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The Cross-Cultural Transmission of Martin Luther's *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* into Indonesia Local Congregation Contexts

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Abstract

Adopting hymns from their original language into the local language is a daunting and challenging process. One of the problems that need to be tackled is the different social and cultural contexts that give significance to the adopted hymn. Martin Luther's hymn *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* is socially and politically rooted in the historic 16th-Century church Reformation. The hymn has been translated into countless languages and cultural contexts as the idea of reformation spread worldwide through Protestantism. Using an Ethnographic method through direct participation, this research aims to study the transmission of Martin Luther's hymn *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* from the 16-Century Reformation context into current Indonesian local churches contexts. The analysis of text, contexts, and singing activity shows the shifting of nuance and contextual meaning as the song is sung in the Indonesian local churches. However, there is an unchanging, timeless truth the hymn carries even though it is embodied in a different local congregation context.

Keywords: 'Allahmu Benteng yang Teguh', Allahmu Benteng yang Kukuh, Almighty Fortress is Our God, Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott, Martin Luther, Reformation Hymn, Hymn Translation, Congregational Song, Church Music

Transmisi Menyeberang Budaya Lagu Himne *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* karya Martin Luther ke dalam Konteks Gereja Lokal di Indonesia

Abstrak

Pengadopsian lagu-lagu hymnal berbahasa asing ke dalam bahasa lokal merupakan proses yang pelik dan menantang. Salah satu permasalahan yang harus diatasi berakar pada perbedaan konteks sosial budaya yang berperan penting dalam membentuk pemaknaan dari lagu yang diadopsi. Lagu hymne karya Martin Luther *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* memiliki akar historis yang lekat dengan konteks sosial dan politik jaman reformasi gereja di abad ke-16. Lagu tersebut telah diterjemahkan ke dalam berbagai konteks gereja lokal di seluruh dunia sejalan dengan tersebarnya ide reformasi dan aliran Protestan. Dengan menggunakan metode Ethnography melalui partisipasi langsung, penelitian ini menyelidiki proses transmisi lagu *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* dari konteks Reformasi abad-16 ke dalam konteks gereja lokal di Indonesia saat ini. Melalui penelaahan teks, konteks, dan aktifitas bernyanyi ditemukan adanya pergeseran nuansa lagu dan pemaknaan kontekstual lagu dalam konteks kehidupan jemaat gereja lokal di Indonesia. Namun demikian, ditemukan adanya kebenaran hakiki yang tidak berubah walaupun lagu hymne *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* dihidupi dalam konteks jemaat yang berbeda-beda.

Kata Kunci: 'Allahmu Benteng yang Teguh', Allahmu Benteng yang Kukuh, Almighty Fortress is Our God, Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott, Martin Luther, Himne Reformasi, Lagu Jemaat, Musik Gereja

The Protestant Reformation was one of Western history's most important theological, social, religious, and political episodes. In 2017, commemorating the 500 years of the Reformation, the Stephen Tong Evangelical Ministries (STEMI) hosted an international convention, REFO500. The convention was held in the Messiah Cathedral, a massive 4416-seat church building belonging to the predominantly Indonesian-Chinese Indonesian Reformed Evangelical Church (Indonesian: *Gereja Reformed Injili Indonesia* - GRII) Kemayoran, Jakarta. Attended by international guests, each session was presented in English, Mandarin, and Indonesian. Being a part of the packed house and euphoric congregation, I witnessed the hype of the moment. The representation of the international communities in the conference heightened the sense of unity as one global church and was visually and aurally striking. The enthusiastic participants from China, for example, were particularly standout, not only because of the Mandarin language they were using but also due to

the intense gesture and the aural magnitude they produced when it came to praying and singing. Loud singing, clapping of hands, spontaneous praying, and shouting were remarkably intense.

Singing was observably one of the euphoric moments throughout the conference. The song A Mighty Fortress is Our God was particularly meaningful because it was written by one of the reformers, Martin Luther, whose life and work received the spotlight at the convention. The hymn, being sung in three languages simultaneously, was remarkably powerful in unifying the voices of people from various nationalities and stirring up the spirit of Reformation. I could only imagine the participants' state of mind coming from different social and cultural backgrounds when they sang the hymn, which somehow empowered them to sing the song passionately. Participants from a relatively safe and comfortable social context might experience singing the hymn differently from Christian from the underground church in China, whose life is under threat day and night due to their faith. The same hymn tune and the same hymn text might impact people differently depending on their corresponding social context. It is of the interest of this writing to imagine how different social context shapes people's beliefs and understanding of the hymn and thus impact how they worship, and how their social context shapes their struggle and sense of identity, how they associate hymn tunes and hymn text with the social struggle that in turn impact their sense of identity. How, through singing, the local congregation negotiates meaning in times of trouble and fear? How through singing, they expressed their faith, hope, and conviction?

Historical Significance of the Hymn

Martin Luther's hymn *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* (A Mighty Fortress is our God) has a solid historical significance due to its association with one of the most important milestones of world history, the Reformation. The hymn's historical, social and political significance is reflected in Albert Bailey's description, "It was, as Heine said, the Marseillaise of the Reformation… It was sung in the streets… It was sung by poor Protestant emigrants on their way to exile, and by martyrs at their death… Gustavus Adolphus ordered it sung by his army before the battle of Leipzig in 1631… Again it was the battle hymn of his army at Lutzen in 1632… It has had a part in the countless monument at Wittenberg… An imperishable hymn! Not polished and artistically wrought but rugged and strong like Luther himself, whose very words seem like deeds."(Bailey, 1950)

Flashing back to the historical context when Luther's *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* was written in late 1520, we could imagine how the congregation at the time thought and felt when they sang

the hymn; how the singing of the hymn has helped them to articulate their faith and validate their life experience in a time of persecution. How the timeless truth the hymn carries resonated in the life context of the congregation at the time. The hymn was written loosely based on Psalm 46, the tune of which was uncertain whether it was Luther's.(Eskew, 1995) In paraphrasing the Psalm, Luther elaborates major themes identified in his commentaries on the Psalm: "God is our confidence and strength" and "the heathens must despair and the kingdom fall."(Loewe & Firth, 2018) This chorale depicts Luther's struggle with Satan (stanza 1), including his belief in the presence of the power of devils (stanza 3) and the triumph of Christ and God's kingdom over the forces of evil (stanza 4).(Eskew, 1995) The hymn was written to encourage the faithful in their struggle due to social and political unrest at the time. As Loewe & Firth reported, "it was intended as a propagandistic weapon in the spiritual and actual battles against the Reformation's many opponents."(Loewe & Firth, 2018) In the four centuries since the writing of the hymn, *Ein feste Burg* has often been appropriated as a hymn sung to reaffirm the earthly power and military prowess of Lutheran empires and German nationalists.

Interestingly, Luther's hymns were also given social and political significance among the Roman Catholic congregation. As reported by Gustav Hertel and cited by Loewe and Firth, 'The Catholic Magdeburg engaged in a massed marathon singing of Lutheran hymns to express their discontent with local Catholic authorities,' however, *Ein feste Burg* was not among the early Luther hymns sung in the protest. Loewe and Frith elaborate further that the hymn 'was written in the run up to the Marburg Colloquy (1529) in order to defend the doctrine of the real presence of the Lord's Supper against Zwingli, as put forward by Staats (1998) and van Stam (2002).' Staats and van Stam's interpretation of the 'single word' that would fell Satan in verse three was pointed to the words of institution in the Eucharist, where the word 'this is my body' is spoken. Such interpretation would, however, contradict Luther's suggestion found in his Weekday Sermons on John's Gospel that the little words are, in fact, the "I am he" that Jesus spoke at the moment of his betrayal when he was handed over to be crucified (John 18.5).(Loewe & Firth, 2018)

The two instances of how the hymn found its home in different congregations suggest that the same hymn could bear a different cultural significance. It is of the interest of this research to investigate how the truth engraved in the hymn text finds its overtones and amplification in the real world-context of the believers' life. Delineating the essential or fundamental meaning of the hymn from its cultural overtones could be very difficult. If one analyzes the text only without paying attention to its embedded context, it means taking away the rich overtones that shape the hymn's significance. However, failure to identify the hymn's essential or fundamental meaning from its, for example, social and political contexts will also cause problem, especially when the

hymn is transmitted to new cultural contexts. This paper will investigate the two aspects that entail the cross-cultural and cross-temporal transmission of the hymn: its translation and its embodiment in a new culture.

The English Translation

As Protestantism that carried the Reformation ideology was spread worldwide, the hymn that signifies the movement has also been transmitted and translated to many different cultures and languages. When the hymn was translated and used in a new cultural context, the original context of the hymn might be completely unknown nor relevant to the new community. It is only meant as far as the new community who owns it gives the hymn meaning through their social construct. The translation of hymns across cultures and languages is very complicated and challenging. As Tönsing describes, 'translating hymns is particularly difficult, as they are not only poetic texts but also require adherence to a particular, often foreign meter. One has to accept that one will not be able to take everything 'across the border.'(Tönsing, 2017)

The process of associating meaning to a congregational song that is otherwise simply there through routines of the confined environment often involves redefinition through scholarly invention.(Glassie et al., 2003) Scholarly interest in investigating the historical, social, and political context surrounding the writing of the hymn at the time will help promote the understanding of the cultural bearing and the theological depth the song carries. As stated by Schreiter, the fundamental purpose of the congregational study is 'to discover and grasp better the understandings of faith at work in a congregation.' There might be aspects of the context of origin that are irrelevant to the new community adopting the hymn.(Eisland, Nancy L. & Warner, R. Stephen, 1998) Observing how the new community adopts the hymn and associates the hymn with a new meaning might explain the pattern of change and continuity in the trans-cultural and trans-temporal translation of the hymn.

The hymn has been translated into countless languages and sung by congregations of various cultural backgrounds. Multiple variations of tune and rhythm are assigned for the translated text. We can easily find multiple English text translations online and in various printed hymn books. The Lutheran hymns mostly use the translation by Catherine Winkworth's, A mighty fortress, published in 1854 in Lyra Germanica.(Schreiter, Robert L., 1998) Most non-Lutheran hymnals commonly used English translation by Frederick H. Hedge, published in Furness's Gems of German Verse (1852) and Hymns for the Church of Christ (1853), a hymnal edited by Hedge

and Frederick Huntington. Hedge's translation, which closely follows Luther's words, is usually found in North American hymnals. Hedge's translation is commonly assigned to the modified isometric tune of *Ein feste Burg*, that have a consistent 4/4 meter and slightly different melody. Hedge's use of rhyming words at the end of each phrase and the use of symmetric phrase length and inflection provide the lyric with strong musical quality. A similar poetic trait can be found in yet another translation by Thomas Carlyle entitled A safe stronghold our God is still.

As described by Tönsing, Luther's original tune is rhythmically complex and almost dancelike. He explained further that there is no fixed underlying rhythm, and it swings from duple to triple time and back. When the hymn started to be translated, adjustments were made to make the melody and the rhythm more appropriate to the translation. Almost all Lutheran hymns print at least two versions of the tune. The Psalter Hymnal, for example, included two English text translations with different tunes assigned. Psalter Hymn (PHH) #448 uses a relatively new English translation by Michael A. Perry. His translation was published in the British Hymns for Today's Church (1982) and was claimed to "captures well the strong battle images that Luther's text magnified from Psalm 46: as we fight against the powers of hell, our hope is fixed on Christ whose "kingdom is immortal!" The other version (PHH #449) from the same Hymn book uses well known text translation by Frederick H. Hedge and the adapted tune with simplified rhythm. Wikipedia claims that the hymn has been translated to English alone more than seventy times.("A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," 2022) Identifying all the identifiable English translations would not be necessary. However, the fact raises a fair question of which text and tune version translate Martin Luther's hymn *Ein fester Burg* most accurately?

Translation accuracy might be an essential consideration before anyone attempts to write or introduce a new one to the congregation. However, one needs to consider the huge impact of changing the song text or tune that the congregation has internalized. Hymn tune and hymn text that has found their home in people's lives plays a role in articulating and validating people's faith and life experience. For better or worse, changing the tune or text of a well-known existing hymn has proven to be very hard and disruptive to the congregation's worship experience.

In the following section, I will examine the Bahasa Indonesia translation of the hymn, compared to the literal translation (abbreviated LT) by Farseth (Farseth, n.d.) and the English translation by Frederich Hedge. We will examine how the element of poetry is negotiated in the translation? What elements in the Indonesian translation are missing or altered compared to the LT and other English translations?

The Bahasa Indonesian Translation

The hymn translation of *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* has also been part of the worship song repertoire in many Protestant Churches in Indonesia. There are several versions of the Bahasa Indonesia translation, each with a slightly different musical interpretation. The widely known translation is *Allahmu Benteng yang Teguh*, which appears in the congregational hymn book *Kidung Jemaat.(Kidung Jemaat/Gereja dan Kerajaan Allah - Kidung, n.d.)* The *Kidung Jemaat* is one of the most commonly used hymn books by protestant churches in Indonesia. The hymnbook was compiled by the Indonesian Institute for Sacred Music (Indonesia: Yayasan Musik Gereja or Yamuger). The first publication appeared in 1986 under Gunung Mulia Christian Publisher Company (Indonesia: Badan Penerbit Kristen Gunung Mulia). It is now published under Yamuger. The Yamuger version of the hymn is widely known, especially in the circle of the Christian Church of Indonesia (Indonesia: Gereja Kristen Indonesia or GKI).

The Hymn of the Reformed Evangelical Federation (Indonesia: Kidung Persekutuan Reformed Injili or KPRI) under the synod of the Reformed Evangelical Church of Indonesia (Indonesia: Sinode Gereja Reformed Injili Indonesia or GRII) published the Bahasa Indonesia version of the hymn entitled Allah Jadi Benteng Kukuh.(Allah Jadi Benteng Kukuh (KPRI 17), n.d.) The KPRI version of the hymn has slightly different lyrics and rhythmic arrangements compared to the Yamuger version. Some local churches in urban cities, such as Karawaci Presbyterian Church (KPC), Christ Chapel Karawaci (CCK), and Evangelical Reformed Church of Indonesia (GRII), use the English version of the hymn in their Sunday service. The Bahasa Indonesia version of the hymn is more widely used. Interestingly, the various online YouTube presentation of *Allahmu Benteng yang Teguh* show different interpretations of the song in terms of meter, rhythm, and style (Rusli, 2016).

Examining The Lyric Translation

The translation by Frederich Hedge is the most widely used. From the outset, this version stands out due to the poetic translation. The lyric composition gives the poetry its outstanding quality. The syllabic rhyming at the end of each phrase elegantly shapes the phrasing and strengthens the sense of symmetry and balance. The YMG version doesn't follow poetic rhyming. The YMG word '*perisai dan senjata*' refers not to 'bulwark' indicated by FH but to the 'defense and weapon' from the LT. The archaic word 'bulwark' is quite unfamiliar to Indonesian.

The LT uses the strong word 'distress' and the present adverb 'now' (1.B), indicating the danger's intensity and the urgency of help. This strong nuance is missing from both the FH and YMG translation. The YMG denotes the general idea of God's real help in times of suffering, not necessarily expressing the reality of the first person's looming danger.

The YMG indicates the enemy as 'si jahat' (the evil one). The LT and FH identified the enemy more specifically as the 'old evil for' or the 'ancient foe,' referring to the old Satan. This very enemy dragged down the whole of humanity to sin through the disobedience of Adam. The word 'gravely' in the LT highlight the intensity of Satan's assault, a nuance that is missing from the YMG.

CODE	Literal Translation (LT)	Frederick H. Hedge, 1852 (FH)	Yayasan Musik Gereja (YMG)
1.A.i	A strong fortress is our God,	A mighty fortress is our God,	Allahmu benteng yang teguh,
1.A.ii	A good defence and weapon;	A bulwark never failing:	perisai dan senjata;
1.B.i	He helps us free out of all need [trouble],	Our helper He, amid the flood	betapa pun sengsaramu,
1.B.ii	Which us presently has struck. [Which has forcefully become the object of our concern or worry]	Of mortal ills prevailing.	pertolonganNya nyata!
1.C.i		For still our ancient foe	Si jahat yang geram
1.C.ii	The old evil foe, he means it earnestly now.	Doth seek to work his woe;	berniat 'kan menang;
1.D.i		His craft and power are great,	Ngeri kuasanya
1.D.ii	Great might and much guile are his horrible war equipment,	And armed with cruel hate,	dan tipu dayanya
1.E	On Earth is not his equal	On Earth is not his equal.	di bumi tak bertara.

Table 1: Text Analysis Verse 1

The comparison analysis above reveals a shifting of nuance regarding the intensity of the imminent danger and the urgency of help needed. In the original text in German (with the literal translation provided), repeated use of the time reference 'now' indicates the contextual struggle that is here and now and not in the form of the general idea of struggle. The repeated use of qualitative words such as 'grave,' 'great,' and 'dreadful' in referring to the enemy reflects the real sense of terror. The original text of the hymn reflects the real struggle of the congregation during the Reformation. The historical account of the social and political struggle that gives the song cultural significance is implied in the original text—however, the Bahasa Indonesia translation needs a re-contextualization that reflects the struggle of the faithful in its local cultural and social

context. Without a re-contextualization singing of *Allahmu Benteng yang Teguh* will be devoid of a sense of intensity and urgency. The idea of the enemy, threat, and danger reflected in the Indonesian translation would be reduced to the abstract spiritual realm that does not impact people's lives in a real sense. In the following section, we will examine how the singing of Martin Luther's hymn A Mighty Fortress is Our God finds new contextual meaning in the congregation's life in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Congregational Singing and Contextual Meaning

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has abruptly disrupted all aspects of communal life. In less than a month since the first Covid-19 patient was publicly announced on March 2, 2020, by Indonesian president Mr. Widodo, the local governments such as Jakarta Special District (DKI Jakarta) had ordered the closure of public places (March 14, 2020). The first closure of Schools took place on March 16, 2020, followed by the banning of the public religious worship meeting.(Media, 2020) The prohibition of public worship meetings that was intended to last for only two weeks continued for months as the pandemic worsened. Two years after the global onset of the virus, many public services in Indonesia were still grappling with whether to resume public services fully. Local churches were struggling in negotiating their mode of worship meeting from offline to online: whether to use live music or pre-recorded one, whether to have real-time or pre-recorded preaching, whether to use one-way broadcast or interactive-participatory worship or a combination of both. The dynamic negotiation among local church leaders in deciding which mode of worship to use challenges the assumed belief about the importance of bodily presence and participation in worship.

Disruption of Physical Presence and Embeddedness in Worship

Before the pandemic, KPC held Sunday service at the Hope building, an enclosed auditorium with no access to natural sunlight or natural airflow. The carpeted floor and the more or less 300 fabric upholstered chairs that occupied most of the space significantly contribute to the damping of the room acoustic. The wooden platform and wooden wall at the back of the platform do help to project sound coming from the stage; however, when the congregation fills the room speaking or singing on the stage without amplification can hardly be heard clearly from the audience side.

Acoustic grand piano, electric bass, amplified acoustic guitar, and Cajon are the typical musical setup for Sunday service. One liturgist, two or three standing singers, each with an assigned microphone, and an occasional additional violinist or cellist make up the whole music team. The sound engineer operating the sound console in the middle back of the room plays a vital role in mixing and regulating the balance of the sound. The sound-damping materials, including the on-site human bodies, help to shape the acoustic behaviour of sound waves projected from the sound speakers and sound monitors in such a way that the congregation can still hear their voices when it comes to singing. Sitting at the congregation side helped me to participate in active singing as I could still hear my voice and the voices of others sitting behind and next to me, despite the amplified sound of the music team.

The pandemic has disrupted the physical embeddedness of congregational singing in the regular place of worship. The isolation and physical distancing policy has also disrupted the congregation's bodily presence, which is essential in Christian worship. When the church gathers bodily, the sound it produces forms 'chorality.' Chorality is, as Stephen Connor puts it, "the sonorous actualizing of the otherwise abstract or merely attributive idea of a collectivity."(Engelhardt, "Congregation and Chorality: Fluidity and Distinction in the Voicing of Religious Community" in 2021) The spatial arrangement of the room, the room acoustic, the bodily presence of the congregation, the musical instruments, and the amplification system together contribute to shaping the distinct aural characteristic of Sunday morning worship at KPC. The sound of Sunday morning worship in this particular local church is unique. Such aural quality represents the church as the physical body.

At the onset of the pandemic, we were not sure how to hold Sunday worship amidst local government restrictions for religious gatherings. We could not worship in our regular place of worship. We experimented with several modes of worship, negotiating the use of space, time, worship structure, and method of delivery. As a response to the government announcement due to the escalation of the COVID-19 case, KPC Elders decided that starting on March 22, 2022, in place of regular Sunday Morning Worship, each family would uphold Sunday Morning Family Worship at home. A limited group of people would gather to worship on Sunday morning, which would be recorded and broadcasted so that the congregation could join online. This disruption has forced us to navigate difficulties and challenges. Taking turns with three other small groups, my family took part in providing the recorded worship materials. Providing the public broadcasting video was not an easy task to accomplish. Although I had the freedom to do a simple recording with minimal labour and time investment, I felt it unacceptable to provide recording materials less than the best I could do. So, I took the hard route in providing the broadcasting video. Each

Sunday service would take me three to four days of intense labor of arranging music, recording, editing, and mastering three to four hymn accompaniments. Prior to the recording session, my family would rehearse the singing. During the planned recording session, my wife and three children would dress up appropriately and sit in the assigned spots before the camera and some additional lights. During the recording session, which usually involved several takes, I would perform several roles: liturgist, prayer presider, song leader, and multimedia operator. It would take another five to six hours to cut unwanted materials, combine several video takes, smooth video transitions, edit and mix the audio, and so on, to finalize the liturgy of the worship. The final step is combining the liturgy part with the sermon and broadcasting them through the KPC YouTube channel for the following Sunday morning service. Congregation singing was then mediated through complex realization using analogue, physical, digital, and virtual means.

Disruption of Corporeal Identity

The online mode of worship changes the actualization of the collective individuals, the local church. While retaining family worship gathering help believers to realize corporeal worship, the absence of worship in the regular place deeply impacts the church's life. The physical gathering with other believers in the regular place of worship plays an important role in the emotional and spiritual health of the people. The YouTube worship broadcast robs the bodily presence in worship as a church. When such an opportunity is taken away, people realize something is missing from their 'spiritual diet.'

Physical presence and bodily engagement are fundamental in Christian worship. The promise of Christ's presence in the church is realized when two or three are gathered in his name. Taking the context of the disciples to whom Jesus delivered the promise, the idea of the virtual gathering was unthinkable. If the virtual union was an idea at all in that context, Jesus might need not to come to the disciples bodily in person. But that was not the case. He took the physical human form with blood and flesh. When Jesus instituted the Lord's supper, he took real bread and a real cup of wine and gave that to the disciples as a sign of the giving of his body; the very body that soon would be torn apart and the very blood that soon would be spilled for the forgiveness of sins. The Lord's supper celebrated by Christ's Church commemorates the spiritual union with Christ, yet it is realized through the physical taking of bread and wine.

In Christianity, the corporate union of believers bears a fundamental idea of the church as the earthly representation of the body of Christ. As the earthly corporate body of Christ, the church

meets regularly, 'upon the first day of the week.' The regular gathering of believers that has been the practice from the time of the apostles becomes the actual realization of the church. When the church meets, they celebrate the Lord's Supper (Acts. 2:42) and dedicate themselves to the apostle's teaching, praying, sharing, and giving (1 Cor. 16:2).

Saliers pointed out the idea of Christianity as a 'religion of the body and of song that is proclaimed and celebrated in the human idioms of ordered sound.' (Saliers, 2007) Singing, which has been an integral part of the life of the church, is made possible through engaging the physical world. Saliers pointed out, 'music-making and hearing arise from an engagement with the distinctive configurations of the physical world we inhabit.' Music and its practice are "inescapably bodily." How the embodied act of music-making relates to our spiritual life? Saliers explains that whatever affects us spiritually or mentally also resonates within our bodies. James MacMillan, as quoted by Begbie, explains, "We hear music, we experience music; viscerally physically. It's a sensual experience, the serious listening to music requires the activation of the mind as well as the senses."(Begbie, 2007) Further, MacMillan asserts that physical engagement with music becomes the portal to our spiritual core. For him, 'spirituality is not something you hive off into some kind of aesthetically pure, sanitized environment, but it's something that has come out of our natural, physical and corporeal existence.'

When the church meets, their sense of identity and unity is strengthened through music-making. In his research, Nathan Myrick examines 'the complex social and religious factors that facilitate the emotional efficacy of congregational song to generate relational strength and communal and individual religious identity in participants.'(Myrick, 2017) Music, as he explains, connects us in profound – often unrecognized – ways. The shunning of churches and the isolation of people during the pandemic weakened the emotional bonding among congregations. When at some point, the church could hold a limited gathering, the sense of identity as one church was strengthened through physical presence in the corporate worship. However, the mask-wearing and the physical distancing were felt as detrimental, as such restriction limits how people could interact properly. The tendency to avoid close contact with others hinders people from mingling and communicating before, during, and after worship. The atmosphere of fear that directs the way people behave, even as they gather, was seen as unhealthy physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually by the church leaders. One thing that strongly connects the physically-distanced congregation is the moments when they fill the room with their voices as they sing. When the congregation unifies their voices through music, the sense of corporeal identity is strengthened. Singing in worship enables one to hear his own voice and the voices of others. The distinctiveness of singing in church worship, as Steuernagel puts it, lies in "the need to hear, to feel, the voice of

the other as an actualization of the body of Christ through the sonic and visual performance of the community." Although limited due to mask-wearing and physical distancing, the presence of others is felt deeply through hearing and sharing voices.

Disruption of Sense of Security

Living in a red zone, a dense city of Kelapa Dua Tangerang, with five big hospitals nearby, including COVID-dedicated Siloam Kelapa Dua Hospital, Singing the hymn A Mighty Fortress is Our God was particularly meaningful for believers who were forced to live in isolation and were bombarded through social media with discouraging news of the soaring number of infected and death statistic caused by the highly contagious virus. I witnessed the terror of hearing the constant roaring of ambulances. The atmosphere of fear was real, like a hanging dark cloud above the city. The unprecedented number of death of family members, relatives, and close friends that happened one after another in a relatively short time had shattered many people's courage to live. No one felt safe anywhere, even living among close family members who, at some points, had to go out of the house to at least get food and supplies during isolation. In such a situation, singing the hymn Almighty Fortress is Our God perpetuates in our memory the timeless truth of God as our refuge and strength and the very present help in trouble (Psalm 46,1). Singing the hymn during the pandemic reminds us of God's promise of deliverance from terror by night, the arrow that flies by day, and the pestilence that walks in darkness, death, and destruction (Psalm 91,5-6). Singing of the hymn awakens people's hope and confidence in God, who is our refuge, that 'no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling' (v. 9). The singing of the hymn was instrumental in healing the community that was engulfed by terror and fear.

Summary and Reflection

The changing of the contextual significance of the hymn suggests that *Ein feste Burg* was not written for specific social or political agenda. When the congregation sings the hymn, they might associate the hymn message with their real-life struggle. The hymn carries universal truth about God and God's people. It calls believers to sing about the realm that alone will remain when all other principalities fall: the kingdom of heaven where God himself is a stronghold and place of shelter for those who share this belief.'(Loewe & Firth, 2018) The hymn carries a timeless truth that, over time and in different places, we may find its resonance in the life and struggle of the congregation who own that.

How does a timeless truth resonate in culture and tradition? How do we know? Elizabeth Phillips, in her work, Charting the "Ethnographic Turn": Theologians and the Study of Christian Congregation, suggests that doctrines (the way the truth is expressed proportionally) must be tested through "contact with lived experience."(Elizabeth Phillips, 2012) Citing Linbeck, Phillips describes the three existing models of theology as (1) cognitive-propositional, which views religion as a cognitive enterprise and doctrines as propositional descriptions of objective truth, (2) experiential-expressive, which views religion as personal experience and doctrines as expressions of inward feelings, attitudes, or orientations, and (3) the combination of these two attempted especially by ecumenical Roman Catholics. Beyond the three, a different model is proposed by Linbeck: a cultural-linguistic model that 'views religion as resembling cultures with languages and forms of life in which doctrines function as rules of discourse, attitude, and action.' He also suggested that 'sociological and anthropological methods may be used fruitfully as long as congregations' stories are learned and told with normative, not merely descriptive, intentions.' In line with Linbeck, Stanley Hauerwas, in his reflection on Christian Ethics for church-centered Seminary, emphasized that social-scientific methods are unhelpful to theologians only when they are employed so uncritically or rigorously as to "methodologically preclude the theological claims necessary for the church's intelligibility."(Elizabeth Phillips, 2012)

Such a promising view of the relationship between Theology and social sciences creates space for allowing theologians to 'deeply engage with and thickly describe social groups and realities – as social scientists have done – while not accepting the premises of social sciences but allowing the research to be shaped by theological traditions and normative concerns.'(Elizabeth Phillips, 2012) Phillips and Wards argue further that theologians 'should intentionally and carefully attend to the complex realities of the actual people involved in our day's compelling theological and social issues. Genuine attentiveness to people and genuine engagement with the complexities of their lives is only possible through research methods that take theologians beyond the desk and the library and into those lives.'(Elizabeth Phillips, 2012, p. 105)

Based on the above premises, I argue that the timeless truth, often expressed through the doctrinal proposition a hymn carries, might contribute to the shaping of culture and tradition. Culture and tradition, as Glassie explains, are 'constructed by individuals, and in that, they are constructed differently by people who, as a consequence of interaction within different environments.'(Glassie et al., 2003) Although Glassie did not explicitly discuss the element of belief or religion, we can assume that the individuals taking part in shaping society, culture, and tradition interact with their real-world context through sets of assumptions of realities that form their

worldview. In the context of the life of the local congregation, their worldview is represented in their liturgy, in which songs usually play key roles in preserving what they believe.

The hymn A Mighty Fortress is Our God carries a testimony of God as strong refuge and strength, whose presence and help in times of trouble is real. The congregation's life who owns the hymn is shaped by the timeless truth the hymns carry, both at an individual and societal level. The dynamic of their struggle dealing with the reality of their here and now trouble is shaped by their worldview drawn from and strengthened by the songs they sing. As they sing, such as the Chinese underground church congregation mentioned earlier, they negotiate with realities. Remembering what God had done in the past, they negotiate the present and anticipate the future. Singing of hymn creates space for the congregation to reorient their lives, rearrange their values, reshape their attitude, and rekindle their spirit. As the congregation sing, they anticipate the joyful hope of God's presence and God's helps that is never failing that entails the here and now and the already but not yet hopeful future of total deliverance.

The hymn perpetuates in our memory the timeless truth of God as our refuge and strength and the very present help in trouble (Psalm 46,1). Singing the hymn during the pandemic reminds us of God's promise of deliverance from terror by night, the arrow that flies by day, and the pestilence that walks in darkness, death, and destruction (Psalm 91,5-6). Singing of the hymn awakens people's hope and confidence in God, who is our refuge, that 'no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling' (v. 9). The singing of the hymn was instrumental in healing the community that was engulfed in terror and fear.

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