

to religious society. I have stated that marriage is an ecclesiastical contract subject to the canons of the Church. That truth I shall now demonstrate. Since this discussion began, you must have observed, Sir, that most of those on either side have, as a rule, each in his turn, addressed in support of their assertions, the incontrovertible authority of Holy Scripture. Such an advantage should not be denied me, and I may be allowed to prove my proposition by biblical quotations, which I shall give, not as an expression of my own individual views, but as the doctrinal and divine interpretation of the Church to which I belong. First, I state that marriage is a sacrament. What St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians (v., 25, 28): "*Sacramentum hoc magnum est, ego autem dico in Christo et in ecclesiâ,*" is an incontrovertible proof of the truth of this proposition, and the more so for us Catholics, because it has also been the teaching of the Church from its foundation to the present day. The fathers of the Church have spoken: St. Ignatius of Antioch, Tertullian, Origen, St. Athanasius, St. Augustin, etc.; the voice of the Church was heard at Florence, at Cologne, at Trent; and everywhere and at all times marriage was proclaimed a sacrament. Now, what the Universal Church believes, and has always believed, can only have been transmitted to us by Apostolic tradition, and what the Apostles have transmitted to us as a divine institution, proceeds as all admit from Jesus Christ himself. Marriage is therefore a sacrament and a sacrament of the new law. For us Catholics it is a dogma of faith. Pius IX, in his letter to the King of Sardinia, dated 19th September, 1852, says: "It is a dogma of faith that marriage was raised by Our Lord Jesus Christ to the dignity of a sacrament." Would you know the doctrine? The Council of Trent speaks: "Whosoever says that marriage is not really and truly one of the seven sacraments of the Evangelical Law, let him be anathema." If marriage is a sacrament, and such is our unalterable belief, the Church only, by divine right, has supreme power over christian marriage. In fact the Church alone is the dispenser of the sacraments. St. Paul teaches us this in his first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 4, in which he

says: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Jesus Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." The Pope Gelasius, writing to the Emperor Anastasius told him plainly: "Although your dignity raises you above the human race, you are nevertheless subject to the Bishops in matters relating to the faith, and to the delivering of the sacraments." And what is a sacrament, if it be not a means subordinate in its nature to the object of religious society? The Church has, therefore, supreme power over marriage. An examination of history proves that in all ages the Church claimed, by divine right, power over marriage. In the days of the primitive Church, the Apostle to the Gentiles, writing to the Corinthians, told them that it was not the Lord but he, Paul (*Dico ego non Dominus*), who prescribed a regulation in relation to marriage between infidels, one of whom had embraced the faith. He thereby recognised the right of the Church to make regulations respecting marriage. In 305, the Council of Elvira, that of Neocesarea in 314, St. Basil, Pope Innocent I, Pope St. Leo, the Council of Agda in 506, St. Gregory the Great, the Church in a word, by the lips of her teachers and the decisions of her Councils, promulgates her laws as to marriage, and decides what are absolute impediments, and we Catholics have only to submit to that infallible authority. And when error lifts up its head, when the most false principles are circulating in society and threatens to poison all true doctrine, a Pontiff of sainted memory does not fear to raise his voice. And what are the words of that aged man? They condemn this proposition:—"The Church has not the power to establish absolute impediments to marriage, but that power appertains to the secular authority, by whom existing impediments may be removed," (*Syllabus*, 68.) We now arrive at the true question as it presents itself to us. We shall easily solve it. The hon. member for Jacques Cartier brings in a Bill which may meet with our approval, but he has just delivered a speech which I cannot accept as an expression of the ideas and principles of Catholics upon this question of marriage. What does the hon. member maintain? That this Parliament has the undoubted right to establish absolute impediments to marriage,