

assume the position of masters of the world, which they pretend to enlighten, and boldly expound the dreamy speculations of their insane reason and the impieties of their vain theories, as so many truths calculated to regenerate human nature. And the spirit of darkness has hurled forth on the world legions of heretics, impostors, false doctors and seducers, who wage a cruel war against the Church of God; who never weary nor rest, in their violent efforts to weaken, to corrupt and to extinguish faith in the hearts of her children, to seduce souls and draw them down with themselves into the gulf of perdition. And hell has spewed forth on earth, through their impious mouths, an awful deluge of errors, impieties and blasphemies, which "might seduce the elect themselves if it were possible;"¹ these multiplied efforts of hell and of its agents, these accumulated iniquities and means of seduction have caused the clarity of many to wax cold, and have weakened faith throughout the world, and even now we seem to be drawing nigh to those days of woe and dissolution, foretold by the Saviour of the world, in these words: "When the son of man cometh, shall he find, think you, faith on earth."²

(1) S. Matth.,
24-24.

(2) S. Luke,
18-8.

This is the great scandal of our age, these are the innumerable dangers which threaten your faith; and you dwell in the midst of these scandals, in the midst of men without faith, unbelievers, impostors, blasphemers, heretics, seducers, enemies of your faith and of your religion: you are surrounded by them, they penetrate, they intrude into the bosom of your families, and force their presence into the midst of your society.

Could the Fathers of the second Provincial Council have remained silent at, or unmoved by the spectacle of the trying ordeal to which your faith is exposed? After they had bewailed and deplored the evil, were they not bound, in duty, to raise their voice to denounce it, and warn you against the danger of seduction? This duty they also performed by their first decree, with the full authority with which they are invested, as Bishops established by God, sentries on the vanguard of the armies of the Church to watch over the precious deposit of Faith. After having themselves, with their tongues and hearts, solemnly confessed the divine faith, they propose it to your belief, in the same terms in which it was defined by the General Councils, in which it is preserved in the Catholic Creed, and in which you should hold and believe it in order to be saved: afterwards,

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