

*Common Ground*, by Bob Beckel and Cal Thomas, © 2007 by Harper Collins, confirmed me in my efforts to stand for right, despite the name-calling and misrepresentation this book threw at those I work with. A couple of times it said in sotto voce that a few people act partisan because of good motives instead of greed, and that the book wasn't about them (nevertheless, it proceeded to rip into Focus on the Family). It should have stressed that some things need to be opposed, no matter what the cost is to agreement. Instead it called people polarizers, extreme, right-wing, etc., and ignored the standard of right they were trying to uphold. No such treatment was given to the ones who *are* polarizers, extreme, and *left-wing*.

Common ground needn't be achieved under the guise of both sides are equal. There was no common ground between Peter and the Sanhedrin (Acts 8). Like Peter, I want to do what the risen Christ wants me to do, no matter what. When we say both sides are equal and we need to work together, the other side wins. We need to strive to know God's truth and represent it. We need to do the best we can to be faithful to it. We can enter the political arena being wise as serpents, but gentle as doves. The Lord keeps those who fight that fight, as they stay their minds on Him and let His power work in them (Isaiah 26:3; Ephesians 3:20). The godless, which we all are without God, do not rule well.

Indeed, there is a poison in politics we need to be aware of. I know someone, who Beckel would say was dropped on her head as a baby (ugh!) - if she weren't of his party. She means well and (somehow) feels her stances are compatible with the Bible. She doesn't challenge me much anymore. If we had to work together on these issues we would (ironically) work against each other, but I can see us still being friends.

On the other hand, I know someone else whose vitriol spues whenever Bush's name is mentioned. "He's my friend," I keep saying, trying to get him to be civil. When Obama's name came up the other day, I was informed, "He's his hero." I said that maybe I should start cutting him down like he does my friends. As he kept working, I saw a half smile come to his face. I know he's picked up his hate from the politics of others, so his wry smile gave me hope that maybe he's hearing me now.

I'm glad not to defend my stances, but that doesn't mean I'm not vigilant. Through being educated, well-read, involved or close to the action, and wise, we can be pretty good at spotting bias and ignorance, in ourselves and others. We should want the truth, seek after it, and tell others about it. But there's a battle for power against the powers of darkness, who have the advantage of using any dirty, strife-filled trick they want. Jude (verse 21) tells us to keep ourselves in the love of God.

How can Cal Thomas find common ground with someone who is against everything he stands for? Some common ground. He did present his side here and there, but I wonder if anyone who didn't agree with him initially would read that part. Is he doing any good sharing a book, editorial column, and TV program with Beckel? Beckel antagonizes. I wonder if Thomas's congeniality is making any headway. The book has a polarized tone itself, so accomplishes nothing except to stir the pot it's trying to soothe. Surely Beckel set the tone, which is why I list him first as author. Because of its

tone, it's not even useful in the history it presents. It had potential, but failed to deliver. It is garbage material.