

NYTimes Socrates, Jesus and

In an article on the Op-Ed Page on Jan. 16, Evan G. Koons, principal of Exeter Junior High School in Reading, Pa., likened Richard M. Nixon's situation to the fates of Jesus and Socrates. His views drew a number of letters, some of which are excerpted here.

To the Editor:

To argue, as Evan G. Koons has done, that Richard M. Nixon stands in the tradition of Socrates and Jesus is to misconstrue the intent of both philosophy and Christianity.

Moral character is validly assayed neither by the findings of a court of law nor by the kind of distorted comparative biography that Mr. Koons has employed. Moral character is determined, rather, by conscientious response to ethical principle and is therefore known with certitude only to God and the individual concerned.

In the absence of this certitude, public opinion probably provides the best external contemporary estimate of moral character that is available. In the long run, history must judge. History has judged that public opinion was correct in ancient Athens and Jerusalem where the verdicts against Socrates and Jesus were not popular. It remains for history to judge whether public opinion is correct about Richard M. Nixon today.

The Rev. ROBERT NEWMAN BARGER
University of Illinois
Champaign, Ill.

To the Editor:

I, and my family, also feel that President Nixon has been unjustly treated "by the court of public opinion."

If I had an opportunity to cast my vote again, I would still vote for Richard M. Nixon!

Thank you again!

O. MONCHAK
Northfield, N. J.

To the Editor:

Sheer blasphemy!

ISABEL JACKSON
Port Jefferson, N. Y.

To the Editor:

I've lived a long time and been a reader of The New York Times for over 55 years, but this is the limit.

Why do you publish such trash? Is this your conception of freedom of speech and press? Newsprint is too expensive and short in supply.

LOUIS KARPF
Miami Beach, Fla.

To the Editor:

According to Mr. Koons, the Second Coming has already taken place. Does the Pope know?

SARAH J. GROSS
Valley Stream, N. Y.

To the Editor:

When Mr. Koons places Richard Nixon among Socrates and Jesus, he does so without the aid of logic.

Socrates searched for truth; Nixon has done everything in his power to hide truth from the people. Jesus threw the money moguls out of the temple; Nixon invited them in to finance his re-election. Jesus opposed violence; Nixon forced Americans to destroy the entire area of Southeast Asia, where we had no right to be involved at all.

SHELDON A. HOROWITZ
Bronx, N. Y.

To the Editor:

As a fellow educator, I must gently chide Mr. Koons for failing to do his homework—certainly, not his Bible homework.

I doubt whether he ever read the Old or New Testament. How can anyone who has ever read them believe that a modern-day Jesus could have ordered the Christmas bombing? Can any student of the Bible imagine a modern-day Jesus at home in the royal

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compound at San Clemente? Or in the plush, well-guarded hideaway in Key Biscayne?

Can one imagine Jesus, as a head of state, requiring his fellow citizens to pay more than one-quarter of their income in taxes, while he, with an income perhaps forty times higher, pays practically nothing?

EMMANUEL ROSEN
Central High School,
Valley Stream, N. Y.

To the Editor:

I found Evan G. Koons's analogy of Christ and Socrates to Richard Nixon intellectually and morally offensive, as well as inaccurate. Aside from the obvious difference between public accountability and impeachment (which is not yet even imminent, much less completed) and execution, a distinction which Mr. Koons blurs, his essay contains several flagrant distortions of history.

Unlike our "martyred" President, neither the rabbi nor the philosopher spent his adult life seeking the temporal self-aggrandizements of wealth and political power. While Jesus fatally opposed a morally bankrupt social order, "this good kind man," Mr. Nixon, presides over one. Even though Socrates was unjustly condemned, he chose the hemlock over an ignominious repudiation of his words and deeds. I

wonder if our President will swallow his medicine, whatever it may be, with similar dignity and magnanimity.

Mr. Koons's pious distortions of history and his slanders against two moral giants would be reprehensible from any quarter. However, the fact that Mr. Koons is a professional educator makes his ignorance of our civilization's history more than outrageous. While Mr. Koons's inalienable right to support and defend the President is beyond challenge, no matter what his occupation is, his failure to understand our civilization's history and hence its ethics calls into question his effectiveness as an educator.

I hope, for his sake, that President Nixon can number among his supporters some people who have read and understand his Platonic dialogues and the Gospels more perceptively than Mr. Koons has. For if such people had had the President's ear at the outset, Watergate, "the tapes," I.T.T., and impeachment, would perhaps not be household words today.

JAMES BLOOM
New York City

To the Editor:

I suggest that Mr. Koons still believes in Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy and the Easter Bunny.

R. E. GILBERT
Hempstead, N. Y.