Asphaleia as a Digitruth

Constructing Ethical Virtue of doing Theology in Digital Literacy Era

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Abstract—Doing theology in the era of information disclosure and freedom of sharing, which is supported by technological advances, has caused a disruption, besides positive benefits for the church. Unfortunately, the negative behavior of sharing information online also affects the way many Christians in doing theology. The term theology is not only limited in an academic sense but also an act of sharing what is believed to be true regarding the Christian faith. This article aims to build an ethical virtue of doing theology in the digital world, employing various social media applications, in addition to publishing scientifically. By applying a descriptive method of interpretive analysis to the text of Luke 1:1-4, it was found that the word *asphaleia* was used by Luke as a guarantee of the truth of the information shared with Theophilus. In conclusion, the word *asphaleia* is a digital truth, or *digitruth*, which can be used as an ethical virtue for every Christian who wants to do theology in the digital world. This research provides benefits for the development of constructive theology by considering issues related to church behavior in the public sphere. In addition, this study also contributes to the construction of Christian ethical behavior in digital public spaces.

Keywords— asphaleia; digital era; digital literacy; digitruth; doing theology; luke 1

I. INTRODUCTION

Doing theology in the digital era has experienced many shifts in ways and patterns, especially in the outbreak of a pandemic that seems to insist churches and educational institutions to make social and cultural adaptations to virtual spaces. Internet technology-based worship is also an inevitable choice, so it takes a study that can be the theological basis of digital or virtual worship practices [1], [2]. The existence of worship with the application of live video streaming technology strongly supports the continuity of worship and service amid social restrictions that have an impact on the temporary closure of churches. Through this technology, the practice of home churches seems to be a trend of worship in this internet of things era [3]. Not only that, but church leaders also became fluent in using technology, either to provide spiritual feeding to church members who were served, or to share theological teachings with everyone surfing the web.

The digital world has become a space of actualization for many theologians so that the freedom to express theology often causes disruption. The act of attacking each other and discrediting certain groups or individuals seems no longer taboo to be displayed in a vulgar manner on YouTube channels and can be accessed by many people. Each people considers their theology to be the most correct, so the diversities tend to be interpreted as rivalries in a negative sense [4]. Digitalization, on the other hand, has spread disruption to the world of theology [5], so that some kind of ethical control is needed so as not to be trapped in a fragmented pattern of the theology of identity. The theological institution is a think tank that should be able to take on an ethical role and function in doing theology without insisting on a uniform color of theology. Every lecturer is a theologian who is required, academically, to produce theological works that can build togetherness in the diversity of doctrines.

Doing theology by utilizing digital literacy media is an actualization space for academics [6] to produce theological works that can be freely accessed by everyone. However, simultaneously, the advancement of this digital technology gives such a warning for all theologians could ensure the originality of their works. Thus, theologians must avoid infringement, like plagiarism, in doing theology. This article aims to suggest an ethical virtue based on Luke 1:4, for all theologians in doing theology.

II. METHOD

This paper constructively examines the ethical virtue of doing theology in the digital age. The method used is a descriptive analysis of the text on Luke 1:4, where the Greek term *asphaleia* is used by Luke as an indication of the true data information and originality of his theological work, the Gospel of Luke. With the approach of literature research, this research uses various sources such as books, journal articles, and proceedings to show the disruption of theology influenced by the freedom of literacy in the digital age, so that requiring a biblical studies-based value.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. The understanding of asphaleia

Luke mentions his Gospel with a term of *proto logos* (Acts 1:1), or the first treatise, as a work containing elements of scientific research, as Siahaan also says [7]. That's why, Luke could ascertain what was written to Theophilus as truth, or factually based (Lk. 1:4). He was not only present in the field to obtain ethnographic data (*parakoloutheo*), but also investigated it carefully and thoroughly (*akribos*), before finally compiling it into a systematic work (*kathekses*). Luke was not alone in seeking information from the news that was going viral at the time; others also try to do the same, before finally sharing the information found to the public.

The history of Jesus was indeed an interesting piece of information to share with the public in Luke's time. It is indicated by emerging other gospels, out of what has been received in the New Testament canon. The news presented by those other gospels was certainly different from the canonical gospel and most destructive. The certainty and legality of a doctrine are urgently needed to build the foundation of the Christian faith, and Luke assured it. He dared to guarantee the truth (*asphaleia*) of the shared work (Lk. 1:4).

The term *asphaleia* appears only three times in the New Testament (Lk. 1:4; Acts. 5:23; 1Thes. 5:3), which means true, or safe. Strelan said that even if the word is used to affirm the truth of Jesus' facts, it can also be understood as an argument that does not contain contradictions [8]. The word is interpreted as "safe" and "sound" because even if it allows for arguments and contradictions, it does not interfere with the shared truth. Furthermore, the word *asphaleia* is an expression of information, or reports, or even teachings, that is shared publicly and can be accounted for.

This is what Luke asserted about his first writing, which was later referred to as Luke's Gospel. Luke himself calls it a logos, with an emphasis on the essence of logos which is a science that can be accounted for its validity. It is at this level that the notion of *asphaleia* is used as a virtue of theological literation. The accuracy of the data and it is processing methodologically is characteristic of logos in Luke's time, especially with the context of the Greek philosophical world that became his intellectual habitat.

B. Ethical Virtue of Doing Theology

Ethical virtue is mostly needed in doing theology in virtual spaces that take place in the digital community. What is meant by doing theology is not only limited to producing theological works in the form of books used among academics, or theologians in theological schools only. Every Christian, even the layman, can do theology in the era of freedom of expression in the digital space, using a variety of social media applications available. Not even a few also packaged theology as a way of increasing popularity in the digital world. For this reason, sometimes people no longer care about the content of their theology, because sensationalism often brings popularity in the form of an increasing number of followers.

Meanwhile, in the environment of theological education institutions, academics are required to be able to produce theological works in the form of journal articles published online. In the last three years, there has been a kind of awakening of consciousness to conduct publications in Christian religious colleges. Lecturers get a wide-open actualization space, penetrating local, even national boundaries [9]. Online publication media provides an opportunity for everyone to become a theologian recognized by the international world [10]. However, simultaneously, digital technology has also presented a tool that functions as a warning against theological works in order can be accounted for their originality.

Every lecturer, as a theologian as well, is ethically required not to be trapped in plagiarism literacy. Plagiarism is a sin among academics in general, especially in theological institutions context. That is why, from the most common level to the academic one, where all could do theology using social media, it takes an ethical standpoint. Ethical virtue could prevent ethical violations in doing theology, especially regarding the theological content that is shared; whether does it have *asphaleia*.

C. Constructing a Digitruth

The term *asphaleia* is a virtue that serves as a control for every theologian making ethical-theological considerations, that what is shared through digital devices can be accounted for. The term is not only an ethical label, but also a certainty in using data that does not contain hoaxes, besides showing the stages reflecting logical argumentation, and resulting in the truth. This is not about a dogmatical truth, yet a methodological and theological one instead. Ethical virtue is a

guarantee of truth in doing theology with digital literacy, not about theology and its content, which could be "wrong" in the perspective of other groups or theological traditions.

Building a habit of ensuring the truth of information shared in the digital world becomes the essence of *asphaleia*, and can be taught to church members, who, at the same time, are members of digital world groups. It is about truth in literacy that is widely disseminated in the era of the internet of things, so that every believer, especially theologians, does not merely collect followers and increase the popularity with sensational issues. This is about constructing a digital truth (*digitruth*), which will guide everyone's doing theology in the digital space, in a disruptive era.

IV. CONCLUSION

Considering the theological strength built in the Gospel of Luke, which proposed proven data and facts, and could be accounted for, thus doing theology in the digital world of this disruptive era should pay attention to an ethical virtue, so-called by Luke with the term *asphaleia*. Doing theology in the digital world, due to sharing the work or theological insight, is most important to have a guarantee of the validity of the information employed, so could avoiding the nature of hoaxes. Therefore, every Christian, and theologian, must have *asphaleia*, as *digitruth*, which guarantees the work that is shared.

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