

17 November 2017

NECF Media Statement

Height of Presumption as MAIS Suggests Government Agency Can Edit Scriptures

NECF is both appalled and deeply disturbed by the suggestion of MAIS through their lawyer, Hanif Mohamed, as reported on the 15th November 2017 by Malay Mail Online under the heading “Mais: Dewan Bahasa can prepare BM Bible to correct Christians’ ‘Allah’ use”.

It is our fervent belief that the fundamental right to profess, practice and to propagate one’s religion includes the right to pray in the name of their God is guaranteed under Article 11(1) of the Federal Constitution. BM speaking Christians have been using the word, “Allah”. To them, that name for God carries spiritual meaning that has been passed down from one generation to another. This is born of centuries of usage of the word which has never harmed or caused any problem for people of other faiths. To now deny them the use of that word is not only an infringement of their rights under Article 11 of the Constitution, it also takes away the full spiritual identity of God from every prayer, every baptism and every sermon. Nobody and no party can dictate how Christians should call their God, in whatever language.

Article 11(3)(a) makes it clear that every religious group has a right to manage their own religious affairs including the translation of their Holy Scriptures, subject only to public order, public health and morality. Therefore, no one, including “Dewan Bahasa”, can rename the God of that particular religion for whatever reason or claim the right to translate the Holy Scriptures.

The Holy Scriptures used by Christians must also be translated accurately, without loss, change or distortion of the meaning of the original text. The literary forms in the original text such as poetry, prophecy, narrative, exaltation, doctrines, beliefs, tenets of faith must be translated faithfully to the original historical and cultural context with understanding of the political, ideological, social, cultural and theological thinking at the time when those Scriptures were written or given. This can best be done by Christian scholars who are highly qualified in the study of the Holy Scriptures who also believe in its inspiration but more importantly, by those who are the recognized and authorized translators of the Christian religion represented by the Body of Churches.

MAIS' attempt to deny the use of, "Allah", by Christians is already very upsetting to the Christian community and going on to suggest that a government agency like "Dewan Bahasa" should translate the Holy Scriptures only adds insult to the injury. We urge the government to make it clear that it will uphold the rights of the Christian minority religion guaranteed under our Constitution.



Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng
Chairman