

# The Vatican Has Her Back to the Wall

So said a leading French cardinal in a public attack on a high-ranking cardinal in the Roman Curia. Because of that, said the French cardinal, certain decisions “cannot suffer further delay” and must be made “promptly.” What decisions? The French cardinal cited certain “disciplinary and doctrinal knots” — e.g., sexuality, marriage, and the role of women in the Church.

Now, it’s our understanding that decisions about those matters were authoritatively made long ago by the Church, and that there are no “knots” here — certainly no *doctrinal* knots — that need untying.

The French cardinal continued: “The times we live in are marked by a profound evolution of the moral...conscience. Couldn’t this evolution bring us [in the Church] something new...something that would present itself in a ‘rationality’ other than that of antiquity and of the Middle Ages?... Should we not further expose some of our concepts and practices to the challenge of the rationality and the sensitivities of today...?”

For those of us familiar with the code language of cardinals, it’s clear that the French cardinal was saying that the Church is stuck in antiquity and the Middle Ages, and needs to appease the Spirit of the Times by overhauling her teachings.

The mindset of that French cardinal is typical of the large “progressive” (or accommodationist) bloc in the Church. And he made bold to say, “Those in charge [in the Vatican] have their backs to the wall.”

And maybe he’s right. *But so what?* St. Athanasius had his back to the wall. So did St. Thomas More. And so did Winston Churchill at the beginning of World War II. None of them capitulated.

Yes, Rome *does* have her back to the wall,

but in no small measure because many prelates have refused to defend papal teaching, have chosen to play the role of Neville Chamberlain or Marshal Pétain in today’s Church.

Today we need prelates, priests, and laymen with Churchillian spirit. A mere 18 days before the fall of France, Churchill said that even if all the Continent should fall to the Axis powers, “We shall not flag or fail.... We shall fight in the seas and oceans...we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing-grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender....”

The struggle ahead will be difficult. We know that many loyal Catholics feel beset on all sides — outmanned, outgunned, isolated. That too was Britain’s plight. She stood alone. But she did not flinch — and she prevailed.

St. Paul urges us to “fight the good fight” (1Tim. 6:12). And so, to paraphrase Churchill on the day after the fall of France, let us orthodox Catholics brace ourselves against those who collaborate with the *Zeitgeist* and let us so steel ourselves for victory that even a thousand years from now men will say, *This was their finest hour.*

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