

Shincheonji Church of Jesus France Renounces Claims Made by Former Member in Le Parisien Defamation Article

Shincheonji Church of Jesus France directly refutes Le Parisien's report as a generalization, citing "distortion of facts, provocative expressions, and defamation of the faith community."



Chicago, Illinois Apr 16, 2025 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - The Japanese-French daily newspaper *Le Parisien* reported on the Shincheonji Church of Jesus in a distorted manner in an article dated April 7. The Church stated its official position, saying, "The reputation of the church and its members has been seriously damaged." The church pointed out that the article was biased, as it excessively highlighted one-sided claims of those who left and hardly reflected the true character of the religious organization as a whole.

The article in question was titled "*They Treated Us Like Animals*," and was based on the personal testimony of an anonymous member of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus. The article defined the church as one of the "problematic evangelical groups" in France. It included content about training camps, severed personal relationships, and demands for money. However, the church noted that only two sentences in the article reflected its position.

A church official criticized, "We faithfully submitted thousands of written answers to the 12 questions sent in advance by the reporter, but only two sentences were reflected in the text of the article. This is

less than 1% of the answers given, seriously limiting the opportunity to convey a balanced perspective to readers.” He also said, “Judging by the fact that the report was published 4 hours after the response was delivered to the reporter, we could see that it was already a unilaterally prepared, targeted slander article.”

He added, “If writing alone was not enough, we could have actually visited the church, confirmed the religious site, and listened directly to the voices of the believers currently practicing faith.” He further stated, “The church is ready to respond to open communication with the media at any time.”

To reflect the actual experiences of the believers, the church also disclosed testimonies from current members. Teresa (29), who has been attending for 6 years in Paris, said, “Faith is something you do voluntarily. Here, I got to know God properly and learned how to act as a light in the world as a person of God.” Another believer, Mr. Axel (30), said, “Before I came to Shincheonji Church, I was looking for the meaning of my life. After practicing faith in Shincheonji Church, I was able to realize what God wants, and I love doing God’s work. During my mission, I was able to go on trips that I like and meet my wife at church. I am living a very satisfying life.”

Regarding the title of the article, “*They Treated Us Like Animals*,” the church stated, “After hearing that expression, the church and its members were very surprised and embarrassed. This is because no one has ever been treated that way and no one thinks so. It was just used as a provocative article title to get attention,” he said. The church explained, “In reality, we do not allow threats or stigma towards those who leave, and we have a culture that respects each individual’s choices even after leaving.”

Responding to the member’s claim that she “broke up with [her] boyfriend due to the demands of the church,” the church countered, “It’s not true. The man in question was a believer who attended church together at the time, and I understand that he actually wanted to get married. However, the woman said she had no intention of getting married right away. The breakup was a decision based on conversation between the parties and personal religious concerns. There is absolutely no fact that the church induced or forced any choice.” He explained, “Dating and marriage are personal areas based on autonomy and responsibility, and linking this to church control is not true,” he emphasized.

Additionally, the church took issue with some of the interview content, stating that it included situations the interviewee had not actually experienced. “It was reported that the photo showing feet on a radiator was ‘corporal punishment,’ but this photo had nothing to do with corporal punishment and was taken before the interviewee even entered the church.” “The person in the photo is a man who is still a believer in the church. At the time, he did it as if he could pose like that, and someone else took the photo for fun. After reading this article, the man in the photo was embarrassed, and he plans to file an official complaint with the media about his photo being used without his consent and being reported completely differently from the photo’s intent.”

The church said, “It is very regrettable that the media quoted and reported such a statement without verifying the facts, as it could give readers a biased perception of all Shincheonji Church of Jesus as an unreasonable organization.”

Regarding the “training camp” mentioned in the article, the church stated, “The program is for those who wish to grow in faith.” Some missionaries are 100% autonomous. “It was a short-term training I participated in,” he explained. “It consisted of a schedule such as morning prayer and meditation on the Word. Participants could stop the camp at any time, and there was no physical punishment or coercion at all. However, we are aware that there is a possibility of misunderstanding from outside perspectives, and we are not currently operating the program.”

Regarding claims of collecting personal information, restricting internet use, and forcing members to sever family relationships, the church stated, “This is completely untrue, and we do not collect any information other than the minimum for religious counseling.” He emphasized, “We have never restricted internet use or external relationships, but rather encourage believers to live exemplary lives within their families and in society.”

Regarding the use of the name “ECA Academy,” he explained, “It is the name of a Bible education program used temporarily in 2019, and it was clearly announced at the beginning of class that it was affiliated with Shincheonji Church of Jesus, and thereafter, the decision to join or not was completely autonomous.”

In relation to this report, the Shincheonji Church of Jesus France requested that the media adhere to the following principles:

- comprehensive coverage that reflects diverse perspectives and experiences
- sufficient reporting of the church's official position and response
- providing fair reporting opportunities on the legitimate experiences and voices of currently active believers
- establishing a reporting culture that respects religious freedom and the dignity of believers
- avoiding the promotion of prejudice through provocative expressions and titles

A church official emphasized, “Biased reporting on a specific religion or faith-based community can result in imposed stigma and prejudice on good believers and undermine religious freedom and human rights,” and added, “The media should capture diverse voices based on complete information and mutual respect, rather than a provocative approach that induces hatred.”

He continued, “We hope that all media, including *Le Parisien*, will maintain higher ethical standards and balance when reporting on religion, and Shincheonji Church of Jesus will continue to do its best to promote proper understanding through transparent communication and open dialogue.”

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Website: <https://www.shincheonji.org/>

NHNE Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/scjchurch_en

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@ShincheonjiChurch_en/featured

Free Theology Course Interest Form: <https://forms.gle/VzGdi9zGUTZJ83nBA>



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Source : The Chicago Church

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