarily supported Jesus in his ministry.⁴⁷ Jesus mentions women when he refers to his disciples asking, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?”⁴⁸ There is evidence to show that many of the Greeks who would have been following and responding to Jesus’s message were primarily women.⁴⁹ Women were apostles and deacons alongside Paul.⁵⁰ A long list of women with whom Paul worked and associated can be found throughout his letters.⁵¹ Women like Phoebe, Junia, Priscilla, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis were all coworkers with Paul, and “we can probably assume that as coworkers they were doing pretty much whatever he was doing in ministry.”⁵² Junia is listed as “prominent among the apostles,” thought by some scholars to be an apostle herself.⁵³

Women’s bodies are just as much vessels for the Holy Spirit as men’s bodies are.⁵⁴ If women feel

⁴⁵ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 120.

⁴⁶ Melissa, “Listening Session,” 23:30.

⁴⁷ Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 79–80; Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture’s Vision for Women*, 45.

⁴⁸ Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture’s Vision for Women*, 45–46.

⁴⁹ Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 83.

⁵⁰ Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 85.

⁵¹ Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture’s Vision for Women*, 141–142.

⁵² Rom 16 (NRSV); Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 87.

⁵³ Rom 16:7 (NRSV); Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture’s Vision for Women*, 145.

⁵⁴ Moores, “Developing Women in Senior Leadership,” 8–9.

that they are called to serve the church, but not permitted to, what does that say about what men think of their authority? “The key question to be asked today can be succinctly stated: Is a man’s authority greater than that of the Holy Spirit? The answer will challenge existing beliefs, potentially influencing change.”⁵⁵ Matthews and Peppiatt both point out how both women and men are image bearers of God, that Jesus trusted both men and women with the spread of the gospel, and that the church as a “new creation” is not bound by the cultural and societal norms that trap women, and other marginalized groups.⁵⁶

Robert, an older man and lone male participant, spoke about a feminine style of leadership during the listening session.⁵⁷ He felt that the women he had worked with in the past had a relational style of leadership, like Anna in *Frozen II*, that these women aimed to bring others together to do the work of the church, and Robert notes that this has been the best leadership style that he has seen throughout his work as a pastor in the UMC.⁵⁸ While women bring people together, they also work to include all the voices that they can.

While some women may engender a feminist leadership style, there is often a disconnect between their practice and their identity.⁵⁹ Identifying as “feminist” is still taboo in Christian circles; however, women are practicing feminist religion, even if they do not identify with it.⁶⁰ In the Catholic Church, as women seek to include all God’s children in their worship, often the strategy is working outside the realms of official liturgical work and sacrament.⁶¹ In “underground” services, the women leaders ensure that the service is “inclusive and attentive to

⁵⁵ Moores, “Developing Women in Senior Leadership,” 8–9.

⁵⁶ Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 226; Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture’s Vision for Women*, 138, 160–163.

⁵⁷ Robert, “Listening Session,” 13:52.

⁵⁸ Robert, “Listening Session,” 15:16.

⁵⁹ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 122.

⁶⁰ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 122.

⁶¹ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 113, 116.

women's experiences."⁶² These women have a "we do it anyway" attitude that I have felt appropriate to espouse at times.⁶³ There are times I know that I will be told "no" when I attempt to include certain women or children in the service. If I sense that it is appropriate and necessary to include them in a given instance I "do it anyway," and ask for forgiveness later. At times it feels unnecessarily difficult to include a diverse array of voices and make room for more at the table.

Spiritual Themes

Spirits and Spirituality

Elementary schoolers Harmony and Renee noticed the spiritual nature of the Northuldran people, and the spirit symbols of the fire, wind, water, and earth.⁶⁴ The Catholic sisters interviewed by Christine Gervais have said that they are drawn to "earth-centered spirituality" based on indigenous religions.⁶⁵ They incorporate earth elements into their worship, in a way to be in relationship with the broader creation.⁶⁶ One of the sisters said, "We're God; we came from God and we're going back to God."⁶⁷ Another sister noted how she values a varied and diverse way of learning about God, that it helps to bring forward another element in her spiritual development.⁶⁸ In addition to including earth elements in worship, sisters also use techniques like centering prayer and liturgical dance and draw on other religions like Buddhism.⁶⁹ These sisters also embrace the "sacred feminine"—"worship, practices, and scholarship that honor a sacred female

⁶² Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 128.

⁶³ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 116.

⁶⁴ Harmony, "Listening Session," 27:23; Renee, "Listening Session," 27:59.

⁶⁵ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 106.

⁶⁶ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 107.

⁶⁷ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 98.

⁶⁸ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 101.

⁶⁹ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 112, 102, 126.

life-force or deity and that emphasize the sacred gifts of femininity and women’s spirituality.”⁷⁰ This means reversing harsh church dogma and incorporating “emphases on inclusivity, earth-centeredness, and gender equality.”⁷¹ All of these are feminist values, even if you do not identify as “feminist.”⁷²

Calling

During the listening session, Lisa said,

*I don’t know if I’m a feminist, but I’ve raised her to be her own woman and not be afraid to do the things that she wants to do. . . I think that’s what we are supposed to do. And if we’re meant to lead, then if God brings us in that way, that’s where we’re supposed to be. Now, I don’t know if my dad always agrees.*⁷³

To place some context with her statement—Lisa, my mother, is referring to my grandfather in this statement as well. She notes that she has raised me to be my own woman and to listen to what God has in store for me. However, we were both taught, by my grandfather (a Baptist pastor), that our place is submissive to the man, and that we were not to lead men in the church. For me, this has been challenging due to my strong sense of call to be in music ministry, paired with the fear that I may be disobeying some other plan that God has.

Abby pointed out how Elsa’s mother did the calling in *Frozen II*, and how her mother was a huge part of her spiritual journey.⁷⁴ Lisa also noted the calling that Elsa heard and acknowledged how God calls us, sometimes in audible ways.⁷⁵ Lisa shared her own story of hearing God’s voice in her driveway during a particularly difficult time in her life when many

⁷⁰ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 123.

⁷¹ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 125.

⁷² Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 132–133.

⁷³ Lisa, “Listening Session,” 22:59.

⁷⁴ Abby, “Listening Session,” 51:23.

⁷⁵ Lisa, “Listening Session,” 28:18–28:30.

things were changing.⁷⁶ These are the important things—the things that God calls us to, and gifts us with. Alice Matthews states,

For most churches, the New Testament norm for any kind of ministry leadership is based on giftedness, character or reputation, godliness, and wisdom. Hierarchies based on race, economic status, or gender have no place in determining who can or cannot serve as God’s ministers in the church.⁷⁷

The gifts that Paul lists are for everyone and were even exercised by the women in Paul’s churches.⁷⁸ The gifts that we are given, and the callings that we hear, or feel, are guidance for what we should do to serve and be in relationship with all God’s children.

Transformation

At the listening session, Rachel, in her fifties, pointed out the theme of transformation in *Frozen II*.⁷⁹ Robert seconded that stating that “there was transformation of *everything*.”⁸⁰ At the close of *Frozen II* Elsa, Olaf, Anna, Kristoff, the spirits, Ahtohallan, Northuldra, and Arendelle had all been transformed, they had all been *saved*. Melissa, in her fifties, pointed out how Anna, in her grief, moved from the darkness into the light, and grade-schooler Harmony said, “It reminds me of how God is light and she’s following God on the path.”⁸¹ In the Gospel of John, Martha is transformed after losing her brother, Lazarus.⁸² In a striking resemblance to the relationship between Anna and Elsa, Martha’s transformation first comes with her trust in Christ, *then*, Lazarus is transformed through resurrection. Anna’s transformation comes with trust in the force

⁷⁶ Lisa, “Listening Sessions,” 52:30.

⁷⁷ Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 157.

⁷⁸ Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture’s Vision for Women*, 146.

⁷⁹ Rachel, “Listening Session,” 28:42.

⁸⁰ Robert, “Listening Session,” 28:51.

⁸¹ Melissa, “Listening Session,” 31:47; Harmony, “Listening Session,” 32:07.

⁸² John 11:25-27 (NRSV); Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture’s Vision for Women*, 48.

has been calling Elsa, *then*, Elsa is transformed through resurrection.⁸³ When we trust in Christ, we are transformed into believers who work for justice, and overturn harmful hierarchical systems, holding all people in “highest honor.”⁸⁴ This transformation brings us hope that God’s kin-dom may be revealed here on earth.⁸⁵

Gender

God

When asked about the gender of God at the listening session, Abby noted that she does initially think of a male, but that she also realizes that God is beyond gender, and so she is working on exploring more feminine imagery of God.⁸⁶ Melissa pointed out how we think of God as male because God is referred to as the “Father” throughout The Bible.⁸⁷ However, Robert brought to our attention how God is described as a mother hen, gathering her chicks, and I discussed the parable of the woman who searches for her lost coin.⁸⁸ One of the sisters in Christine Gervais’s conversation noted her son’s proclamation: “God is a girl and Jesus is a boy.”⁸⁹ While some may have “corrected” the young boy, this mother rejoiced with her son.⁹⁰ The imagery of Mother God has been “validating for countless women who embrace a fuller image of a “God of Being,” inclusive of both “Father” and “Mother.”⁹¹

⁸³ Chris Buck, Jennifer Lee, et al., *Frozen II* (Walt Disney Pictures, Walt Disney Animation Studios), 2019, 1:17:14, 1:24:59.

⁸⁴ Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture's Vision for Women*, 52–55.

⁸⁵ Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture's Vision for Women*, 50.

⁸⁶ Abby, “Listening Session,” 32:53.

⁸⁷ Melissa, “Listening Session,” 39:14–39:25.

⁸⁸ Robert, Cristen Mitchell, “Listening Sessions,” 39:56–41:12.

⁸⁹ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 131.

⁹⁰ Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 131.

⁹¹ Jon P. Bloch, “Countercultural Spiritualists’ Perceptions of the Goddess,” *Sociology of Religion* 58 no. 2 (1997), Joan Chittister, *Called to Question: A Spiritual Memoir* (Oxford: Sheed & Ward, 2004), 32–36 in Gervais, *Beyond the Altar*, 132.

Holy Spirit

Robert introduced to our group that the Hebrew, *ruah*, and Greek, *pneuma*, for the Holy Spirit are both feminine in grammatical gender.⁹² This was a new concept for Lisa, who was a little shocked to find this out; she notes that she would typically think of a male, or maybe not a gender at all when thinking of the Holy Spirit.⁹³ Robert, pointed out how with the “wind” and “breath” of God being feminine, both masculine and feminine are included in the Trinity.⁹⁴ The Holy Spirit and its feminine dimensions are discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 2.

Jesus

Rachel spoke about a devotional she had read that described Jesus as having a male body, and a feminine soul.⁹⁵ Abby spoke about how Jesus was a feminist, and how she could understand Jesus having a feminine soul.⁹⁶ The feminine in Jesus can also be seen through Mary. Jesus was familiar with both male and female since he roamed this earth in a male body and entered it through a female body.⁹⁷ He grew from inside the womb of a young woman, and “her blood [formed] him, her food [nourished] him, [and] her breasts [fed] him.”⁹⁸ Lucy Peppiatt writes,

Women see something in the chosen-ness of Mary (albeit in a unique fashion) of how God might also choose to use them. She stands as a symbol of a female life submitted to God and then used by him in the most powerful and world-changing way possible.

I have learned from Mary about my worth when I had been made to feel that I had none. Jesus also challenges masculine stereotypes throughout his ministry.⁹⁹ Like Abby pointed out, by

⁹² Robert, “Listening Sessions,” 34:29.

⁹³ Lisa, “Listening Sessions,” 38:25.

⁹⁴ Robert, “Listening Sessions,” 38:16, 38:49.

⁹⁵ Rachel, “Listening Sessions,” 35:32.

⁹⁶ Abby, “Listening Sessions,” 35:56.

⁹⁷ Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture’s Vision for Women*, 42.

⁹⁸ Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture’s Vision for Women*, 43.

⁹⁹ Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture’s Vision for Women*, 55.

today's standards Jesus was a feminist. He also regarded love, justice, and equality as important attributes for humans. He resisted violence, was vulnerable, and wept.¹⁰⁰ Jesus represents women since he is the perfect image of God: "It is hard to make sense of this in any literal sense, but in a spiritual sense we could say that what woman is, is in Christ as Christ is in her. In a spiritual sense then, there is nothing in Christ that is other to [a] woman and nothing in [a] woman that is alien to Christ as they are made for union with one another."¹⁰¹

Imago Dei and Songs

Imago Dei: Seeing God in Others, but not in Yourself

When asked if the listening session group saw the image of God in themselves, an interesting response occurred. Abby shared that she did not see God in herself, but saw it in others.¹⁰² She said that she notices when other people are kind, or do good deeds, how she might not have had the strength to make the same decisions these individuals made.¹⁰³ Abby's mother, Shannon piped in, "I don't know if I see it in me, but I sure am super proud that my daughter is here and she's healthy and wonderful,"—pointing out that she can see the image of God in her daughter.¹⁰⁴ Melissa noted that she sees the image of God in Shannon.¹⁰⁵ Josie pointed out that she did not see God in herself because she was not happy with herself, and Jennifer noted that she noticed God in herself when she was sleeping and talking.¹⁰⁶ After hearing this response I asked why the group felt like it was so much easier to see God in others, but not in themselves.¹⁰⁷ Abby talked

¹⁰⁰ Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture's Vision for Women*, 57.

¹⁰¹ Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture's Vision for Women*, 56.

¹⁰² Abby, "Listening Session," 41:42.

¹⁰³ Abby, "Listening Session," 41:42.

¹⁰⁴ Shannon, "Listening Session," 42:19.

¹⁰⁵ Melissa, "Listening Session," 42:25.

¹⁰⁶ Josie, Jennifer, "Frozen II Questionnaire" (January 21, 2024).

¹⁰⁷ Cristen Mitchell, "Listening Session," 42:30.

about a psychology project she recently participated in where she learned that we are predisposed to think of ourselves more negatively than we think of others.¹⁰⁸ Knowing this, she was encouraged to remind herself, that if she can see the God in others, they might also see it in her, reminding her that God is in her too.¹⁰⁹ A Walk to Emmaus retreat leader talks about seeing God in others, and in ourselves, in the same way that the two disciples eventually recognize Jesus after walking with him on the road to Emmaus.¹¹⁰ She shares how by using the tools of prayer, sacrament, and meditation, you can learn to see the Christ in others *and* within yourself.¹¹¹ At Emmaus, Jesus was recognized in the breaking of the bread.¹¹² Perhaps if we can learn to break bread with one another, to care for one another in their most basic needs, then Christ might become more visible in us all.

Songs

Chapter 2 goes more deeply into the Yoik and its significance to Sámi culture. Chapter 5 discusses both “Show Yourself” and “The Next Right Thing.” Here, I will discuss the listening session participants’ responses to the songs. Rachel and Maria both mentioned enjoying the Yoik sung in the enchanted forest, and we had a short conversation about how that song is significant for Sámi culture.¹¹³ “Show Yourself,” was a favorite song for Abby and Jennifer.¹¹⁴ Abby liked “Show Yourself” because it was “catchy,” but also because of the relationship with Elsa and Iduna in the song, she noted that she also has a close relationship with her mother.¹¹⁵ Jennifer

¹⁰⁸ Abby, “Listening Session,” 42:49.

¹⁰⁹ Abby, “Listening Session,” 42:49.

¹¹⁰ Marie Gervasi in James D. Davis, “Profile Seeing Christ in Yourself: Emmaus Organizer Trains People to Recognize God,” *Sun-Sentinel* (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Tribune Publishing Company, LLC, 2012).

¹¹¹ Marie Gervasi in James D. Davis, “Profile Seeing Christ in Yourself.”

¹¹² Luke 24:30–31 (NRSV).

¹¹³ Rachel, Maria, Cristen Mitchell, “Listening Session,” 46:57–47:10

¹¹⁴ Abby, “Listening Session,” 46:13; Jennifer, “*Frozen II* Questionnaire,” (January 21, 2024).

¹¹⁵ Abby, “Listening Session,” 46:13.

liked “Show Yourself” because that was when Elsa found out “who she [was].”¹¹⁶ “The Next Right Thing” was an important and bothersome song for the listening session participants. Abby was disappointed in Anna’s response in “The Next Right Thing.” She felt that was out of character for Anna’s strength.¹¹⁷ Kim agreed, feeling like Anna’s breakdown was cliché.¹¹⁸ However, Robert pointed out how Anna was facing so much darkness and grief, facing what “she had been worried about the whole time,” and how she overcomes it.¹¹⁹ Rachel said for her it was like Anna was “stepping out in faith.”¹²⁰

Conclusion

Girls and women are called and transformed, so when they are not included, they notice. They notice when all the pastors are men, then notice when God is a man, that Jesus is a boy, and the Holy Spirit, often, she is left out. Let us continue to resist by including and assuming permission to do so. I am inspired by the tenacity, strength, and vulnerability of the women that I serve, and I know that God has called them to do great things.

¹¹⁶ Jennifer, “*Frozen II* Questionnaire,” (January 21, 2024).

¹¹⁷ Abby, “Listening Session,” 8:16.

¹¹⁸ Kim, “Listening Session,” 10:17–10:45.

¹¹⁹ Robert, “Listening Sessions,” 9:29.

¹²⁰ Rachel, “Listening Sessions,” 10:00.

CHAPTER 5

FROZEN II MUSIC ANALYSIS AND THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

The Songs and Stories in *Frozen II*

In this chapter I will focus on five significant songs, their lyrical analysis, and theological themes or implications. Songs selected are “All is Found,” “Some Things Never Change,” “Into the Unknown,” “Show Yourself,” and “The Next Right Thing.” These songs show the humanness of Anna and Elsa in their story. The songwriters for *Frozen II* (2019), Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez, share some of their techniques for creating the music with *Vanity Fair*, and the *Walt Disney Animation Studios* YouTube channels. These accounts focus on the *story*. They emphasize the importance of knowing “why.”¹ Kristen Anderson-Lopez quotes Mark Twain as their guiding principle, “The two most meaningful days in your life are the day you are born, and the day you find out why.”² This principle seems to not only guide their writing, but also is a metaphor for the story itself. Elsa is seeking to find out “why.”

The couple notes that collaboration with the directors, animators, and others is one of the most important things that they do. They describe it as a “weird, high pressure, five-year play date.”³ Robert Lopez says, “It’s amazing how a picture can inspire a melody.”⁴ The Lopezes describe a “give and take” process where they will be given images, write a little bit, then the storyboard artists will give them some more images, and the process will continue.⁵ They say

¹ Vanity Fair, “‘Frozen 2’ Songwriters Discuss Writing Music for Animated Musicals,” Posted December 3, 2019, video, 1:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x75TphEixkc> (accessed July 11, 2023).

² Walt Disney Animation Studios, “Frozen 2 | Behind The Music,” Posted November 29, 2019, video, 2:12, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S14k8w72urQ> (accessed July 25, 2023).

³ Vanity Fair, “‘Frozen 2’ Songwriters,” 11:32.

⁴ Walt Disney Animation Studios, “Behind the Music,” 4:07.

⁵ Walt Disney Animation Studios, “Behind the Music,” 4:34.

that the songs are doing the “heavy lifting for storytelling,” that the story, song, and action are so intertwined that they cannot be separated. The Lopezes, animators, and directors all work so closely together that it is hard to tell who came up with what.⁶ Kristen Anderson-Lopez says that the animators breathe life into the stories.⁷

Kristen Anderson-Lopez conveys their connection with the voice actors, especially the voices of main characters Anna, voiced by Kristen Bell, and Elsa, voiced by Idina Mendel. She expresses that this connection allows them to write for their unique voices.⁸ For the Lopezes, all of the songs are important for them. Each song serves to tell the story of searching for truth where truth is uncertain and telling the story through the eyes of two strong women.⁹

Christian Storytelling and Musicking

Storytelling plays a fundamental role in conveying religious beliefs, morals, and teachings within Christianity.¹⁰ Examples of Christian storytelling include biblical narratives, the parables of Jesus, sermons, rituals, the liturgical calendar, and Christian art and iconography. L. Michael White states that “story telling was the center of the beginning of the Jesus movement.”¹¹ Before the gospels were written (about forty years after Jesus’s ascension), the people were telling stories with each other about their memories of, and what they had heard about him.¹² White expressed that at the core of the Christian oral tradition is the “summary of the death, burial, and

⁶ Vanity Fair, “‘Frozen 2’ Songwriters,” 19:49.

⁷ Walt Disney Animation Studios, “Behind the Music,” 23:08.

⁸ Walt Disney Animation Studios, “Behind the Music,” 5:26.

⁹ Vanity Fair, “‘Frozen 2’ Songwriters,” 22:09.

¹⁰ Paul Jenkins, “Why Storytelling is Important for Culture (Fully Explained),” *Brilliantio*, <https://brilliantio.com/why-storytelling-is-important-for-culture/> (accessed October 7, 2023).

¹¹ L. Michael White, “Importance of the Oral Tradition,” pbs.org, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/story/oral.html> (accessed October 4, 2023).

¹² White, “Importance of the Oral Tradition.”

resurrection of Jesus, the Passion tradition.”¹³ White emphasizes that Paul quotes a hymn to tell the story of Jesus in his letter to the Philippians. This signifies that the telling of the story of Jesus’s death, burial, and resurrection is “anchored in the worship life of the community.”¹⁴

These stories serve an important role in the life of the Christian. Stories communicate association, empathy, imagination, and curiosity. They unite, rather than divide, create freedom, and make pathways.¹⁵ “In telling stories and by listening to stories, we are engaged in story theology, trying to fathom the divine and human meanings deposited in layers of stories and above all in the depths of stories.”¹⁶ “While doctrines, canons of faith, creeds or ideologies divide people, stories unite them.”¹⁷ Stories have the ability to allow people to learn about and support one another in their unique life journeys or develop a new life view or worldview.¹⁸ In his book, *In the Beginning Were Stories, Not Texts: Story Theology*, Taiwanese theologian C.S. Song states that

Curiosity is the mother of truths. If you have no curiosity, truths are forever hidden from you. A tree, for instance, is not just a tree. It can mean a whole host of things to artists and to poets. It may tell you secrets in your own heart and mind. It may disclose to you what life, death, and eternal life stand for. It may whisper, say and sing to you the joy and agony of creation.

Song also highlights *kairos* (*kairoi*) which is a critical moment, or main point of a story.¹⁹ *Kairos* is the key to unlocking the story, to understanding the meaning, and understanding how other

¹³ White, “Importance of the Oral Tradition.”

¹⁴ White, “Importance of the Oral Tradition.”

¹⁵ C.S. Song, *In the Beginning Were Stories, Not Texts: Story Theology* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2012), 166, <https://www-jstor-org.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/stable/j.ctt1cgf751> (accessed October 3, 2023).

¹⁶ Song, *In the Beginning Were Stories, Not Texts*, 159.

¹⁷ Song, *In the Beginning Were Stories, Not Texts*, 162.

¹⁸ Song, *In the Beginning Were Stories, Not Texts*, 162.

¹⁹ Song, *In the Beginning Were Stories, Not Texts*, 169–170.

stories in the Bible and in Christian narrative work together.²⁰ *Kairos* can be expressed through “techniques that convey special meaning.”²¹ These techniques include:

- Repetition of key words
- Words that connect one scene or story to another
- Repetition of events and encounters
- Repetition of images
- Careful use of dialogue
- The meaning of a name
- A detail that foreshadows, or anticipates, something to come.²²

These techniques serve to weave together the story of God and the story of us. They “teach us about the human condition and the many ways in which human beings have encountered God. They teach us how we might respond to God in our own lives.”²³ Stories and metaphor not only stir up imagination and curiosity, but they also create more connections in our brain that activate our own memories and senses. These brain centers are shown to activate, or “light up,” increasing our understanding, learning, and prediction.²⁴

When humankind vocalizes its story, it often *sings* its story.²⁵ The monks of the friary of the Carthusian order in the mountain range of north Grenoble practice silence as a way to grow closer to, and to *hear* more closely the voice of God — in all creation.²⁶ The monks note that music can be a distraction from this silence, with the exception of *singing*.²⁷ Tamisha Taylor, in her chapter on “Beyoncé Mass” in *Ethics and Christian Musicking*, says that “ways of being

²⁰ Song, *In the Beginning Were Stories, Not Text*, 169.

²¹ Adriane Leveen, “Storytelling in the Bible,” *Society of Biblical Literature*, 64: 64. https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/TB4_Storytelling_AL.pdf (accessed October 4, 2023).

²² Leveen, “Storytelling in the Bible,” 64.

²³ Leveen, “Storytelling in the Bible,” 57.

²⁴ Taffeta Chime, “Why Storytelling is Important to the Life of a Christian,” *renew.org*, <https://renew.org/why-storytelling-is-important-to-the-life-of-a-christian/> (accessed October 4, 2023).

²⁵ Rob Smith, “The Role of Singing in the Life of the Church,” *The Gospel Coalition*, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-role-of-singing-in-the-life-of-the-church/> (accessed October 7, 2023).

²⁶ Marcel Cobussen, “The Silence of the Monks: The Ethics of Everyday Sounds,” in *Ethics and Christian Musicking*, ed. Nathan Myrick and Mark Porter (London and New York: Routledge 2021), 38–39.

²⁷ Cobussen, “The Silence of the Monks.” 39.

(ontology) + ways of knowing (epistemology) = ways of flourishing.”²⁸ She says, “acknowledgement of the lived experience as a primary authority in producing knowledge is central to a womanist epistemology and is expressed in the offering of testimony. Testimony serves as a way of acknowledging and sharing knowledge.”²⁹ This testimony is our story. When we are empowered to sing our story, we are grounded in a way of being who we are and way of knowing who we are, transcending into flourishing through realizing our purpose. One does this through honesty with themselves and with their community, thus singing their truth.³⁰ Even a story with words on the page may not have specific emotion tied to it until music is added.³¹ One of my students commented at a choral rehearsal, “why does it sound happy with the solfege, but when we add the words, it sounds sad?” Her younger sister chimed in, “the words have a different meaning!” What a beautiful moment of story interaction, emotion, and imagination with these young people!

²⁸ Tamisha Taylor, “Beyoncé Mass and the Flourishing of Black Women,” in *Ethics and Christian Musicking*, ed. Nathan Myrick and Mark Porter (London and New York: Routledge 2021), 242.

²⁹ Taylor, “Beyoncé Mass,” 244.

³⁰ Taylor, “Beyoncé Mass,” 242, 244.

³¹ Alan Palmer, ““Put the Heart Into it!”: Narrative in Country Music and the Blues,” in *Audionarratology: Interfaces of Sound and Narrative*, ed. Jarmila Mildorf and Till Kinzel (Berlin and Boston, De Gruyter, 2016), 74.

“All is Found”

All is Found
Stanza 1

Where the North-wind meets the sea there's a riv-er full of
mem-o-ry. Sleep, my dar-ling, safe and sound, for in this riv-er all is found.

Example 5.1, “All is Found,” Music and Lyrics by
Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez © 2019 Wonderland Music Company, Inc.

The lullaby “All is Found” serves as a “musical abstract” foreshadowing important themes in the story.³² The songwriters express that “All is Found” is the roadmap for the entire musical.³³ Queen Iduna sings this lullaby to young Anna and Elsa, setting this scene as a flashback, since they are young adults in their current timeline.³⁴ Symbolic foreshadowing is seen through the shawl that Queen Iduna wears while singing this lullaby to her daughters (Anna and Elsa). This shawl incorporates the markings that are later seen to symbolize the spirits of the Northuldra people.³⁵ In this scene Anna and Elsa’s father, King Agnarr, tells a story about the “enchanted forest” before their mother sings the lullaby, this story serves as prophetic foreshadowing, alluding to their journey to come with Northuldra and Arendelle people in the Enchanted

³² M. Dolores Porto Requejo, “Music in Multimodal Narratives: The Role of the Soundtrack in Digital Stories” in *Audionarratology: Interfaces of Sound and Narrative*, ed. Jarmila Mildorf and Till Kinzel (Berlin and Boston, De Gruyter, 2016), 33.

³³ Vanity Fair, “Frozen 2 Songwriters,” 19:01.

³⁴ Rebecca Ray, “Types of Foreshadowing,” storyboardthat.com, <https://www.storyboardthat.com/articles/e/foreshadowing> (accessed September 19, 2023).

³⁵ Ray, “Types of Foreshadowing.”

Forest.³⁶ Prophetic foreshadowing is also used in the refrain and stanzas of the lullaby. This lullaby is a secret message for Anna and Elsa.³⁷ The refrain speaks of a “river full of memory.” Elsa eventually finds this river, the Ahtohallan river, as a glacier with portrayals of memories frozen in time. The stanzas inform Elsa that her answers will be found there, but also warn her of the dangers that she needs to face in order to break the curse and lift the veil enclosing the enchanted forest.³⁸ The character behavior is enforced here when young Anna falls asleep to this lullaby, but Elsa remains awake, eager to hear her mother’s song.³⁹

Lullabies span “through time and across cultures.”⁴⁰ Named from the mother’s use of vocalization to “lull” their child to sleep, lullabies convey a mother’s dreams, hopes, and warnings for her child.⁴¹ Overtime, many of these orally transmitted lullabies have come to refer to the Christ-child, the nativity image, and the Mary-Jesus relationship.⁴² “Life in medieval England was difficult and the death of young children was expected: mothers sang cradle songs ‘not of magical kingdoms, but of life’s struggles and inevitable death.’ The lullaby genre was thus appropriated by medieval Christian clerics to inspire imitation of Mary and devotion to Christ.”⁴³ Through this “lens of The Nativity image” the carol lullaby was born.⁴⁴ One example of

³⁶ Ray, “Types of Foreshadowing.”

³⁷ Walt Disney Animation Studios, “Frozen 2: Behind The Music,” 6:39.

³⁸ Chris Buck, Jennifer Lee, et al., *Frozen II* (Walt Disney Pictures, Walt Disney Animation Studios), 2019.

³⁹ Ray, “Types of Foreshadowing;” Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

⁴⁰ Henrique T. Vicente, Ana Alexandra G. Grassing, Cristina P. Vieira, Carlos Farate, “Lullabies and Unconscious Maternal Phantasies: An Exploratory and Comparative Study of Traditional and Contemporary Songs,” *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* 17, no. 4 (2020): 338, <https://doi.org/10.1002/aps.1657> (accessed September 19, 2023); Rebekah Pryor, “Lullaby: Births, Deaths and Narratives of Hope,” *Religions* 11, no. 3 (2020): 2, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11030138> (accessed September 19, 2023).

⁴¹ Rebekah Pryor, “Lullaby: Births, Deaths and Narratives of Hope,” *Religions* 11, no. 3 (2020): 4, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11030138> (accessed September 19, 2023). Melissa Bilal, “Lullabies and the Memory of Pain: Armenian Women’s Remembrance of the Past in Turkey,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 43, no. 2 (2019): 194, 195, 201, 202, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10624-018-9515-8> (accessed September 19, 2023).

⁴² Pryor, “Lullaby: Births, Deaths and Narratives of Hope,” 3–4.

⁴³ Pryor, “Lullaby: Births, Deaths and Narratives of Hope,” 3.

⁴⁴ Pryor, “Lullaby: Births, Deaths and Narratives of Hope,” 4.

the carol lullaby is the Coventry Carol.⁴⁵ The first stanza alludes to the lament of “the weeping women” in the Old Testament, as well as the women weeping on the path to the cross.⁴⁶ These women sing in an “act of preservation and resistance against an imminent threat to the life of her child and others.”⁴⁷ When these women, this mother, sings she not only evokes the ears of her child, but those around her, as a way to sing “listen to me.”⁴⁸ Since we come to being through our mothers, the mother is just as much *subject* of the song as her child.⁴⁹ She sings to her child, and thus sings to herself, for herself. In the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:42–55), Mary sings to her Lord, who is also her child, while also acknowledging that she is blessed and favored by this miracle. The lullaby of the *Magnificat* can be detected in its use in the prayer of evensong, evoking a mother singing a lullaby to her child in the evening before sleep. Artists of other mediums have also identified the lullaby in the *Magnificat*. “Freedom Lullaby (Magnificat)” is a painting by Lisle Gwynn Garrity depicting a glowing Mary soon to give birth to Christ.⁵⁰ “Magnificat Lullaby” is a poem by Katy Lines.⁵¹ This poem imagines a young Jesus snuggling with Mother Mary before bedtime, Mary asks Jesus what song they should sing before bed, and he chooses the song that “Mama...sang with Tía Elizabeth.”⁵² This mother-child/Mary-Jesus relationship may be why those who identify as “religious” often cling to lullabies for their young children.⁵³

⁴⁵ Pryor, “Lullaby: Births, Deaths and Narratives of Hope,” 4.

⁴⁶ See Jer 9.

⁴⁷ Pryor, “Lullaby: Births, Deaths and Narratives of Hope,” 4.

⁴⁸ Pryor, “Lullaby: Births, Deaths and Narratives of Hope,” 8.

⁴⁹ Pryor, “Lullaby: Births, Deaths and Narratives of Hope,” 6.

⁵⁰ Lisle Gwynn Garrity, “Freedom Lullaby Print,” sanctifiedart.org, <https://sanctifiedart.org/advent-and-christmas-prints/freedom-lullaby> (accessed September 19, 2023).

⁵¹ Katy Lines, “Magnificat Lullaby,” theenglewoodchurch.com (posted December 22, 2019), <https://www.theenglewoodchurch.com/post/magnificat-lullaby> (accessed September 19, 2023).

⁵² “Magnificat Lullaby or Lullaby for the Kingdom Come,” *Englewood ByLines* (posted December 22, 2019) <https://www.theenglewoodchurch.com/post/magnificat-lullaby> (accessed October 10, 2023).

⁵³ Henrique T. Vicente, Ana Alexandra G. Grassing, Cristina P. Vieira, Carlos Farate, “Lullabies and Unconscious Maternal Phantasies: An Exploratory and Comparative Study of Traditional and Contemporary Songs,” *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* 17, no. 4 (2020): 338, <https://doi.org/10.1002/aps.1657> (accessed September 19, 2023).

“Some Things Never Change”

Some Things Never Change
Refrain 1

Yes, some things nev - er change. like the feel of your hand in mine.

Some things stay the same, like how we get a - long just fine, like an old

— stone wall that - ll nev - er fall. Some things are al - ways true! ————

Some things nev - er — change, — like how I'm hold - ing on tight to you.

Example 5.2, “Some Things Never Change,” Music and Lyrics by Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez © 2019 Wonderland Music Company, Inc.

The orange and red leaves swirling through the air in “Some Things Never Change” signal to the viewer that Arendelle is experiencing autumn, the season of change.⁵⁴ This song highlights the various storylines that the characters will face during the film, each character, or pair of characters receiving their own stanza, or portion of a stanza. Right before the song begins Olaf is

⁵⁴ Rose Mulu, “Autumn (Fall): Powerful Symbols and Symbolism,” *SymbolSage* (posted September 4, 2023), <https://symbolsage.com/autumn-symbols-and-symbolism> (accessed September 23, 2023).

concerned about the thought that “nothing is permanent.”⁵⁵ While Anna agrees, she is not worried, because she knows she has her family’s support. During the song there is a focus on the juxtaposition of things that are changing, and things that are “certain certainties,” like the love between Olaf, Anna, and the rest of their family unit (Anna, Elsa, Olaf, Kristoff, and Sven). Kristoff and Sven reveal Kristoff’s nervousness around asking Anna to marry him. Elsa acknowledges the voice that she hears, and all the Characters acknowledge the importance of their community. This is important because Elsa, et al., save the community through reconciling with the Northuldra people. In the first refrain Anna sings “Like an old stone wall that’ll never fall, some things are always true.”⁵⁶ However, the destruction of an “old stone wall,” a dam that was “gifted” to the Northuldra people, is the very thing that saves the Northuldra and Arendelle communities.

In *Aristotle’s Ontology of Change*, Mark Sentesy remarks that “[Aristotle] gives his own answer to how many beings there are by examining the phenomenon of coming-to-be. . . For coming-to-be to exist, being and non-being cannot be mixed. For coming-to-be to exist, then, being must be multiple, positive, and definite in aspect.”⁵⁷ Anna and Elsa are in a constant state of “coming-to-be” throughout *Frozen II*. Anna is “coming-to-be” this defender of Northuldra, while at the same time “coming-to-be” the Queen of Arendelle, while also *being* a sister and friend, and a discoverer of past wrongs that were hidden and unknown to the people of Arendelle. Elsa *is* the fifth spirit, but she also has not figured that out yet. She is “coming-to-be” this spirit while also *being* Queen of Arendelle, sister, and protector.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

⁵⁶ Chris Buck, Jennifer Lee, et al., *Frozen II*. Chris Buck, Jennifer Lee, et al., *Frozen II* (Walt Disney Pictures, Walt Disney Animation Studios), 2019.

⁵⁷ Mark Sentesy, *Aristotle’s Ontology of Change* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 37.

⁵⁸ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

Women view themselves as “a second self,” they sense their “old self,” as they struggle with change and identity.⁵⁹ Mothers specifically noted feelings they had lost control over most everything in their life.⁶⁰ Often mothers combat this loss of control by attempting some version of perfectionism and are hesitant to let go of their “old self.”⁶¹ In a study done with mothers focusing on their first year as a mother there were three themes that emerged—“crisis, embodiment, and transformation.”⁶² Humans spend their lives in search of “authentic truth,” and spiritual humans seek meaning, purpose, and value in their lives.⁶³ It is evident that the seeking, finding, and transformation of Anna and Elsa relate to the experiences of women and mothers. Their relationship with their own mother, who is revealed to be a spiritual being, transforms Anna and Elsa in their queenship of Arendelle and Northuldra respectively. Their roles as queen, and leader of each community echo the themes of crisis, embodiment, and transformation. Through crisis, they reconciled the two communities. Through Elsa’s embodiment as the fifth spirit and Anna’s embodiment of “doing the next right thing” they battled the crisis, and they transformed the relationship between the two communities; through this they were also *transformed*.

⁵⁹ Alison Woolley, “Silent Gifts: An Exploration of Relationality in Contemporary Christian Women’s Chosen Practices of Silence,” in *The Faith Lives of Women and Girls: Qualitative Research Perspectives*, ed. Nicola Slee, Fran Porter, and Anne Phillips, (London and New York: Routledge 2016), 150–151, Kindle; Noelia Molina, “The Liminal Space in Motherhood: Spiritual Experiences of First-Time Mothers,” in *The Faith Lives of Women and Girls: Qualitative Research Perspectives*, ed. Nicola Slee, Fran Porter, and Anne Phillips, (London and New York: Routledge 2016), 211, Kindle.

⁶⁰ Molina, “The Liminal Space in Motherhood,” 211.

⁶¹ Molina, “The Liminal Space in Motherhood,” 211.

⁶² Molina, “The Liminal Space in Motherhood,” 207.

⁶³ Molina, “The Liminal Space in Motherhood,” 208, 209.

“Into the Unknown”

Into the Unknown
Dies Irae

The image shows a musical score for the song "Into the Unknown" from Disney's Frozen II. It features two staves of music in a key signature of three flats (B-flat major/D minor) and a 12/8 time signature. The first staff contains two measures of music, each followed by a long horizontal line representing a vocal line with the lyrics "Ah". The second staff starts with a measure number "5" and contains a single measure of music followed by another long horizontal line with the lyrics "Ah". The music consists of a sequence of notes: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B-flat4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B-flat4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a half note F4.

Example 5.3, “Into the Unknown,” Music and Lyrics by
Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez © 2019 Wonderland Music Company, Inc.

During “Into the Unknown” Elsa hears the voice that has been “calling” her in the silent of the night. She sings of her struggle and fear in acknowledging this “voice,” but feels the importance and gravity that the “voice” carries.⁶⁴ The call that Elsa hears is modeled after the *Dies Irae*, a leitmotif used throughout recent history in classical, romantic, and modern works including film.⁶⁵ This Latin church text speaks of the world dissolving away.⁶⁶ As Elsa reaches the end of the song, and her conversation with this “voice,” she is shown the symbols of the four spirits that inhabit the enchanted forest—Earth, Water, Wind, and Fire.

⁶⁴ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

⁶⁵ Bennett King, “‘Dies Irae’ Through the Ages,” Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras, October 27, 2020, <https://cyso.org/news/dies-irae-through-the-ages/> (accessed October 7, 2023).

⁶⁶ King, “‘Dies Irae’ Through the Ages.”

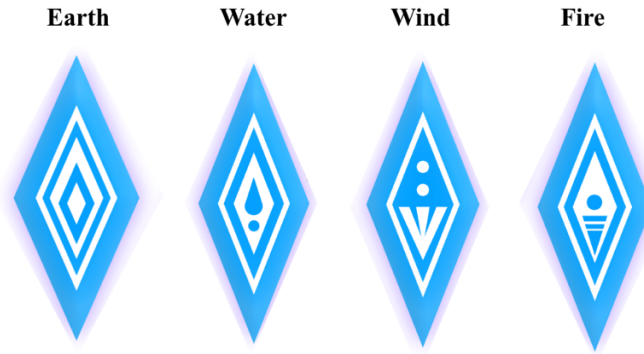


Illustration 1: Elements Crystals⁶⁷

After she sees these symbols, as the *Dies Irae* suggests, the elements begin to collapse in Arendelle, the community awakes and the entire kingdom escapes to higher ground.⁶⁸

Elsa finally acknowledges this voice in the silent of the night when the distractions of the day have subsided.

Emphasizing silence actually leads to the emancipation of sounds, of sound usually neglected, ignored, or made inaudible, of sounds usually covered by human utterances. As soon as we start listening to these minute and insignificant sounds, as soon as we start listening to them attentively and unbiased, they become meaningful. They speak to us; they communicate. Removing human speech from the sonic environment, and thereby opening up the possibility for an aural reorientation towards the world, may lead to a rather radical reconsideration of the position of [a woman] in relation to [her] *umwelt*, [her] *ambience*, [her] *surroundings*, [her] *being-in-and-with-the-world*.⁶⁹

Elsa is not alone in the hearing of voices. This phenomenon happens to those who are mentally, ill, *and* to those who are not, it happens to those who are “religious,” *and* those who are not.⁷⁰

Those who claim to hear a voice from God may have trouble determining if they are actually hearing God’s voice—a sound created outside of their own head—or if they have a strong feeling or knowing that God is trying to tell them something—without actually hearing a voice

⁶⁷ Elements Crystals, <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/334884922293164505/> (accessed October 7, 2023).

⁶⁸ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

⁶⁹ Cobussen, “The Silence of the Monks.” 40.

⁷⁰ Chris Cook, *Hearing Voices, Demonic and Divine: Scientific and Theological Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge 2019), 35.

unattached from their own being.⁷¹ When individuals hear voices there can be a *knowing* that the “voice” or “God” is *with* the individual as a comfort or guide.⁷² There are “important implications for self-identity, purpose in life, and relationships with significant others” when an individual hears a voice.⁷³ For Elsa, her self-identity is eventually greatly changed as she learns that she is the fifth spirit and rightful leader of the Northuldra people. Her purpose is changed to finding the call and learning what the voice is trying to tell and show her. Her relationships with her family unit are changed. Olaf’s livelihood is attached to Elsa’s—he dies and is resurrected as she is. When Kristoff and Sven see the newly transformed Elsa after her resurrection, Kristoff proclaims, “Elsa, you’re ok! You look *different*.”⁷⁴ Elsa then transfers her power as Queen of Arendelle to Anna.⁷⁵

“Show Yourself”

Show Yourself
Stanza 2

I've nev-er felt so cer-tain. All my life I've been torn. But

⁷¹ Cook, *Hearing Voices, Demonic and Divine*, 24.

⁷² Cook, *Hearing Voices, Demonic and Divine*, 28–30.

⁷³ Cook, *Hearing Voices, Demonic and Divine*, 37.

⁷⁴ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

⁷⁵ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

5
I'm here for a rea-son. Could it be the rea - son I ___ was born? ___ I have

9
al - ways been so diff - 'rent; nor-mal rules did not ___ ap - ply. ___ Is

13
this the day? Are you the way I fi - n'ly find ___ out why? ___

Example 5.4, “Show Yourself,” Music and Lyrics by
Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez © 2019 Wonderland Music Company, Inc.

The song “Show Yourself” is sung by Elsa at the climax of the movie. This song serves to bring all the other elements of the story together. Elsa is drawn to Ahtohallan, the river that her mother would sing to her about. Elsa makes her way to this river—which is now frozen into a glacier—when she arrives at the glacier on the back of the water spirit, a horse named “Nokk,” she begins to sing. She arrives with certainty and commands “show yourself.” This refrain seems to be a command for both the “voice,” and herself.⁷⁶ Woven into this song is the refrain of the lullaby, “All is Found,” and the *Dies Irae* of “Into the Unknown.” The combination of these two themes signal to Elsa that the “voice” is her mother. She is reminded that this river is full of “memory.” She also learns that she is the fifth spirit, and must search this glacier, even if it threatens her life, to find the memories that tell the truth she is seeking.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

⁷⁷ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

This song presents Elsa's calling, her *vocation*. Vocation has come to apply to not just a call into ministry but to a range of pursuits and careers.⁷⁸ Often a call to vocation is experienced through seeing a vision, hearing a voice, or by encouragement from another individual.⁷⁹ In data collected in a study with full-time ministers in the Church of England there were three types of cues that "trigger thoughts of calling." Elsa experienced these same cues:

- 1) an "unexpected, emotionally charged and transformative experience that revealed to them 'that God wanted them to do something.'"⁸⁰ Elsa experiences the elements of Arendelle crumbling, and the journey that leads to her discovery of past wrongs.
- 2) "A disquieting and unsettling 'inner feeling,' which 'wouldn't go away.'"⁸¹ Elsa has an inner feeling, this "nagging voice" that she hears, and "wish[es] would go away."⁸²
- 3) "other people unexpectedly suggesting this to them."⁸³ The lullaby that Elsa and Anna's mother sings seems to be the key to this. This song unexpectedly suggests to Elsa that there are answers to Elsa's questions, that there is a "path" for her. Before bed on the night that Elsa confronts the *Dies Irae* voice, Anna sings this lullaby to her to comfort her, but this also an unexpected reminder to Elsa of something *more*.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Petervir A. Paz, "Exploring Life Narratives on Challenged Religious Vocation: A Phenomenological Study of One's Discernment," *Fieldwork in Religion* 17, no. 2 (2022): 125, <https://doi.org/10.1558/firn.22617> (accessed October 2, 2023); Marco Roman, "Vocation in Theology and Psychology: Conflicting Approaches?," *Christian Higher Education* (London, UK) 16, no.1-2 (2017): 24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2017.1249763> (accessed October 2, 2023).

⁷⁹ Paz, "Exploring Life Narratives on Challenged Religious Vocation," 126.

⁸⁰ Jane Sturges, Michael Clinton, Neil Conway, and Alexandra Budjanovcanin, "I Know Where I'm Going: Sensemaking and the Emergence of Calling," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 114 (2019): 62, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2019.02.006> (accessed October 2, 2023).

⁸¹ Sturges, Clinton, Conway, Budjanovcanin, "I Know Where I'm Going," 62.

⁸² Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

⁸³ Sturges, Clinton, Conway, Budjanovcanin, "I Know Where I'm Going," 62.

⁸⁴ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

Seven phenomenological themes emerged in a study with those who identified as Roman Catholics and their spiritual call to their career. Here are ways in which Elsa’s story aligns with these phenomenological themes.

- 1) “A mutual relationship” with God.⁸⁵ Elsa seeks to understand *who* is calling her and *why* so that she can be proactive in answering the call.⁸⁶
- 2) “Questioning the faith.”⁸⁷ Elsa originally questions and attempts to block out the “voice.”⁸⁸
- 3) “Struggles with being called.”⁸⁹ Elsa does not want to take the next step because she has already been through so much and wants to settle down, not go on another big adventure.⁹⁰
- 4) “Journey back to. . . faith.”⁹¹ When Elsa discovers the Northuldra people she begins to understand the importance of the spirits and her role as the fifth spirit.⁹²
- 5) Need of “support during the struggle.”⁹³ Elsa does not initially want help from her sister, but it is inevitably needed when Anna destroys the dam.⁹⁴
- 6) “Mixed feelings” of “elation and doubt.”⁹⁵ These are the same as the struggles she experiences with being called.

⁸⁵ Esperanza F. Hernandez, Pamela F. Foley, and Ben K. Beitin, “Hearing the Call: A Phenomenological Study of Religion in Career Choice.” *Journal of Career Development* 38, no. 1 (2011): 71, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845309358889> (accessed October 2, 2023).

⁸⁶ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

⁸⁷ Hernandez, Foley, Beitin, “Hearing the Call,” 71.

⁸⁸ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

⁸⁹ Hernandez, Foley, Beitin, “Hearing the Call,” 71.

⁹⁰ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

⁹¹ Hernandez, Foley, Beitin, “Hearing the Call,” 71.

⁹² Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

⁹³ Hernandez, Foley, Beitin, “Hearing the Call,” 71.

⁹⁴ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

⁹⁵ Hernandez, Foley, Beitin, “Hearing the Call,” 71.

7) “Effect on the family.”⁹⁶ Elsa initially just wants to connect and spend time with her family unit and community, in the end, however, her relationships are changed in the ways discussed earlier in the section on “Into the Unknown.”⁹⁷

Seeking one’s vocation seems to come down to learning the meaning of their life, their “genuine identity.”⁹⁸ For women, it may be more complicated to follow a calling. Undergraduate men reported a feeling of being called more than undergraduate women.⁹⁹ Women in conservative Christian homes may have been discouraged from pursuing their calling.¹⁰⁰ Elsa even attempts to block out this call, in hopes of being more connected with her family. However, she encourages women and girls to listen to the “voice” that guides them.

“The Next Right Thing”

The Next Right Thing
Section C

but a ti - ny voice whis-pers in my ___ mind... You are lost, hope is

gone, but you must go on and do the next right thing.

Example 5.5, “The Next Right Thing,” Music and Lyrics by Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez © 2019 Wonderland Music Company, Inc.

⁹⁶ Hernandez, Foley, Beitin, “Hearing the Call,” 71.

⁹⁷ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

⁹⁸ Paz, “Exploring Life Narratives on Challenged Religious Vocation,” 126–127.

⁹⁹ Hernandez, Foley, Beitin, “Hearing the Call,” 65.

¹⁰⁰ Hernandez, Foley, Beitin, “Hearing the Call,” 65.

Anna realizes that Elsa has died when Olaf also begins to dissolve. She does not think that she can move on from this simultaneous loss of her sister and best friend. She makes a decision to do what is next instead of dwelling on the loss, loneliness, and the inevitable impacts on her life.¹⁰¹ The songwriters say that this song is about “grief, when your whole world has collapsed,” and the choice to still keep going.¹⁰² They share how one of the directors, Chris Buck, lost his son during the press junket for *Frozen I* (2013). The Lopezes express how this song was inspired by and echoed the experience Chris Buck had.¹⁰³ They wrote this song before *Frozen II* and when they asked directors Jennifer Lee and Chris Buck if it could be used in a Disney movie, their response was “yes, not only can we, but we must.”¹⁰⁴

The work of healing was important to Jesus and is important to the Christian community.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately there is a history of Christianity mistreating those with mental illness.¹⁰⁶ However, there is also a historical precedent dating back to the thirteenth century in Belgium of community care for the mentally ill. In this system mentally ill individuals would live with families who cared for them.¹⁰⁷ Up until the last century this form of care was organized by church ministers, but now the government has taken over this care.¹⁰⁸ Twelve-step programs and suicide telephone support have also evolved from Christian care.¹⁰⁹ Spirituality has been shown to predict a better outcome for those dealing with psychosis. Those who feel loved and cared for by God are “much more likely to experience mental health benefits from such a

¹⁰¹ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

¹⁰² Vanity Fair, “Frozen 2 Songwriters,” 6:04, 7:09.

¹⁰³ Vanity Fair, “Frozen 2 Songwriters,” 7:13.

¹⁰⁴ Vanity Fair, “Frozen 2 Songwriters.” 7:57.

¹⁰⁵ Alison J. Gray, Christopher C.H. Cook, “Christianity and Mental Health,” in *Spirituality and Mental Health Across Cultures* ed. Alexander Moreira-Almeida, Bruno Paz Mosqueiro, and Dinesh Bhugra (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2021), 172.

¹⁰⁶ Gray and Cook, “Christianity and Mental Health,” 173.

¹⁰⁷ Gray and Cook, “Christianity and Mental Health,” 173.

¹⁰⁸ Gray and Cook, “Christianity and Mental Health,” 173.

¹⁰⁹ Gray and Cook, “Christianity and Mental Health,” 174.

relationship” while those who “view the Divine as punishing, vengeful, or distant,” may not gain these benefits.¹¹⁰

Many spiritual beliefs, such as the idea that God is benevolent, or belief in the immortality or reincarnation, or the concept that suffering can have a purpose, can be positively used to facilitate coping with different stressors through life. Conversely, the beliefs that God is malevolent or unfair, or that human beings cannot overcome their challenges, can have a negative impact on mental health and well-being.¹¹¹

For pastors and church leaders, it is important to be able to recognize mental health needs and be able to refer people to the proper care.¹¹² One of the driving factors of mental illness is loneliness.¹¹³ “To share the neighbor’s suffering, where mental illness is concerned, is at least to befriend that person and thereby at least reduce their isolation and loneliness.”¹¹⁴ When Anna took the step of doing “the next right thing,” Kristoff was by her side, befriending her, aiding her, saving her life.¹¹⁵

Conclusion

These songs represent the human, and, at times, mythical, experiences of sisters Anna and Elsa. These experiences—being lovingly lulled to sleep, fear of change, hearing a call, finding one’s true purpose, and battling mental illness, grief, and loneliness—are core themes in many

¹¹⁰ Gray and Cook, “Christianity and Mental Health,” 177; Harold G. Koenig, “Mechanisms: Religion’s Impact on Mental Health,” in *Spirituality and Mental Health Across Cultures* ed. Alexander Moreira-Almeida, Bruno Paz Mosqueiro, and Dinesh Bhugra (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2021), 134.

¹¹¹ Marianna de Abreu Costa, David H. Rosmarin, “Spirituality integrated psychotherapy,” in *Spirituality and Mental Health Across Cultures* ed. Alexander Moreira-Almeida, Bruno Paz Mosqueiro, and Dinesh Bhugra (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2021), 389.

¹¹² Wai Lun Alan Fung, Victor A. Shepherd, King Yee Agatha Chong, Sujatha D. Sharma, Avdesh Sharma, “Fruitful collaborations with religious and spiritual communities to foster mental health in general society: An international perspective,” in *Spirituality and Mental Health Across Cultures* ed. Alexander Moreira-Almeida, Bruno Paz Mosqueiro, and Dinesh Bhugra (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2021), 438.

¹¹³ Lun et al., “Fruitful collaborations,” 441.

¹¹⁴ Lun et al., “Fruitful collaborations,” 443.

¹¹⁵ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

women's lives. The *kairos* in *Frozen II* is transformation. Olaf sums it up best when he says, "well, I still don't know what transformation means, but I feel like this forest has changed us all."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Buck, Lee, et al., *Frozen II*.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Frozen II (2019) influences the spiritual formation of girls because of the feminist and religious themes found in the characters and storyline, particularly the character Elsa who is a female spirit, and her mother, Queen Iduna, who is portrayed as a female spirit/goddess. This thesis reveals that the inclusion of girls and women as the *imago dei*, or the image of God, is a compelling image that can focus girls' attention on their own strength and power, opening the doors to leadership roles in the church and the world.

Girls and women have been denied full inclusion to the church for centuries. Walt Disney Animation Studios has mirrored this subordination of women through their stories of princesses told and visualized by men. The church is making strides in the inclusion of women with church communities who embrace expansive inclusiveness. However, many worshiping communities still perpetuate a patriarchal culture, naming God as singularly male, and ignoring the feminine dimensions of God, and shaming women for their spirituality.

Frozen II, directed in part by Jennifer Lee, the first female Chief Creative Officer of Walt Disney Animation Studios, features characters who are spiritual and empowered women. These women are included in the religious aspects of their community and bring about transformation in their kingdom.

The following synchronicities show both the growth that the church and Walt Disney Animation Studios have made in the purposeful inclusion of women and girls, as well as the work that they have yet to do:

1. Parallels between feminist issues in the church and Walt Disney Animation Studios
2. Parallels between the feminine dimensions of Christianity and *Frozen II*

3. The convergence of spiritual formation and psychological development of girls and women
4. Conversations around *Frozen II* and Spiritual formation with women and girls from Blacksburg, Virginia
5. The analysis of songs from *Frozen II*

1. Parallels between feminist issues in the church and Walt Disney Animation Studios

In the early 2000s there is a shift in Disney princess movies tropes. Mothers and queens evolve from evil to supportive, encouraging, and caring. Elsa and Anna's mother, Queen Iduna, is a spiritual being that helps to transform the characters and communities in *Frozen II*. The princesses themselves are beginning to find paths that do not revolve around a prince. For example, in *Frozen II*, Elsa discovers that she is a spiritual being and leads the Northuldran people while Anna becomes the queen of Arendelle. Jennifer Lee, who was the first female director of a Walt Disney Animated Studios Feature Film— 93 years into Disney's history— has been working to tell the stories of women, and other minority groups, through their voices.

The church has been a source of subordination of women, and the perpetuation of patriarchal and misogynistic culture. While many traditions now allow women to hold leadership roles in the church, there are still Christian traditions that forbid women to be clergy, or do not allow them in their highest positions.¹ Women leaders in the Christian faith who tell their stories share about how they have been belittled while their male counterparts were assumed to be more educated, used as the “token woman” to show inclusion, and been expected to deal with problems and work that men do not typically need to worry themselves with. Women are striving

¹ Aleksandra Sandstrom, “Women Relatively Rare in Top Positions of Religious Leadership,” (2016), Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/03/02/women-relatively-rare-in-top-positions-of-religious-leadership/> (accessed February 24, 2024).

for their own inclusion, and the inclusion of other minority groups, and continue the wearisome work.

2. Parallels between the feminine dimensions of Christianity and *Frozen II*

The feminine dimensions of Christian tradition include: Wisdom Sophia, the Holy Spirit, Ecclesia (Mother Church), and Mary. These dimensions support the inclusion, and importance of women in the church, however, many of these teachings have been perverted or changed throughout centuries to prove men to be in ultimate place of leadership, and that God is male. Wisdom Sophia is depicted as God's partner and co-creator and is described as "radiant life energy."² The Holy Spirit, like Wisdom Sophia, is described like a mother of creation, and her Hebrew name is grammatically feminine, and she is like the elements of fire, wind, and water. Ecclesia, the bride of Christ, is depicted in female imagery, mothering the community of Christ and seeking justice.³ Mary, the mother of Christ, is regarded as a goddess in some traditions, and seen as co-redeemer with Christ.⁴

In *Frozen II* the elements of fire, wind, water, and earth are featured as important elements to the Northuldran people. This mirrors the important relationship that the Sámi people—indigenous people of Norway and other surrounding areas—have with nature. The elements parallel the fire, wind, and water symbols of the Holy Spirit, and the earth element echoes the relationship that women are seen to have with the earth.⁵ Elsa and Anna also echo the sacraments of baptism and eucharist through their tears, the breaking of the dam that separates Northulda and Arendelle, and through Elsa's meal of water and snow.

² Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 93–94; Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 436.

³ Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 136–146; Walsh, "Ecclesia Reconsidered," 80.

⁴ Kraemer, "The Divine Feminine in Christianity," 37.

⁵ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, location 243–263.

3. The Convergence of spiritual formation and psychological development

Men have been the gateway to the Christian world. However, women are using feminist practice to bring about justice and inclusion to the body of Christ. While the label “feminist” remains taboo in certain Christian contexts, women are using these practices even if they are unsure about the label.⁶ Spirituality is an important part of girls’ psychological development, and the communal aspects of spirituality are particularly important for girls and their need for relationship due to the differences in development between adolescent girls’ and adolescent boys’ brains.⁷ Relationships are important to girls and women, especially the mother-daughter relationship, and relationships with other women. These relationships help women to defy social norms, just like Elsa and Anna do through their relationships with their mother, the Arendelle people, and the Northuldran people.

4. Conversations around *Frozen II* and Spiritual Formation

Women and girls in Blacksburg, Virginia, shared their thoughts and stories around women and femininity in the church as well as their understanding of *Frozen II* and how it relates to spirituality in a Christian context. The group discussed the following:

- Relationships with their mothers, and how their mothers are role models in their lives
- Their understanding of women in leadership in the church
- The spiritual themes spirits, spirituality, calling, and transformation
- Genders associated with the Holy Trinity
- The image of God, *imago dei*, and how it is easier to see God in others than in yourself
- The songs in *Frozen II*

⁶ Sarah-Jane Page, “Feminist Faith Lives: Exploring Perceptions of Feminism Among Two Anglican Cohorts,” in *The Faith Lives of Women and Girls*, ed. Anne Phillips et al. (London: Routledge, 2016), 61–62.

⁷ Baker and Edwards, “What Would Catherine of Sienna Do? *Religious Education* 107, no. 4 (2012): 371–387.

The group had experienced the frustration of dealing with the perceived stereotypes of women, the expectation of men to be leaders in the church, and the overwhelming teaching of God as strictly male. However, they were also aware of and open to other symbolism of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit as female. They noticed how spirits and spiritual themes in Christianity paralleled the themes in *Frozen II*, and how the songs highlighted calling, relationship, and grief, and they pointed out the yoik, “Veulie,” which is important to the Sámi culture that the Northuldran people are modeled after. They embraced the *imago dei* of every person in the room, even if they could not find it in themselves.

5. Analysis of Songs from *Frozen II*

The following songs from *Frozen II* were analyzed:

1. “All is Found”
2. “Some Things Never Change”
3. “Into the Unknown”
4. “Show Yourself”
5. “The Next Right Thing”

“All is Found” is a lullaby that foreshadows the events in *Frozen II*, leading Elsa to a “river full of memory,” which turns out to be the glacier, Ahtohallan where she learns of her spiritual nature from her late mother. “Some Things Never Change” highlights how things are *always* changing, and while Elsa and Anna might always be changing, their love for each other and their chosen family is constant. “Into the Unknown” introduces the spirits and emphasizes the voice that is “calling” Elsa to her true identity as the fifth spirit. “Show Yourself” solidifies Elsa’s calling as the fifth spirit as reveals her mother as the voice that is calling her. This song is the pinnacle of *Frozen II* where Elsa learns about the transformations that she must make. “The Next Right Thing” underscores Anna’s grief in learning that her sister has died, and the healing she needs

and must embrace in order to save the Northuldra and Arendelle people. All of these songs are synchronized with Christian themes and traditions.

Areas for Further Study: Intersectionality and Eco-theology

“The concept of intersectionality describes the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other forms of discrimination ‘intersect’ to create unique dynamics and effects.”⁸ This concept is touched on throughout this thesis, for example:

1. the whitewashed representation of princess Tiana in *Wreck It Ralph 2* (chapter 1)
2. the misogynistic comments shared by White men on Facebook posts regarding Halle Bailey, a Black woman, as Ariel in *The Little Mermaid* (chapter 1)
3. the colonization and conversion of the Sámi people to Læstadianism (chapter 2)
4. the ways in which black girls choose to use social media to educate their followers about racial issues since often, these issues are not addressed in school or through other media (chapter 3).

The stories of princesses of color, like Tiana, Jasmine, Mulan, and Moana are important, but often whitewashed. Disney Animated Studios, under the director of Jennifer Lee, is working toward inclusion, and telling stories in authentic ways. The church continues to argue about who is worthy to be loved, cared for, and included at the table. An important area of further study is the convergence between the stories of marginalized groups like people of color, those in the LGBTQIA+ community, and those with disabilities told by Disney, and how that relates to inclusion in the church. These intersectionalities can be understood as a life-giving lens for doing theology, deepening our relationship with God by deepening our relationship with all voices within the Christian community. *Intersectional Theology: An Introductory Guide* (2018) by

⁸ “What is intersectionality,” Center for Intersectional Justice, <https://www.intersectionaljustice.org/what-is-intersectionality>.

Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Susan M. Shaw, as well as works on womanist theology by Kishundra King would serve to expand this area of further study.

Another area of further study is eco-theology. In chapter two there is some emphasis on eco-theology and its relation to feminist practice through the book *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit* (1993) by Elizabeth A. Johnson, as well as the exploration of Sámi culture and spirituality. This area of study can be expanded through the writings of Melanie Harris on “ecowomanism,” and the works of Karen Baker-Fletcher on ecology through a womanist perspective.

Personal Reflection

The church still has work to do. While Elsa can inspire women and girls to find the image of God within themselves, it will take more than just that. It will take more than highlighting the feminine dimensions of God, more than “allowing” girls and women to take part. Girls and women need to be treated as important and included in every element and tradition of the church. Throughout my career I have been stereotyped, belittled, told I should not do what I was called to do based on the fact that I am a woman. I have been expected to do more, more, more, in order to have a seat at the same table as men. I have only been taught about a male God, who gives more importance and dominance to men, than to women. I believe that women must continue the work, we must give ourselves permission, and we must strive for inclusion, justice, and love.

APPENDIX A

DISNEY PRINCESS MOVIES

Film Title	Synopsis
<i>Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs</i> (1937)	“The beautiful and kindhearted princess Snow White charms every creature in the kingdom except one—her jealous stepmother, the Queen. When the Magic Mirror proclaims Snow White is the fairest one of all, she must flee into the forest, where she befriends the lovable seven dwarfs—Doc, Sneezy, Grumpy, Happy, Bashful, Sleepy and Dopey. But when the Queen tricks Snow White with an enchanted apple, only the magic of true love's kiss can save her!” ¹
<i>Cinderella</i> (1950)	Cinderella is forbidden from attending the royal ball by her evil stepmother, but her step-sisters are allowed to go. She is “rewarded with an enchanted evening at the Royal Ball. It just takes the help of her loyal animal friends Jaq and Gus, and a wave of her Fairy Godmother’s wand.” ² After losing her glass slipper at the stroke of midnight, the prince’s only choice is to hunt the town to find the girl whose foot fits the slipper so that they can marry.
<i>Sleeping Beauty</i> (1959)	“Maleficent, one of imagination’s most spectacular villains, casts a curse on the kingdom’s beloved Princess Aurora. Hoping to save the princess, three Good Fairies—Merryweather, Flora and Fauna—spirit her off to the forest where they raise her as their own daughter. But it isn’t enough, for on her 16th birthday, Aurora pricks her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel and falls into a deep, enchanted sleep, just as Maleficent had intended. The Good Fairies do not give up, and they help brave Prince Phillip—armed with the Shield of Virtue and the Sword of Truth—defeat a powerful fire-breathing dragon, rescue Aurora and break the spell with true love’s kiss.” ³
<i>The Little Mermaid</i> (1989)	Ariel, “a mermaid princess makes a Faustian bargain with an unscrupulous sea-witch in order to meet a human prince on land.” ⁴

¹ “*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, movies.disney.com, <https://movies.disney.com/snow-white-and-the-seven-dwarfs> (accessed Feb 29, 2024).

² “*Cinderella* (1950),” movies.disney.com, <https://movies.disney.com/cinderella-1950> (accessed Feb 29, 2024).

³ “*Sleeping Beauty* (1959),” movies.disney.com, <https://movies.disney.com/sleeping-beauty> (accessed Feb 29, 2024).

⁴ Lauren Louie and Steven Chen, “Marketing Feminism in Youth Media,” *Business Horizons* 63, no. 5 (2020): 662.

<i>Beauty and the Beast</i> (1991)	Belle, “a young woman whose father has been imprisoned by a terrifying beast offers herself in his place, unaware that her captor is actually a prince who was physically altered by a magic spell.” ⁵
<i>Lilo and Stitch</i> (2002)	Lilo, “a Hawaiian girl, adopts an unusual pet, who turns out to be a notorious extraterrestrial fugitive.” ⁶
<i>The Princess and the Frog</i> (2009)	Tiana, “a waitress, desperate to fulfill her dreams as a restaurant owner, is set on a journey to turn a frog prince back into a human being, but she has to face the same problem after she kisses him.” ⁷
<i>Tangled</i> (2010)	“The magically long-haired Rapunzel has spent her entire life in a tower, but now that a runaway thief has stumbled upon her, she is about to discover the world for the first time—and who she really is.” ⁸
<i>Brave</i> (2012)	“Determined to make her own path in life, Princess Merida defies a custom that brings chaos to her kingdom. Granted one wish, Merida must rely on her bravery and her archery skills to undo a beastly curse.” ⁹
<i>Frozen</i> (2013)	“When the newly crowned Queen Elsa accidentally uses her power to curse her home with an infinite winter, her sister Anna teams up with a mountain man, his playful reindeer, and a snowman to change the climate.” ¹⁰
<i>Moana</i> (2016)	“In ancient Polynesia, when a terrible curse incurred by the demigod Maui reaches Moana’s island, she answers the ocean’s call to seek out the demigod to set things right.” ¹¹
<i>Wreck it Ralph 2: Ralph Breaks the Internet</i> (2018)	“Six years after the events of <i>Wreck-It-Ralph</i> , Ralph and Vanellope, now friends, discover a Wi-Fi router in their arcade, leading them into a new adventure.” ¹²
<i>Frozen II</i> (2019)	Elsa and Anna set out to find what is causing the elements to crumble their kingdom of Arendelle. They find an enchanted forest where Arendelle Soldiers and the indigenous Northuldran people have been trapped by a magical fog for 34 years. Elsa finds out that she is the fifth spirit, and that her mother was Northuldran. Anna breaks the dam allowing the fog to be lifted from the enchanted forest, and Elsa saves the kingdom of Arendelle from flooding. Elsa returns to lead the Northuldran people, and Anna becomes queen of Arendelle.

⁵ Louie and Chen, “Marketing Feminism in Youth Media,” 662.

⁶ Louie and Chen, “Marketing Feminism in Youth Media,” 662.

⁷ Louie and Chen, “Marketing Feminism in Youth Media,” 662.

⁸ Louie and Chen, “Marketing Feminism in Youth Media,” 662.

⁹ Louie and Chen, “Marketing Feminism in Youth Media,” 662.

¹⁰ Louie and Chen, “Marketing Feminism in Youth Media,” 662.

¹¹ Louie and Chen, “Marketing Feminism in Youth Media,” 663.

¹² Louie and Chen, “Marketing Feminism in Youth Media,” 663.

APPENDIX B

FROZEN II MOVIE NIGHT AND LISTENING SESSION TRANSCRIPT

Cristen (Interviewer) (00:01): Like I mentioned, I am going to be recording you guys this evening. That way I don't have to write every single thing down. So when we go through these questions, it's just important to know there's not a lot of right or wrong. I just want to hear your all's opinions and what you think.

Cristen (Interviewer) (01:13): Who inspires you in the movie *Frozen II*? Who inspires you, Renee?

Renee (01:34): Maybe Kristoff.

Cristen (Interviewer) (01:35): Kristoff. What do you like about Kristoff?

Renee (01:39): That he rides his reindeer and stuff.

Cristen (Interviewer) (01:41): Yeah.

Renee (01:42): And he takes Anna and to take when something's happening.

Cristen (Interviewer) (01:47): Oh, he protects Anna. That's really, I like that answer, Renee. Anybody else? What do you want to say?

Elaine (01:58): I saying Olaf.

Cristen (Interviewer) (01:59): Olaf. Why does Olaf inspire you?

Elaine (02:03): He's funny.

Cristen (Interviewer) (02:04): He's funny. Or do you like to be funny? Yeah?

Renee (02:07): That was my joke.

Cristen (Interviewer) (02:08): Yeah. Anybody else back here want to answer that question?

Abby (02:19): I think all of them in a different way for me. I enjoy that Olaf is carefree and that he cares about his friends, but he's also intent on living his life like not fully just wanting to do everything for everyone else. I think Kristoff just because I think that a lot of times I see some of my guy friends or just friends in general having issues with communicating their feelings. And even with me, myself, it just helps me to think, "Okay, I can communicate better how I feel in different ways." And then Anna just because I think she would be a great sister like such a sweet person. And then obviously Elsa. Just like everyone in their own different ways.

Cristen (Interviewer) (02:59): That's a great answer. Does anyone else want to answer that one?
Yes, Harmony.

Harmony (03:06): I think Elsa is very brave and she takes the risk of what happened, like what happened in the background.

Cristen (Interviewer) (03:15): Yeah. She paid attention to-

Renee (03:18): The background.

Cristen (Interviewer) (03:18): What was going on before. Yeah, that's really good. Yeah. Okay.
Are we ready to move on to the next one?

Renee (03:28): Yes ma'am.

Cristen (Interviewer) (03:30): Okay. I like that. Okay. Who are your role models in your daily lives? So in your real life, who are your role models?

Renee (03:44): Like right now?

Cristen (Interviewer) (03:45): Yeah, like real life.

Renee (03:48): Probably my dad because I love him and even he takes care of me very well.

Cristen (Interviewer) (03:58): Does he? And do you have any role models in your life who are ladies? Who are women?

Renee (04:03): My mom.

Cristen (Interviewer) (04:03): Your mom. That's really sweet.

Renee (04:06): She takes care of me more better than my dad.

Cristen (Interviewer) (04:06): Does she? Yeah.

Renee (04:13): My dad just stays on the phone and she cleans all of the stuff up.

Cristen (Interviewer) (04:15): Yeah, but your mom does a great job of taking care of you, doesn't she?

Renee (04:18): My dad too.

Cristen (Interviewer) (04:19): Yeah. What about you, Elaine? Do you have any role models?

Elaine (04:23): My mom.

Cristen (Interviewer) (04:24): Your mom? Aw, okay. What about you, Harmony? Do you have any role models?

Harmony (04:35): My Oma.

Cristen (Interviewer) (04:36): Your Oma? Is that what you said? Is that right, Maria? Aw, that's sweet.

Harmony (04:46): She takes me to exciting things because my parents can always take me to these fun things like grandma can.

Cristen (Interviewer) (04:57): What do you call her again?

Harmony (04:58): Oma.

Cristen (Interviewer) (04:59): Oma.

Maria (05:00): Oma. Oma is German for grandmother.

Cristen (Interviewer) (05:06): Oh-

Renee (05:06): How about Stephanie?

Cristen (Interviewer) (05:06): How cool. Yeah, we already talked about Stephanie, you love her, don't you?

Cristen (Interviewer) (05:28): Anybody else have any role models? Who are women that they would like to share about?

Lisa (05:40): My role mother. . . My role model is my mother. One of my role models. I think if we have good guidance, it tends to be one of our role models.

Cristen (Interviewer) (05:49): Our mothers. Yes.

Lisa (05:51): My mother's 80 this year and she just still takes care of everything. She takes care of my dad. She makes sure everything works. I don't know that the house could run without my mother and she's still encouraging and I don't know. She's just a good woman in my life.

Cristen (Interviewer) (06:14): By the way. This is my mother and she is my role model too. And so she's talking about my grandma. Do your role models and the characters in *Frozen II* have anything in common? So we mentioned a lot about our mothers. What do you think, Harmony?

Harmony (06:42): They're like a path. They never leave anyone behind. If someone, fades away, like, go off, they find and get him back.

Cristen (Interviewer) (06:53): Yeah, I like that.

Harmony (06:55): A family.

Cristen (Interviewer) (06:56): Yeah, a family. Yes. And all the characters, they were like a family together. Right? Great answer. Yeah, Heather.

Heather (07:12): I think the mother in the movie was inspirational in a way because she was the one that made them all realize that because of what she did for the Prince or the king or whoever that that kind of joined the kingdoms.

Cristen (Interviewer) (07:25): Yeah, absolutely.

Heather (07:25): That was a nice part of the story.

Cristen (Interviewer) (07:30): Yeah, I absolutely agree. And she's the mother, the matriarch in the story. Anyone else on that one?

Rachel (07:41): She was the bridge.

Cristen (Interviewer) (07:42): Yeah.

Rachel (07:43): They talked about the bridge having two sides, but she was the bridge between the two kingdoms.

Cristen (Interviewer) (07:48): Yeah. Yeah. She was. Anybody else? All right, let's go to the next one. Is there anything in this movie or another favorite Disney movie that discourages you? Something that you don't like?

Abby (08:16): I think there were times in the movie that I felt like although Anna had her good moments, I felt there were times that she was maybe a little bit too sensitive with her relationship towards Kristoff and her relationship towards Anna or Elsa and that sister bond just because I think that she's such a strong character and then you see these random moments of her being super insecure that her spouse is going to break up with her or Elsa's going to die and everything's just going to fall apart and I think that's so weird to me because the whole... I mean, I'm not saying that she can't have her sensitive moments, but more it's like I see her as such a strong, powerful person and then you'll randomly have these times where it feels like she just becomes mush and super sensitive all of a sudden. It's not a bad part of the movie, it just doesn't make sense to me in my mind going through the movie.

Cristen (Interviewer) (09:21): Yeah. Huh. Okay. Yeah. You would like to see her be a little bit stronger in some spots. Okay, gotcha.

Robert (09:29): Going along with that at the end when she does her "The Next Right Thing," she's facing all that darkness that she had been worried about the whole time.

Cristen (Interviewer) (09:42): Yeah.

Robert (09:47): Steps out of, I don't know whether she's stepping out of depression or stepping out of her worry and her fear, but she eventually overcomes it.

Cristen (Interviewer) (09:59): That takes a lot of strength.

Rachel (10:00): To me, she's stepping out in faith.

Cristen (Interviewer) (10:00): Yeah.

Robert (10:08): The words where I've always done it for her, now I'm doing it for something else.

Kim (10:17): Well, I think going along the same thing that you had too, it just seems like such a cliché, the attributes that you were talking about, to me as far as that character goes, I totally agree with you. We're just flipping back into this cliché about-

Cristen (Interviewer) (10:45): The same-

Kim (10:45): girls and they have all...

Cristen (Interviewer) (10:45): We still see a little bit of that in there.

Kim (10:45): Kind of forced.

Carol (10:54): I think in this one and lots of other Disney movies too, there's so much darkness. I mean I know that's the wrong part of it. But there's so much darkness that it could be really frightening to children. And I can see that watching some of this darkness if they were really watching it and taking it in how they could get nightmares.

Cristen (Interviewer) (11:24): Right. I think about that a lot too. And I think about, I'm like, hmm, I wonder what they think this part is really? Especially "The Next Right Thing," Robert, because that really is... She is stepping out of a season of grief and depression and that's a very real thing. But that can be hard sometimes for the younger ones to understand. So I can understand that.

Carol (11:54): Some of the colorations.

Cristen (Interviewer) (11:57): Oh yeah.

Carol (11:58): I mean just like the rock giants, you know. I mean that could plant an image in a kid's mind. It just is overpowering. It's such a mean frame that...

Rachel (12:23): I remember going to see Sleeping Beauty.

Cristen (Interviewer) (12:27): That one is a really scary actually.

Rachel (12:30): It was a big thing. We went into Chicago to see, it came out in 1960, whatever, somewhere around there. And I remember I was so scared when Maleficent, I had to go sit on my dad's lap and I remember being mortified because we were in this fancy theater [00:13:00] and I was like, I know I'm too big to be going to sit on dad's lap, but there I was. It was scary on that big screen. And that was 60 some years ago and I still remember that.

Cristen (Interviewer) (13:05): Right?

Kim (13:05): Well, just the opening frame, you know, the parents.

Cristen (Interviewer) (13:05): Yes.

Kim (13:13): That's the very beginning.

Cristen (Interviewer) (13:20): Right. And that is a little bit contextual from the first one. I mean, is there anybody here who hasn't seen the first one? You haven't seen the first one. I feel like you can still enjoy this one without knowing the first one, but there are definitely some things that you kind of need to know.

Heather (13:42): There are reminders from what happened before.

Cristen (Interviewer) (13:45): Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Go ahead.

Robert (13:52): Just to talk with those two questions together about women. Yes, I am. In touch with my feminine side here. The stronger women that I have experienced in my life or witnessed doing things have been people who, like Anna, Elsa a little bit, Anna more, I think, pulled people together to work together and help them together. The leadership styles seem to be less and more family cooperative community, not self but... And Elsa has a little tendency to-

Cristen (Interviewer) (15:02): Be on her own.

Robert (15:03): on her own. And Anna keeps, because she's got power, but Anna keeps pulling everybody back-

Cristen (Interviewer) (15:09): Together.

Robert (15:11): We do this together.

Cristen (Interviewer) (15:12): Yeah. That's a great point, Robert.

Robert (15:16): That's feminine leadership. I see feminine leadership in the church that way too. I've been a pastor for a long time, many of the best leaders in the church were those who

pulled people together to work and the larger number of them, not all of them, but the larger number of them female.

Cristen (Interviewer) (15:30): Well, so that is a really good segue, Robert, into our next question. And this, you all are in some sense as I'm preaching to the choir a little bit here, because you all may think of things a little bit differently. Some of you literally. You may think of things a little bit differently than maybe our larger culture and we can kind of tweak this for us. But when you think about a pastor, do you think about a man, woman, someone else? And when you think about leaders in the church, do you think about men, women, otherwise?

Abby (16:21): I'm going to be totally honest, Cristen. When I think of one of the main leaders in the church, I automatically think of you because the way that I see it is, yes, Brad is a pastor or my grandpa is a pastor. I know other pastors, but I growing up in a church specifically this one, I mean, I've been here, I was baptized here. I've been here-

Cristen (Interviewer) (16:43): Yeah. Shannon's like, yeah.

Abby (16:49): fourteen years and I'm not going anywhere. I mean, growing up here and seeing how long some certain women have been in position and have just genuinely held people together while there are different transitions and jobs throughout the church really amazes me because that's such a hard thing to do. I've seen other times where leadership will change and because there's no one there to hold everyone together, it can just sort of crumble. And so I really appreciate having someone like you here because I feel like, okay, if the pastoral role changes or if one day there's just no one to do sound, I feel secure in the knowledge of, oh, it'll be okay because-

Cristen (Interviewer) (17:40): That last part sounded very familiar.

Abby (17:42): I have a sense of, okay, it's okay because maybe Cristen will be stressed or whatever, but I know that she will find a way to make it happen. And I know that this whole church, because she's such a good leader and because we have other great leaders in the church too, that I know, okay, maybe it's a thing to worry about, but I know we'll be okay.

Cristen (Interviewer) (18:09): And that's the consistency factor is somewhat unique to the Methodist church because of that July threshold of your pastor can switch out. But I've thought about this a lot, Abby, if you look at our staff, at least since I've been on staff, the majority of the staff is women except for the lead pastor.

Shannon (18:42): And really they've change except for you, right? For 7 years.

Cristen (Interviewer) (18:43): Yeah.

Shannon (18:43): Goodness. That's fast, woman.

Cristen (Interviewer) (18:56): I know. I told these ones that are here now, y'all better be sticking around, there's been quite a bit of change through COVID. Everything has... It's been hard. But you're right, Shannon. Yeah. I'm hoping that we'll all stay a little bit consistent for a while. And while we've definitely had some wonderful pastors who are men, that's not to downplay them. It's just been interesting to see that trend in our staff of who's in what roles. Anybody else on that question? Question Five?

Carol (19:44): Our new bishop.

Cristen (Interviewer) (19:45): Oh yeah.

Carol (19:50): Bishop Sue is awesome. And I hope, I asked Brad last week, if there was a way that we could get her to come to actually speak and spend some time as a church family and he's going to work on that. But she is down to earth, very personal and Christ centered, and she is really one for us to trust and look up to at this point in our church's life.

Cristen (Interviewer) (20:20): Yeah, that's so encouraging. Yeah.

Carol (20:22): Very, very good.

Cristen (Interviewer) (20:25): Yeah. Thank you. Carol.

Lisa (20:27): Can I say something?

Cristen (Interviewer) (20:27): Yeah

Lisa (20:27): I was raised Baptist. My dad was a Baptist minister, so we were not raised Methodist. However, Cristen, she did an internship with the Methodist church in Vinton. And so she's been in the Methodist church for a number of years, But typically in the Baptist church, and by the way, I'm Pentecostal, so we've got our bases covered here. But typically in the Baptist church, we do not have women typically in the role of the pastor. And I understand the male role is supposed to leave the church in his family and all of that, but I also know as being a single parent that women have to stand up a great deal. Nothing against you being the only man in the room, but women do have to stand up a great deal and lead their family on their own and do all the jobs. So I see, even though I was raised in a typical setting with a man as being the leader, I see all these women that have had to stand up and lead. And all these women, even in my dad's church, there were all these women that I think of, these widows in the church that you went to that led the Sunday school and even though they weren't the lead pastor, they were very strong women and leaders in the church. So I have a mixed feeling I guess about I don't know if they necessarily should be one thing or the other. I think it depends because I see Cristen take a lot from my father. She takes a lot of traits from him, and she's a very good arguer where my father is too, and they butt heads sometimes on this specific subject. I also feel like Cristen has been led by God to be in the role that she's in. So I feel like women... I don't know-

Cristen (Interviewer) (22:46): Have a place.

Lisa (22:59): Have a place, a definite place. I really do because I don't know what I'm called. I don't know if I'm a feminist, but I've raised her to be her own woman and not be afraid to do the things that she wants to do. And I think that's what all... I know this is more led towards girls. I think that's what we are supposed to do. And if we're meant to lead, then if God brings us in that way, that's where we're supposed to be Now. I don't know if my dad always agrees.

Melissa (23:26): God calls women too.

Cristen (Interviewer) (23:27): Exactly. Yeah.

Melissa (23:30): That's actually one of the things I appreciate about the Methodist church is that women don't have to stand up and lead. They get to stand up and lead. They have the opportunity.

Cristen (Interviewer) (23:37): Right. Yeah.

Abby (23:46): I also think just piggybacking off of that. Some context for this thought process is, I hit puberty a little bit earlier than a lot of people in my grade or my just age range. And I also just grew up with a different experience than most people. I mean my mom's in a wheelchair and my dad works a lot. So-

Cristen (Interviewer) (24:05): Shannon.

Abby (24:06): You're going to point out the obvious. But I think growing up in that way, because I hit puberty so much earlier than a lot of girls my age, I just see things in a little bit of a different way. Not from you, but just in a stereotypical way. I just think a little bit different from the stereotypical things. And I think there are some guys that I am best friends with them and I'm like, you are an amazing person. But then there are other men that I see that I'm just like, I respect you as a person, but sometimes it is very difficult for me to have a conversation with you just because we have such different opinions on certain things that I feel strongly about. And so I really appreciate the fact that there are both men and women the church leadership in Methodist specifically that I can trust both of them, at least in this church. I know I'm not going to have a male role model here that's going to completely just be like, "Oh my gosh, women are trash."

Cristen (Interviewer) (25:16): Right.

Abby (25:19): They might have their own opinions, but I know that they're not going to immediately be like, throw you out.

Cristen (Interviewer) (25:28): That's a great point. And I'm glad that you sense that. I think that's something that's different from both just the time that we're in now and being in the Methodist church because I have been around a lot of males that even if the intention

wasn't to assume that I could not do the things I was supposed to do, that assumption was just ingrained in them. And I've had some hateful things said to me that if I hadn't been a young woman working in that scenario and it would've been a male counterpart, those things probably wouldn't have been said. So I'm really glad that you feel that as you're coming up. I'm glad to hear that Abby.

Abby (26:36): And I can definitely sympathize with some of those situations you've been in just as much as times have changed, like-

Cristen (Interviewer) (26:44): Sometimes. Yeah.

Abby (26:45): You always meet those people that, I don't want to say are old fashioned because it's not necessarily old fashioned, it's just one type of thinking that I think a lot of people stereotypically think is an older fashioned, which is not necessarily true.

Cristen (Interviewer) (26:59): Yeah, it's still here. Yeah. Let's go ahead and move on to this next section here. Excuse me. Do you notice any religious themes in *Frozen II*? What do you think, Harmony? Do you notice anything?

Harmony (27:23): Just the culture is different. Arendelle has a different culture than the other one. The other... what is it called?

Cristen (Interviewer) (27:27): The Northuldra people?

Harmony (27:30): Yeah. They're more like we praise more and then Arendelle has more high-tech things-

Cristen (Interviewer) (27:45): Right.

Harmony (27:45): ... better things.

Cristen (Interviewer) (27:48): So would you say the Northuldra people are a lot more spiritual?

Harmony (27:52): Yeah.

Cristen (Interviewer) (27:53): Yeah. Great. Good job, Harmony.

Renee (27:56): Me.

Cristen (Interviewer) (27:57): What do you think, Renee?

Renee (27:59): His like lizard thing.

Cristen (Interviewer) (28:00): The lizard. What was the lizard? Do you remember what spirit the lizard was?

Renee (28:05): No.

Cristen (Interviewer) (28:07): What came out of the lizard?

Renee (28:08): Fire.

Cristen (Interviewer) (28:10): Fire. The lizard was the fire spirit. Yeah. Yeah. Anybody else?

Lisa (28:18): One thing I saw, she kept talking about how something was leading her and I feel like-

Cristen (Interviewer) (28:23): Like a call.

Lisa (28:23): A call.

Cristen (Interviewer) (28:25): Yeah.

Lisa (28:26): God calls you.

Cristen (Interviewer) (28:28): Yeah, I agree.

Lisa (28:30): I felt like that could be something that...

Cristen (Interviewer) (28:34): Yeah, the vocation is the term we use. You feel like you have that calling.

Rachel (28:42): And there was definitely a transformation theme.

Cristen (Interviewer) (28:45): Yes.

Robert (28:51): And there was transformation of everything.

Cristen (Interviewer) (28:53): Yeah.

Robert (28:55): The alienation came because, that's a biblical thing, because of Sin.

Cristen (Interviewer) (29:03): Wow, yeah. Thanks, Robert.

Robert (29:07): The fog around kind of separated everything, but all of creation got transformed. I mean, it was the earth, wind, fire, water.

Rachel (29:25): In that one scene, it felt like it was Moses's cloud-

Cristen (Interviewer) (29:25): Oh yeah.

Rachel (29:30): Pillar of clouds meets Wicked Witch of the West.

Cristen (Interviewer) (29:35): Oh, right.

Robert (29:35): And the curtain got rented at the end.

Cristen (Interviewer) (29:35): Yes.

Robert (29:35): The fog was removed.

Cristen (Interviewer) (29:48): Oh, I'm so glad you came, Robert.

Robert (29:51): All of it got redeemed.

Robert (30:00): according to Olaf's final words before he got resurrected was love.

Cristen (Interviewer) (30:04): Good job. Yeah. Yeah.

Maria (30:06): And Olaf said, love is permanent.

Robert (30:07): Love is the one thing that will not change.

Cristen (Interviewer) (30:10): Yeah. Absolutely.

Robert (30:23): And somewhere in the Bible I believe does say, God is...

Cristen (Interviewer) (30:35): Love. Yes.

Melissa (30:35): Somewhere.

Robert (30:35): First letter of John.

Melissa (30:35): Might be there.

Rachel (30:35): Did they think... Did the producers, were they thinking this?

Cristen (Interviewer) (30:39): Well, so a lot of the spiritual items in the movie they're portrayed as the Northuldra, the indigenous people. That's the Sami people and the Sami culture in Norway. And a lot of these elements are based on their religion, the spirits, and those things. I think, I don't know that every single theme that we've mentioned would tie in, but the directors, they traveled to Norway and met with the people and did intentionally bring those elements in. So yeah, in many ways they were thinking about these things.

Lisa (31:32): You need talk to your grandmother.

Cristen (Interviewer) (31:32): Huh?

Lisa (31:32): You need to talk to your grandmother.

Cristen (Interviewer) (31:37): Not her mom. I have another grandmother is from Norway, so she would be familiar with some of these things.

Melissa (31:47): That I thought was kind of obvious, but nobody said it yet, so I'm going to make sure we say it, was Anna left, she went from the darkness and moved toward the light.

Cristen (Interviewer) (31:56): Oh, yes. Yes, absolutely.

Melissa (31:56): And they also gave her light.

Cristen (Interviewer) (32:00): Yeah, go ahead, Harmony.

Harmony (32:07): It reminds me of how God is light and she's following God on the path.

Cristen (Interviewer) (32:18): Good job, Harmony. So when you think about God, do you think about a man, a woman, boy, girl, something else? And then also the follow-up is Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Do you have a gender that you think about when you think of this Trinity?

Abby (32:53): I personally, I think what first comes to my mind, I think of male, but then I also read this thing a couple years back that talked about how God just doesn't have a technical gender. And I've talked to my grandfather who was a pastor about this. And so I'm trying to train my brain a little bit now to not think of him as one gender, but to think of God as just sort of a being. I don't know whether I would call them transgender or they/them or she/her-

Cristen (Interviewer) (33:32): Non-binary, right.

Abby (33:34): But just genuinely like God. And so, although I do have trouble with it, it's not me personally in my mind just referring to God as a him. I just personally think that God is a feeling.

Cristen (Interviewer) (33:49): Right.

Abby (33:49): The gender doesn't have too much influence on me and how I think about God. So that's sort of where I stand. But I also know so many other people that are like, oh, I want God to have a gender so that I can think of God as a-

Cristen (Interviewer) (34:10): Right. Because our context is a human. It's hard to-

Robert (34:14): Use our language.

Cristen (Interviewer) (34:16): Right. It's hard to think of something that's not a human.

Shannon (34:19): And it starts with Jesus being a male until you think, well, I think the Holy Trinity. So yeah, God is... Yeah.

Robert (34:29): Those words, the Hebrew Ruah and the Latin [Greek] Word pneuma are both feminine.

Cristen (Interviewer) (34:29): For Holy Spirit?

Robert (34:30): They're both what we use for Holy Spirit. Yes. Thank you.

Lisa (34:56): Is that what he said?

Cristen (Interviewer) (34:59): Yeah. For the spirit. And I think most historians, we would agree that Jesus, who was a human here on Earth was male. But it seems like there's a lot of evidence to show the spirit in a feminine light. And then it's really difficult for us to say, what is God? Because God's not in a human body. Right?

Rachel (35:32): Right. I read a devotional just this morning that was talking about this very thing and that Jesus had a male body, but a feminine soul.

Cristen (Interviewer) (35:50): Oh, interesting.

Rachel (35:55): So I was like, I could wrap my head around that.

Abby (35:56): There are also just, I've seen this on Pinterest because it's very popular on some of the internet social platforms that some of them really point out how much of a feminist Jesus was and just in some other scriptures and things. I could fully believe that Jesus might appear as male, but have more of a feminine soul. And then I can picture it being like that because I can see both sides of how Jesus was feminine and also masculine. All these just different things sort of wrapped up in one package. Maybe not one but just wrapped up. So I can see.

Cristen (Interviewer) (36:52): Because he was quite radical for his culture. And I think at times, even for today, and feminists, some of the things that are important to them, justice, love, equality, those were also things that Jesus stood for. So that's kind of where that quote, I've seen that too, that quote comes from. And I would agree with that too. Yeah.

Lisa (37:29): I think I tend to think of a male. I think I do. I don't know. I have to look at what you said about the Holy Spirit. What words were you talking about? The Hebrew?

Robert (37:38): Hebrew is Ruah.

Speaker 14 (37:38): What is it?

Robert (37:38): Ruah.

Cristen (Interviewer) (37:41): Is it R U A?

Robert (37:43): R U A H.

Cristen (Interviewer) (37:44): R U A H.

Robert (37:47): I mean Hebrew doesn't have any.

Cristen (Interviewer) (37:48): Right. Right.

Robert (37:48): There's no vowels in Hebrew. So you have to kind of-

Cristen (Interviewer) (37:53): That's our spelling. Yeah.

Lisa (37:55): If you just looked up the Holy Spirit in Hebrew, that's what you would-

Robert (37:58): You would find.

Lisa (38:00): You could Google that and you could get that word.

Robert (38:05):

And if you did it in the and Latin [Greek], you'd get pneuma, which we get pneumonia from.

Cristen (Interviewer) (38:12): Oh, I never. Yeah, yeah, yeah. There's your sermon from a few weeks ago.

Robert (38:16): The breath of God, the wind of God. They're both feminine.

Lisa (38:25): I don't know. I think I tend to always think male, but I don't know. When you really get down to it, we know that Jesus a man, but when you get right down to it, I don't know if I've ever put a gender on the Holy Spirit. I don't know if we ever... We think of them. We know that they're the trinity, but I don't know if we ever discussed it. I don't know that I ever have until now.

Robert (38:49): That was just said to make it so that we know that male, masculine, feminine, all of that, the Trinity gives us a way to see it all wrapped up. And so that we're not... Sadly, we in the church argue about these things when scripture says it's here.

Cristen (Interviewer) (39:13): Jesus came for everybody.

Melissa (39:14): I also think we're predisposed to think of God as male because the Bible-

Cristen (Interviewer) (39:20): God The Father.

Melissa (39:25): .. itself refers to him, Him, God the Father. Jesus referred to God as my father. In the Old Testament, God referred to himself as the Father God of Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob. And I don't know if you could tell me if those were the masculine words in the original text.

Robert (39:43): Those are the masculine words.

Melissa (39:44): ... Yeah, or whether that was just the way it was translated.

Robert (39:47): But in a patriarchal society.

Rachel (39:49): Exactly.

Melissa (39:50): Right.

Robert (39:52): How else are you going to talk about it?

Cristen (Interviewer) (39:54): Robert?

Robert (39:56): God gathering his chicks, her, excuse me.

Cristen (Interviewer) (40:00): The mother. Yes.

Robert (40:06): Like a mother hen gathering his chicks like a mother did. Gathering-

Cristen (Interviewer) (40:10): Her chicks. And I believe I've also heard that the story of the coin, that parable, also shapes God as a woman. Because in that story, the woman is... I'm trying to remember exactly-

Melissa (40:27): Are we talking about last week?

Cristen (Interviewer) (40:27): ... the parable. Is it the lost coin?

Robert (40:37): It's a lost coin.

Cristen (Interviewer) (40:38): Yeah. I think that's what I'm thinking of because I was looking at those, but in that story, the woman is searching for her lost coin. Correct? So it's almost like the shepherd parable.

Melissa (40:55): It's one of the three parables that are together.

Robert (40:56): you get the coin, you get the shepherd, you get the lost coin.

Cristen (Interviewer) (41:00): Exactly. But in that story, the Christ, the God symbol, is a woman in that story.

Melissa (41:09): If you look at it that way.

Cristen (Interviewer) (41:12): Thank you, Melissa. Okay.

Melissa (41:16): This goes with why I want to be in Sunday school tomorrow or when

Cristen (Interviewer) (41:20): The Bible teaches us that we are all made in God's image. Do you see the image of God in yourself? I guess you could also ask in others.

Abby (41:42): I don't see it in myself, but I see it in parts of other people. Just like good deeds or good qualities. I think. I mean, I'm not the most religious person, but I see it in other people and I'm like, gosh, genuinely. I don't know how that... Not that that person can't be good, but in just a world, I don't know where some of those things can come from just logically without a Christ or God or Trinity, like Jesus there. So there are just times that I see it and when I do, I'm like...

Shannon (42:19): I don't know if I see it in me, but I sure am super proud that my daughter is here and she's healthy and wonderful

Melissa (42:25): I see it in you.

Cristen (Interviewer) (42:30): So let me ask you guys this. What makes it so much easier to see it in other people rather than yourself?

Abby (42:49): Well, I just know because I did a project on psychology that typically when you think about yourself, it's just sort of put into your brain, no matter how much you try, to think of yourself a lot more negatively than other people think of you. So even if you're super confident and you're like, I love myself, you still have this sense of like, oh, I see myself doubting a little bit just subconsciously. And so I personally see it in a way of I can recognize that. And I recognize that I'm not always going to see the best in myself. And so I enjoy the times that I see myself in other people. And then I can also see God in those people because that sort of reminds me a little bit of like, okay, it might be hard to recognize for myself sometimes, but I know that there's some God and some religion in me, even if I can't see it in myself.

Cristen (Interviewer) (43:51): Yeah, seeing it in other people helps you know that it's in you too.

Abby (43:56): Yeah.

Cristen (Interviewer) (43:57): Yeah.

Robert (43:58): Anna has some of that same issue. She had a harder time seeing it in herself.

Cristen (Interviewer) (44:03): That's very true, Robert.

Robert (44:05): ...than in others.

Cristen (Interviewer) (44:05): Yeah.

Robert (44:05): But ultimately, she

Cristen (Interviewer) (44:11): Yeah, that's true. That's very true. So do any of you all have a favorite song from the movie? And if you do, what was it?

Abby (44:29): "Show Yourself."

Cristen (Interviewer) (44:30): That's my favorite too.

Melissa (44:34): Yeah, I think that's an Academy Award.

Robert (44:34): Which one got the Academy Award nomination?

Cristen (Interviewer) (44:43): Oh, I'm not sure. Well, I think the writers... Oh gosh, what's... The woman her name is Kristen, so I can remember her name. But the male counterpart? Yes.

Abby (44:59): The guy who plays Kristoff I know who you're talking about

Cristen (Interviewer) (45:09): Right. Yes. What's her?

Melissa (45:11): Lopez. Robert Lopez.

Cristen (Interviewer) (45:12): Robert. He won. So there's two Kristen's on this film. He won an EGOT. I think it was "Let it Go" that got the Academy...

Melissa (45:24): For the first?

Cristen (Interviewer) (45:25): Yes. That was the first one. Yeah.

Melissa (45:25): The second one.

Cristen (Interviewer) (45:28): But yeah, "Show Yourself" is my favorite song too. My second favorite is "Lost In the Woods" because it's so eighties. Yes, Harmony.

Harmony (45:40): I like "Into The-

Cristen (Interviewer) (45:43): Unknown?

Harmony (45:44): Yeah.

Cristen (Interviewer) (45:44): Yeah, that's a really good one too.

Harmony (45:46): I like the last one. It's just the after the movie start and they-

Cristen (Interviewer) (45:51): Yes.

Harmony (45:51): I like that one-

Cristen (Interviewer) (45:52): The Panic at the Disco version. He has such a good voice, doesn't he? He's got an awesome voice. Why do you like that song so much, Harmony?

Harmony (46:01): It's just so catchy.

Cristen (Interviewer) (46:03): Oh, yeah. It is. It's very catchy.

Harmony (46:06): In your head so.

Cristen (Interviewer) (46:08): Yeah. Why do you like "Show Yourself?"

Abby (46:13): I think, I don't know. I think I just like it overall. I like how it sounds. And I think I have more of a reason to like "Lost in the Woods," because that's my second favorite. I just think it's catchy. I like how there's both the mother and the daughter, and I really like that because I'm so close with my mom, and so I enjoy seeing things where other people are close with their parents because I don't always see that and I think that's nice.

Cristen (Interviewer) (46:49): And did you notice how it brings in the lullaby into... That's like woo crying.

Rachel (46:57): I like the native music.

Cristen (Interviewer) (47:00): Yes.

Rachel (47:00): That really...

Cristen (Interviewer) (47:00): That song that they do is actually a native Norwegian song that (singing).

Maria (47:06): Yes. I love that.

Cristen (Interviewer) (47:10): Yeah, that is actually a real song that they sing in their native culture. And they do have it in the first one too, but it's more prevalent in this one. So yeah, go ahead.

Robert (47:29): An early one in the beginning "Into the Unknown" kind of sets the theme. And then "The Next Right Thing" kind of draws you into its conclusion. Those two together kind book end, my favorite songs.

Rachel (47:32): Did you study this movie?

Cristen (Interviewer) (47:32): Robert did his homework.

Robert (47:32): This is the very first time I've ever seen *Frozen*.

Rachel (47:32): Wow.

Robert (47:33): I had never seen *Frozen II*. But we've been to the movies with Carol will testify. You get a theological discussion whether it's Bambi or whatever.

Cristen (Interviewer) (47:33): Yes. Carol,

Carol (47:33): Every Disney movie is theological.

Cristen (Interviewer) (47:33): Oh yeah.

Carol (48:00): To Pastor Robert.

Cristen (Interviewer) (48:21): If you start digging, you can find a lot. Yes.

Carol (48:26): He cries through most of them. But that's why. But I think "Show Yourself" and that reminds me or makes me think of sometimes when we are caught up in crises ourselves and we're praying to God, where in the heck are you? Aren't you in charge of this? And "Show Yourself." Let me see you-

Cristen (Interviewer) (48:57): Who you are.

Carol (48:57): ... and let me feel you and know what's right. So they should be there.

Cristen (Interviewer) (49:00): That's a great point.

Carol (49:05): Myself pleading with God. Where are you at?

Carol (49:10): ... "Show Yourself".

Robert (49:14): We would go to movies and there have not been many movies that I've been to with my daughter that she would not turn around and say, "Are you crying yet?"

Abby (49:24): I have to tell you, Robert. I have been talking a little bit with Sam, who's in youth group with me just every once in a while that we're both trying to find him a good male role model and I swear-

Cristen (Interviewer) (49:46): Sam Coates?

Abby (49:48): ... you're going to be in one of those conversations because we've been looking at all these films, we've been looking at all these guys, and we're like, we need a good male role model because

Cristen (Interviewer) (49:56): Interesting. What a good-

Abby (49:58): ... me and Tristan talk a lot and then he's also there sometimes because it's just us in our grade. They were there. So it's just sort of us. And I know he sometimes feels like in a lot of these Disney movies, there's so much female representation that he sometimes feels a little bit lost with that male representation. And so I told him Kristoff should be a good role model.

Cristen (Interviewer) (50:19): Yeah.

Abby (50:22): Robert should also be there too.

Cristen (Interviewer) (50:26): Well, folks, we have just about 10 minutes left that I can hold you till this evening. And we were already talking some about this last question, which has to do with the song "Show Yourself." So in that song, we've already said this, Elsa finds out that her mother has been calling her to seek justice with the Northuldra people this whole time. And Elsa also finds out that she is the Fifth Spirit. What do you think about Elsa and Iduna? Iduna is Elsa's mother. What do you think about their spiritual nature?

Melissa (51:00): I think I should watch the TV ahead of time so I can process as much as Robert does.

Cristen (Interviewer) (51:16): I know, right? Oh, go ahead, Abby.

Abby (51:23): I see the mother as being a really big leading figure in how Elsa processes spiritual things, just genuinely processes things. But also you can really see where Elsa and her mother, you can see where her mother was a huge part of her spiritual journey through the whole movie.

Lisa (51:49): I don't know. Elsa seems to be more... Have these inside feelings. She's drawn to things where, it's Anna, right?

Cristen (Interviewer) (52:06): Anna is her sister. Yeah.

Lisa (52:07): Anna is not... She's not like that so much. and I don't know if that's just because she's supposed to have powers or whatever. But do you ever find yourself, sometimes there's some people that have more feelings.

Cristen (Interviewer) (52:20): Yeah, yeah. Like a sense about things?

Lisa (52:30): Yeah. A sense about things sometimes. Then other people it's not so much and even for me, I don't know. I went through a traumatic time in my life with a divorce, and one time I was outside, I hadn't been going to church for a while because I couldn't figure things out. And I know y'all don't all need to hear all this, but I heard God in my driveway. I mean, he had a message from me and it was significant in my life. And it was just like, I'm telling you, if you were in my next door neighbor and you were standing in your driveway, I don't know why you couldn't have heard that. I know you probably

didn't. And sometimes I think that people sense and feel things like that stronger than other people.

Cristen (Interviewer) (53:17): Or even different seasons in your life where you're more drawn to that.

Lisa (53:23): I don't know, that's the only example I could-

Cristen (Interviewer) (53:25): No, I think that's a great example

Robert (53:27): The movie said the same thing. (Singing) This voice. And she was hearing it.

Lisa (53:32): I hear this voice and nobody else hears this.

Cristen (Interviewer) (53:33): Right, exactly.

Robert (53:34): Somebody else does.

Cristen (Interviewer) (53:39): Yeah. Yeah. Like the little lizard.

Lisa (53:41): I have a friend that always, when we go out and do stuff, she always tips all the time. Thank you for doing such a hard job. Somebody you would never think about giving a tip, not a waitress or anything like that. And I thought, gosh, I don't ever do anything like that. Certain people are called to do different things and I just saw it more in her. That calling of the sort.

Cristen (Interviewer) (54:07): That's really nice.

Lisa (54:09): I don't know if that's spiritual or not, I don't know. But that's what I saw.

Robert (54:20): In Colossians. Paul's letter, let me preface it. In one of my churches, I had a professor of physics at one of the universities who was in my congregation. And he and I had after the sermon, I preached and had a conversation about science and religion. And he said, Robert, as a physicist teaching physics, physicists have what they call the Colossian rule.

Cristen (Interviewer) (54:46): Really?

Robert (54:54): That's what I said. He said, yes. He said, because there is so much about creation of the universe that is beyond our understanding. We have a Colossian rule, which is in Christ, all things hold together. And you had that fifth spirit. You had all of those elements around. You had alienated human beings fighting each other. The one missing, unidentified spirit that pulled it all back together ended up in this thing Elsa. And I think that she wants the Christ figure in the sense that she was willing to dive deep and give her life and go "Show Yourself". Come on, God.

Cristen (Interviewer) (55:42): And there was that-

Robert (55:42): the unknown I'll do all of this.

Cristen (Interviewer) (55:45): That death and resurrection theme in there too. Yeah. Yeah. Okay.
Any other things we want to say before we wrap it up?

Carol (55:59): I loved it.

Cristen (Interviewer) (56:01): Yeah. Thank you for coming, Carol.

Rachel (56:03): You have done a wonderful job putting this all together.

Cristen (Interviewer) (56:06): Thanks, Rachel.

Rachel (56:08): And I wish you all the best on this dissertation-

Cristen (Interviewer) (56:10): Thank you.

Rachel (56:10): ... and your degree. And we're just going to have a gigantic party, celebrate
when it's all done. And thank you. This was so fun.

Cristen (Interviewer) (56:18): Thanks.

Robert (56:24): Would you remember that the comment was made that when you become Dr.
Mitchell, you don't have to go looking somewhere else for something to do because
somebody said there was consistency?

Cristen (Interviewer) (56:33): Yes. No, I know.

Robert (56:33): In your mind.

Cristen (Interviewer) (56:41): Yes, sir. Robert.

Abby (56:43): Just remember us when you're famous.

Cristen (Interviewer) (56:45): Okay. I'll do my best. Yeah. All right, folks. Well, you are free to
go. If anybody wants to stay and help tidy up, I'll appreciate it. But of course you do not
have to do that.

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