



O'NEILL: Christian roots are democratic roots

By [Terry O'Neill - The Tri-City News](#)

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FACE TO FACE: Should Canada formally recognize Easter's Christian roots?

What have I done? I challenged my colleague this week to a debate on whether Canada — as a society and as a country — should do more to celebrate the contribution the Christian faith has made to the way we live. I admit I am now being nagged by the thought I've bitten off more than I can chew in 375 words.

Nevertheless, onward we go. I'll begin by noting that I am gratified that our country continues to mark this day, Good Friday, along with Easter and Christmas as official holidays, even though the original meaning of the word, holy day, no longer registers on most people's personal radar.

My colleague is more than happy to continue to "celebrate" these special days in a secular sort of way but recoils at my proposal there be some new and more encompassing way to honour the faith that I say has given such vigorous life to the western, democratic way of life that is flourishing so well in our country.

So, where to begin? Let's start with the writings of German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who, in opposing Christianity, described an attribute of the faith with which my colleague must surely agree: the "crazy" concept of equality of souls before God. "This concept," Nietzsche wrote in *The Will to Power*, "furnishes the prototype of all theories of equal rights." In other words, a central element of our democracy, equality of all citizens, owes its existence to Christianity. I would say that's something worth celebrating.

There's much more. In *What's So Great About Christianity*, Dinesh D'Souza goes so far to declare (quite rightly, I say): "Christianity is responsible for the way our society is organized

and for the way we currently live.” From laws and economics to arts and cultural priorities, it all began with the Christian message.

My opponent will no doubt claim that our modern, multicultural way of life precludes any overt celebration of Christianity’s unique contribution to our country’s success.

It seems clear to me, however, that the more multicultural we become, the more we need to honour the source of the ideas that gave birth to a society in which so many different peoples can live together in peace and harmony.

An award-winning journalist, a writer with Edmonton's Report Magazine and Toronto's Catholic Insight magazine, and co-host of RoadkillRadio.com, Face to Face columnist Terry O'Neill is a long-time Coquitlam resident who sits on the board of the Coquitlam Foundation and chairs the finance committee of St. Joseph's Catholic parish.

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