



## **PERSATUAN GEREJA-GEREJA DI SARAWAK** (ASSOCIATION OF CHURCHES IN SARAWAK)

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Association of Churches in Sarawak (ACS) expresses our strongest objection to Statements by Member of Parliament from Pasir Puteh, YB Dr. Nik Muhammad Zawawi Bin Haji Salleh during the 14<sup>th</sup> Dewan Rakyat Parlimen on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2020 at 2.57 pm.

The Association of Churches in Sarawak considered the following statements made by PAS YB Pasir Puteh as offensive and unacceptable:

- (1) *"Saya kira tidak ada agama sebenarnya yang membenarkan penganutnya untuk minum arak. Tidak ada. Agama Buddha, agama Hindu, agama-agama ini tidak membenarkan."*

The above sweeping statement claims that no religion allows its followers to drink alcohol is unsubstantiated.

- (2) *"Terima kasih kepada Yang Berhormat Beruas. Saya minta Yang Berhormat Beruas supaya dia mengkaji betulbetul fakta-fakta agama yang ada termasuk kalau dalam agama Kristian yakni fakta sebelum daripada Kitab Injil ini dipesongkan ataupun diubah."*

The statement that "Kitab Injil ini dipesongkan ataupun diubah" alleging that "The Gospel is distorted or changed" crosses into the boundary of religious sensitivity and is deemed to be an insult to all Christians who hold the Bible as sacred and holy.

Though the learned PAS MP Pasir Puteh cited these as coming from his PhD research in comparative religion, and is using them to state his point against consumption of alcohol during his debate on the Road Transport (Amendment) Bill 2020 in Parliament, ACS strongly condemns these insensitive statements against other religions and in particular Christianity.

First, his statement above (1) that no religion allows consumption of alcohol is simply generalised. I will not be drawn into making claims nor speaking on behalf of the teaching or tenets of other religions as had been done by YB Pasir Puteh. I will only respond to statement (2) above as the ACS Chairman, in solidarity with all the Heads of Churches. ACS represents the Christian community, which forms the largest majority of followers in Sarawak.

ACS considers the view and statement of YB Pasir Puteh as direct insult on the Holy Bible, the most Sacred Book for all Christians. This is considered as serious and unacceptable since these statements were openly said and recorded in the official transcript of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dewan Rakyat Parlimen on 26<sup>th</sup> August at 2.57pm onwards.

In Sarawak, harmonious living through mutual respect and acceptance is highly treasured and is a daily way of life. ACS considers such statements from PAS YB Pasir Puteh as inflammatory and disrespectful to all people of goodwill who seek to live in harmony in Sarawak and in Malaysia. ACS respects the right of every person to his or her opinion. When this becomes an insult against religion, ACS strongly rejects such form of religious imposition from YB Pasir Puteh on Christianity and other religions.

Political leaders are to set the example of civility, and work for harmony for the common good of all people. As citizens of Malaysia, ACS holds the Dewan Rakyat Parlimen in highest regard and believes that all issues are to be addressed in a rational and civil manner. Crossing the boundaries into religious sensitivity with insults against Sacred Scriptures and teaching of any religions is deemed totally unacceptable in such an august setting. ACS reiterates that debates in parliament should be based on rational facts and reasoning not religious sentiments or opinions.

ACS demands that such statements by Member of Parliament from Pasir Puteh, YB Dr. Nik Muhammad Zawawi Bin Haji Salleh be retracted in Parliament and an apology be duly issued. Such insensitive statements with strong allegation against another religion should never be allowed to stand without being rectified. It goes against the spirit of the Federal Constitution and MA63 which guarantee the right of all citizens to religious freedom.

ACS is committed to inter-racial and religious harmony and to contribute towards nation building through mutual respect and acceptance among people of all race, religion and status in Sarawak and in our nation Malaysia.



Archbishop Simon Poh.  
Chairman ACS (Sarawak).  
28<sup>th</sup> August 2020