

Parents are consequently the first educators of their children ; and being under obligation to give their children food and raiment, to parents must be left the choice as to kind and quality. The same methinks, should be said of the intellectual food. Of course, such freedom of choice, must be bound in the "hoops of steel" of sound reason for otherwise it would degenerate into a dangerous license. Making therefore abstraction of all abuses, certain and pernicious, on the part of parents, the State must respect the wishes of parents in the education of their children. Let us listen to the eloquent voice of the great philosopher of Aquinas. "Children naturally form a part of their progenitors. They are flesh of their flesh, bone of their bones. Consequently parents can justly claim the direct right of property over them, for as long as they have not attained the age of reason they can be considered like domestic animals, *habent pueri rationem animalis*. According to the laws of Nature, therefore, children are entirely under the control of their parents, and contrary to God's legislation would it be to take them away from their parents against the latter's wishes." *

The words of Reason and Justice fall from the Angelic Doctor's lips. The State, therefore, cannot without being guilty of flagrant injustice arbitrarily usurp the right of parents, and dispense against their will, the life-sustaining elements either in the physical, intellectual or moral order. The Church herself, even when the all important interests of life eternal are at stake, cannot and would not baptize the child of an infidel without the consent of the parent. "Children", says Taparelli, "on their first appearance on the stage of life, belong to the domestic society from which they cannot be ravished with impunity. There will come a day, when grown-up to perfect manhood they shall join of their own accord, the political society, upon which they will directly depend for protection and support. But as long as children remain within the family circle, the State must not (unless parents be wholly unfit for the task) and morally speaking cannot, step-in to contest the father, his nature-given right to lord over his little kingdom—his family."†

* *Secunda Secundae. Quaest X, Art 12.*

† Taparelli, *Droit Nat., Tom. II., Livre V II., Ch. II.*