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## Editorial Thoughts

Author(s): George Q. Cannon

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**Abstract:** Didactic essay, showing how the Ammonite striplings or sons of Helaman are examples of childhood training that might well be exemplified in LDS homes.

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## The Juvenile Instructor.

GEORGE Q. CANNON, - - - - - EDITOR.

SALT LAKE CITY, FEBRUARY 1, 1876.

### EDITORIAL THOUGHTS.

**F**EW parents, even among the Latter-day Saints, attach sufficient importance to the early training of their children, especially in matters of religion, and faith in God and His promises. That many of the Latter-day Saints are remiss in this one particular, though, is not owing to the fact that they feel no interest in the future welfare of their children and have no desire to see them grow up to be strong in faith and valiant for the cause of God; but rather that they do not fully realize the force and effect of early training upon a person, in shaping his course and forming his character for life. They know that they live at a period when God has set up His kingdom for the last time upon the earth, and that they are members of that kingdom, and they are generally ambitious that their children should grow up in the faith, and never forsake that kingdom; but they do not always realize that in order to insure against their losing the faith, it is necessary to implant within their hearts almost in their infancy and cultivate in them as they grow up, a love for the principles of their religion, and a firm and enduring faith in God.

If the Latter-day Saints devoted sufficient attention to this one particular and always set their children an example consistent with their profession such a thing as infidelity or skepticism would not be known among the rising generation. When children so trained arrived at years of maturity they would have such an understanding of the principles of their religion, and their faith in God and in His revealed laws would be so strong, that no power on earth could shake their faith.

While such a result might be brought about by training the children in the way indicated, an entirely opposite result may be produced by implanting within their minds in their childhood and cultivating in them as they grow up a spirit of unbelief and erroneous ideas in regard to religion. The chances are that those early impressions would continue with them and influence their actions throughout the whole of their lives. And even if they should become convinced in the later period of their lives of the fallacy of their early teachings, they would still be apt to feel the effect of them as if they had become a part of their very natures.

The Catholics, perhaps more than any other religious sect of the present day pay particular attention to the early training of their children, and we see as a result how very few Catholics have ever been converted to the faith of the Latter-day Saints. The effect of their early training in Catholicism is such that it has so far seemed almost impossible to make steadfast, faithful Latter-day Saints out of persons who have been so trained in that faith.

We have an excellent illustration of the effect of early training given us in the Book of Alma (Book of Mormon). We read there that a certain party of Lamanites, called the people of Ammon, had "by the power and word of God been converted unto the Lord," and had taken an oath that they

never would shed any more blood. So sacred and binding did they consider this oath that they would have suffered the other Lamanites, who were then at war with the Nephites, to kill them, rather than break their oath. This being the case they were at the mercy of the hostile Lamanites, and so the Nephites took them under their protection. The war continued to rage between the two nations, until finally the Nephites were reduced to a great strait for want of men to defend their cities, and the Lamanites had gained ground upon them and taken possession of a number of their cities. The people of Ammon, seeing the dangerous condition of their protectors, and feeling, doubtless, that they were partially the cause of it, through having allowed the Nephites to protect them, were constrained to break the covenant which they made and take up their weapons to assist the Nephites. They were, however, counseled not to do so; but they had a great many sons growing up who had not taken the oath not to fight, and these boys or as many of them as were able to bear arms assembled themselves together and entered into covenant to fight in the defense of their friends, the Nephites. Now, though these striplings of boys were without experience in fighting, they had been trained from their infancy to have faith in God, and in the religion of their parents, so much so that they said among themselves "behold our God is with us, and he will not suffer that we should fall; then let us go forth." And they did go forth, to the number of two thousand, and though they were very young, it is said they were very valiant and courageous, so much so that their leader, Helaman, who familiarly called the boys all his sons, said, "Never had I seen so great courage, yea, not even amongst the Nephites." But this was not all that distinguished them. As the effect of their early training, we read that "they were true at all times in what ever thing they were entrusted, yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God, and to walk upright before Him." These were qualities that would make them valuable soldiers; and that is not all, they would make them good citizens and good members of society, and equally valuable in any vocation in which they might be called to act.

We may regard this result as wholly due to the example and teachings these boys had received from their parents, especially from their mothers, for we read that "they had been taught by their mothers that if they did not doubt, that God would deliver them;" and also that they rehearsed the words of their mothers to their leader when they were going to war; and no doubt they relied as implicitly on those words as they would have done if they had come from God.

Relying upon God as they did, and having no fear of death, but rather a determination to preserve their parents and friends from their enemies, it is not surprising that their leader should say afterwards that "never were men known to have fought with such miraculous strength, and with such mighty power." The sequel proved that their faith was well founded, for when they were numbered after the battle was over it was found that not one of them had been killed.

A GOOD CONSCIENCE.—How bravely a man can walk the earth, bear the heaviest burdens, perform the heaviest duties, and look all men in the face, if he only bears in his breast a clear conscience, void of offense before God and man. There is no spring, no spur, no inspiration like this. To feel that we have omitted no task, and left no obligation undischarged. This indeed fills the heart with satisfaction and the soul with strength.