

Newspaper Catches Rick Warren Fibbing?

Says Saddleback confirmed its report on 'Chrislam' accurate



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When an Orange County Register article about Rev. Rick Warren of Saddleback Church's mission to heal differences between evangelical Christians and Muslims was published, some of the pastor's critics saw it as more evidence of a blurry vision of "Chrislam," a blending of Christianity and Islam, despite his repeated denials.

The Feb. 23 article cited Saddleback documents that see similarities between Christianity and Islam. One co-authored by Jihad Turk of the Christian-Muslim Consultative Group in Los Angeles and Abraham Meulenberg, pastor of Interfaith Outreach at Saddleback claims the two religions "worship the same God."

While many supporters of Warren insist that claims in the article are false, the Register reporter and an editor at the paper told WND that Saddleback Church leadership confirmed that the article was "factually accurate." "Folks at Saddleback initially made but then withdrew a request for a clarification to the story's first paragraph," reporter Jim Hinch told WND in an email. "Instead of the words 'Muslims and Christians worship the same God' they wanted the story to read 'Muslims and Christians believe that God is one.' The rest of the story, they said, is factually accurate." WND calls and emails to Warren were not returned.

Despite his staff's acknowledgement to the Register that the article is factually accurate, Warren denied claims in the article by pointing the finger at the reporter for "getting it wrong." "This is an example of why I always doubt what I read in newspapers and blogs about ministries," Warren said in a statement sent to church members. "Secular reporters trying to cover churches and theological issues often get it wrong," he said. "But then *Christian* bloggers, instead of contacting the ministry, blindly believe, quote and repost the errors made by secular reporters. Then those errors become permanent, searchable, and global on the Internet," he continued. "I couldn't count the number of times a secular reporter has gotten a story about Saddleback wrong but then it is perpetuated by Christians who never fact-check. And the three factors I mentioned about the Internet make it impossible to correct all the misperceptions, and outright lies that get repeated over and over."

The Register's Hinch, who has worked as a senior editor at Guideposts magazine, told WND that numerous pastors at Saddleback were contacted about his article, and each one of them told him Warren would not be made available for comment for the story. One pastor even emailed Hinch to say that "leadership decided they don't want the work of King's Way to be published." "King's Way" is a document that was a central focus of the Register story.

The document was unveiled at Saddleback Church in December to an interfaith audience of more than 300 Muslims and Christians. It reportedly was co-authored by Meulenberg and Turk. The five-page document, which outlined similarities between the two religions, was introduced through a slide presentation at the event. Under the heading "A Path to End the 1,400 Years of Misunderstanding Between Muslims and Christians," the presentation included Bible verses and Quran verses side by side to make the case that the God for both religions are one in the same.

One example was titled "Who we believe in," followed by "God is the Creator – Genesis 1:1, Al Shura 42:11" ...

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