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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY • PROVO, UTAH

**Title** Remembrance

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**Reference** *FARMS Review* 19/2 (2007): 71-87.

**ISSN** 1550-3194 (print), 2156-8049 (online)

**Abstract** This article studies human memory and discusses why remembering is integral aspect of making covenants with God.

# REMEMBRANCE

James E. Faulconer

I don't know when children begin to remember, but I know that my earliest childhood memories are an important part of who I am even though I don't have a good memory for things that I really should remember: people's names, things that happened to me, important events. For example, I was fourteen when I was baptized, but I remember only a few details of what happened, though I remember vividly some of the things surrounding my conversion. Perhaps it's true that you don't remember what doesn't matter to you or what is painful, but I don't think so. I remember relatively little about my childhood, but I know that it was a happy one. I remember relatively few details of when my wife, Janice, and I and our sons lived in Pennsylvania while I went to graduate school, and that was one of the most important and happiest times of my life.

In spite of my poor memory, some memories stand out for me. One of my earliest is a game that my mother and I played together: she chewed gum and blew as large a bubble as possible, and I tried to break the bubble before she could suck it back into her mouth. I also remember the interior of my Grandfather Sammon's car. It was dark and warm, and I especially remember the seat covering—gray, rough,

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This essay is a slightly revised version of a devotional talk given at Brigham Young University on 23 June 1998. James E. Faulconer was a BYU professor of philosophy and dean of General Education and Honors when this devotional address was delivered.

and musty but pleasant smelling. Was it made of horsehair or wool? I don't know, but once in a great while I smell the smell again, though I can never quite decide just what I am smelling. In new-car showrooms or dry-goods stores I often sniff the air, unsuccessfully searching for that smell.

I remember riding in the back of that car with my mother—my grandfather driving while she pointed at the telephone poles going by outside. I think she was counting them, and we pointed to animals in the fields: “Look, a horse” or “See the cow?”

These two shadows of memory come together in one vivid memory. While my father served in General MacArthur's honor guard in Japan during the Korean War, my mother and I lived with and near my grandparents in central Missouri. I remember riding with my mother one afternoon, probably in the fall—my mother on the right and I in the middle of the backseat, and my grandfather in the front, driving. Mother blew an especially large bubble, and this time I won, exploding the bubble before she could pull it back. When it burst, it was all over her face and in her hair, and she laughed. But Grandpa didn't laugh. I think he was probably afraid we would get gum on the upholstery of his car.

I also remember my first experience with death, though until I was an adult I didn't know what experience I was having. The house where my grandparents lived when I was young is gone now, torn down because it had become dilapidated after they had passed away. I'm told that the large room in the northwest corner at the front of the house was the bedroom for my mother and me when we came back from Colorado after my father left for Japan. In spite of that, it wasn't until many years later that I remember being allowed in that room, a sitting room. In the early days that I recall, its large double doors were kept closed, and I had to be quiet when around them. At that time my Aunt Betty, Uncle Ermon's first wife, slept in the room behind those doors. In fact, she was confined there with tuberculosis—which I only learned when I was quite a bit older.

I remember nothing about Aunt Betty except being kept from her, but I remember standing in the front yard one day, north of the

yard gate across from where the chicken coop was later built, watching Uncle Ermon carry a small woman wrapped in a light-colored blanket or quilt out to the car, her head on his right shoulder. My mother and grandmother stood watching from the porch on my left. My grandfather got in the front seat to drive.

The memory ends there, but my mother says this must have happened when I was about two years old, perhaps on a visit, since by the time we returned to Missouri to wait for my father, my aunt was dead.

I also remember well the first time my father talked to me about baptism, several years before we joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I was in the fourth or fifth grade, and we lived in Munich, Germany. One day (I suppose it was a Saturday or Sunday) my father took me for a walk. We crossed the two-lane highway (now a freeway) west of our apartment building, and we walked along the forest paths with others out for a stroll. The sky was clear and bright, and the green and black of Perlacher Forest contrasted beautifully with the light of the sky. My father talked to me about whether I wished to be baptized, and I agreed. I only vaguely remember being baptized by the Protestant chaplain, but I remember well the event of our conversation. In a certain way, that walk in the Bavarian woods, talking with my father about serious things on a beautiful day, has come to define my experience in Germany.

Such memories have played a large part in shaping who I am. For philosophical reasons, I do not believe in what many refer to as the unconscious. I cannot make sense of what is said about it. Nevertheless, it is obvious that there is much about myself that I cannot bring to explicit consciousness. Memories such as those I've mentioned are the tips of icebergs floating in my consciousness; they indicate places where matters of considerable weight can be found, even if I cannot explicitly name or bring them to consciousness. They reveal not by exposure, but by suggestion.

I would like to discuss memory partly because it is a professional interest of mine, not least of all because memory is so central to the gospel that we covenant to remember every time we take the bread and water of the sacrament.

Philosophers have had quite a bit to say about memory. Reading and teaching philosophy, I've learned to distinguish between recollection and memory, though in ordinary discussions we use the two terms interchangeably. Recall is a psychological event. Memory is what we share and participate in. It includes the things I can recollect, but it is not limited to it. As share and participation, memory gives us direction (intention) beyond our subjective intentions, often intentions we do not know explicitly. It also creates expectations of us that are beyond our will.

Many may ask, "What in the world can that mean? What could memory be except a subjective psychological phenomenon—what I call to mind?" To think about that, consider an example.<sup>1</sup> Like most married people in our culture, I wear a wedding band, and it cannot be reduced to its economic value as a piece of gold or even to its instrumental values. That is because, beyond having economic or instrumental values, my wedding band is a symbol of my marriage. As a symbol, it is obviously connected to memory. However, though it serves to remind me that I am married, it is more than just a reminder.

What more could it be? First notice that if my wedding ring were only something for reminding me, then I could also have chosen to tie a string to my finger. Though I can create such reminders—putting Post-it notes on my computer monitor or remarks in my daily planner—a wedding ring "works" differently than such things.

My wedding ring is more than a reminder at least because my wife, Janice, gave it to me. It is different from a reminder because it has a physical relation to her and so mediates my physical relation to her. However, when I wear the ring, it isn't that, by doing so, I touch Janice in absentia. The ring isn't a substitute for my wife. Though the ring can remind me—it can cause me explicitly to think about my marriage—most of the time I wear it without explicitly calling my wife or marriage to mind. And yet it continues to do its work, as I notice quickly

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1. My thinking about memory is heavily influenced by the Belgian philosopher Paul Moyaert. For more on these issues, see my paper "Scripture as Incarnation," in *Historicity and the Latter-day Saint Scriptures*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2001), 17–61.

if I have taken it off to work and forget to put it back on. I am more conscious of its absence than its presence, so I cannot explain its work by the way in which it is, sometimes, explicitly present to thought.

Thus my wedding ring is a memorial of our relation because it does something for me in spite of myself: even if I am not thinking of my marriage, the ring demands a certain attitude toward the world, a certain reverence and respect for Janice; it connects me to Janice even when I am not explicitly thinking of her. My wedding ring makes possible certain relations in the world by embodying those relations.

Said another way, my wedding ring gives order to my world: an order that relates me to my wife and to the rest of the world, an order that cannot be reduced to an intention to remember my marriage. Thus, though it is odd to say, it is as if my wedding ring remembers my marriage for me.<sup>2</sup> Not only does the ring not usually refer to or represent Janice, it does not take her place. In a very real sense, it takes *my* place rather than hers. Perhaps like all symbols, rather than merely reminding me, my wedding ring “remembers for me.” That is how it can also, therefore, serve as an explicit reminder.

We encounter the same phenomenon in many things other than wedding rings—for example, in other physical symbols, in sacred objects, in ritual practices, in a variety of institutions. I’ve mentioned the sacrament, perhaps the most important of such event-symbols in Latter-day Saint experience, but we see the phenomenon in other, more mundane places as well.

The university is an institutional repository of memory. As an institution, it remembers a great deal for us: making our explicit recollection of many things possible, giving our lives a particular character, and creating possibilities for us that we have often not yet envisioned. The university is a memorializing object and institution, not only in the library collections but also in its organization and influence, in such things as our academic regalia and other traditions (recognized or unrecognized), in our folklore and style of gossip, and in courses such as the civilization courses or American heritage classes. We often

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2. Remember that I distinguish memory from recall. Though the ring remembers for me, it does not always or even usually recall for me. Perhaps it never does.

see the university as a place from which we look to the future—a place where we prepare for jobs, where we produce knowledge that will have effects in the future. But it is equally important to recognize that, as an institution, the university is a place of remembrance and memorial.<sup>3</sup> In fact, I suspect that a university can be oriented toward the future only because it is an institution of memory. As a Latter-day Saint institution, Brigham Young University is a repository for one particularly important memory, that of the restoration of the gospel as it enlightens the academy. That memory orients us to the world and the future in a unique way.

At the personal level, memory resides not only in my subjective recollections but also in things I may seldom notice, such as the ways I speak—ways that sometimes betray my origins, as when I say “Missouruh” rather than “Missouree.” More broadly, that I speak English rather than Korean or Swahili or Romanian as my native language is a memory of my cultural inheritance. The ways that I interact with others are memories of the interactions of my family and childhood as well as the accumulated results of countless human interactions in ages past. When I joined the Church of Jesus Christ, such things as our pioneer heritage became part of my memory, as did a uniquely Latter-day Saint vocabulary and various social practices. Most important, by joining the church, the memory of the prophets became part of me, as did the atonement. Though I was raised a believing, Bible-reading Christian, through my conversion a vast storehouse of memory was added, an important part of which is latter-day revelation.

While studying the scriptures a few years ago, I was impressed by the importance of memory when I read a passage from the Book of Mormon. At the end of 1 Nephi 1, the prophet tells us that he will

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3. This should make us wary of sudden or drastic changes in the university or anywhere else. Revolutions, whether cultural or political, rarely succeed, because they propose to cut themselves off from the very memory that makes them possible and meaningful. Progress can be important (though we often overrate it), but it rarely, if ever, requires what have come to be called, in a mistaken understanding of the philosophy of science, “paradigm shifts.” Even when it does, such shifts are events that happen as we work and learn but that we can rarely, if ever, engineer.

abridge the sacred record that his father, Lehi, kept, and he will give an account of his own life. He then tells us that Lehi prophesied to the people of Jerusalem, but they refused to listen. Instead they mocked him and sought to kill him. Then, having set the context and the mood of his message, Nephi says, “I . . . will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance” (1 Nephi 1:20).<sup>4</sup> As I read this sentence, it struck me that we might take this to be Nephi’s “thesis statement” for the Book of Mormon: Nephi and the other Book of Mormon prophets give us to remember the tender mercies of the Lord so that we can be delivered according to our faith.

As I reread the Book of Mormon with Nephi’s statement in mind, I was struck by how often the prophets begin by calling us to remember the Lord’s mercy.<sup>5</sup> However, given that the Book of Mormon ends

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4. Nephi’s language seems to be influenced by Psalms. See Psalm 25:6: “Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old”; 40:11: “Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me”; 51:1: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions”; 69:16: “Hear me, O Lord; for thy lovingkindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies”; 77:9: “Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?”; 79:8: “O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low”; 103:2, 4: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: . . . Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies”; 119:77: “Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight”; 119:156: “Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord: quicken me according to thy judgments”; 145:9: “The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.”

5. The Book of Mormon as a whole begins with such a call. Its preface tells us that the book was provided “to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever—And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.” Lehi’s descendants will learn what the Lord did for their fathers, and the Jew and Gentile will be convinced that Jesus is the Christ by seeing that God has revealed himself to all nations—in other words, by seeing what the Lord has done for the descendants of Lehi as well as for those in Jerusalem. Moroni’s preface confirms Nephi’s thesis statement: In the Book of Mormon we are reminded that the tender mercies of the Lord are over the faithful unto their deliverance.



with the annihilation of the people of Mormon and Moroni, we may find this thesis startling. How does a record that ends in disaster and genocide show us the tender mercies of the Lord? Moroni's answer is clear: By showing us that the Lord has, over and over again, been merciful to his children, the Book of Mormon, like the Bible, gives us hope, even when we are in what would otherwise seem a hopeless situation. In Moroni 10:1, Moroni begins his final exhortations. To the remnant of the Lamanites he says:

Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts. (Moroni 10:3)

And he follows this exhortation to remembrance with one that those who receive the Book of Mormon should ask the Father whether it is true. In other words, they should ask the Father about the truthfulness of the record of God's mercies in the Book of Mormon. In verse 24 Moroni turns from the descendants of Lehi to the rest of us, exhorting us, too, to remember the things we have read—namely, the account of God's tender mercies to his people, tender mercies that “make them mighty even unto . . . deliverance” in faith.

As do the psalmists, Nephi and Moroni see a close connection, perhaps even an identity, between remembering the tender mercies of the Lord and repentance. Without such memory, we seem unable to repent; if we repent, remembering those tender mercies is always part of our repentance. Over and over again we find this theme in the Book of Mormon: conversion and reconversion come by remembering; dedication, sacrifice, and covenant are one with memory. Sermon after sermon begins with a prophet reminding his listeners or readers of what the Lord has already done for them. They remind us of the flood (Alma 10:22), of the exodus from Egypt (Mosiah 7:19), and of the journey across the ocean (2 Nephi 10:20). Ammon converts Lamoni

by rehearsing these stories to him, beginning with the story of Adam and Eve (Alma 18:36).

Once I noticed this theme of remembering God's mercy, I saw it everywhere. The Lord announced himself to Moses by calling himself "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6), a common appellation and a name that reminds us of the mercies that he showed to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, particularly as those mercies are manifest in his covenant with them (see Leviticus 26:42).<sup>6</sup>

And occasions for memory are found not only in the scriptures. Each Sunday we renew our covenant with the Father by taking tokens of Christ's body and blood in remembrance of that flesh and blood and by covenanting always to remember him. I understand the Word of Wisdom as an ongoing memorial of who we are and what we have covenanted.<sup>7</sup> One of the most obvious sites of memory is the garment worn by those who are endowed, reminding us of the covenants we have made in the temple; we wear sacred memory on our bodies day in and day out. Like my wedding ring, the garment remembers for me, calling me to recollection when need be, but ordering my world even when I do not have it explicitly in my consciousness. Because I wear the garment, I am in the world differently than I would be if I did not.

In my own life, the memorializing objects and practices of the church continue to make my spiritual life possible. When I remember the Savior not only in my recollections, but especially in my practices and relations with others, I bear witness of his saving relation to me; and, as promised in the sacrament prayers, I receive the Spirit. To the

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6. See also Exodus 3:15–16; 4:5; 6:3, 8; 33:1; Numbers 32:11; Deuteronomy 1:8; 6:10; 9:5, 27; 29:13; 30:20; 34:4; 2 Kings 13:23; Matthew 8:11; 22:32; Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37; Acts 3:13; 7:32; 1 Nephi 6:4; 17:40; 19:10; Mosiah 7:19; 23:23; Alma 29:11; 36:2; 3 Nephi 4:30; Mormon 9:11; D&C 27:10; 136:21.

7. The Word of Wisdom may also direct our attention to the coming of Christ. Since anticipation is a form of memory (another reason it cannot be reduced to recollection), it may call the second coming to our remembrance. The Savior says: "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29). Perhaps by our not drinking of the fruit of the vine now, we remember the Savior's promise that he will drink with us when he returns.

degree that I do not have memory—from the readily identifiable and seemingly mundane culture that Latter-day Saints all over the globe share to my obedience to commandments even when I am not thinking of them to the mysteries and blessings of the temple—I am not part of the body of Christ, I am not one of his adopted children.

Sometimes I find myself slipping from the memory into which I entered through my conversion. I have doubts about my testimony. Something happens that I do not understand, and I wonder whether the church is true. I may chafe at commandments or policies. I might think myself better than others—sometimes because of education, sometimes because of social status, occasionally for political differences, often for who-knows-what reason. I may criticize instructors and leaders in the church, wishing (not out loud and rarely even to myself, but wishing it anyway) that they had more “training for the ministry,” that they were better at getting my interest—shifting the burden of my spiritual life to them. Occasionally I find myself bored with the talks in sacrament meeting or quietly and self-deceptively scornful of the testimonies borne on fast Sunday. In other words, though I may be able to recall my covenants, sometimes I find myself no longer remembering them, no longer remembering (whatever I recollect) that at baptism I covenanted to “mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” so that I would “stand as [a witness] of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9).<sup>8</sup> In spite of that covenant, sometimes I do not even learn with those who would learn or testify with those who would testify, much less mourn or comfort. Whatever I may recall, whatever I may repeat consciously, at such times I have begun no longer to remember the tender mercies of the Lord; I have begun to slip out of the ongoing process of repentance. (I hope that others will recognize a version of themselves in my self-description, not because I hope they share my failings, but because I assume that I am not the only one who finds himself slipping on occasion.)

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8. Notice that Alma makes bearing witness (recollection) dependent on our relation with others (memory): “mourning with” and “comforting” make testimony possible, suggesting that it is not truly possible without such relations to our fellows.

Such events do not characterize most of my life in the church, but they happen often enough that I must consider how to deal with them. My answer is recollection. Though memory cannot be reduced to recollection, when I begin to fade and falter, the answer is to explicitly recollect a few events in my life that have brought sharply to my attention what living my life memorializes. Recollecting the visible tips of the largely invisible icebergs of memory helps resituate me, bringing me back to who I am, putting me back into the larger context of memory.

Consider a few of those recollections. I share them with some trepidation. Sacred experiences are not to be shared easily, like political slogans or loose change. One should be careful about sharing them, for sharing them too often or under inappropriate circumstances strips them of their sacred character. They become commonplace rather than sacred. Nevertheless, there are times when we can share sacred recollections with each other to strengthen the testimonies of both those who testify and those who hear the testimony. I pray that this can be such an occasion.

The first experience I recall is that of my conversion. My father met the missionaries through a friend at work, Robert Clark. I met them through my parents when my mother cajoled me into taking part in a “cottage meeting” at our house. Though I began reluctantly, once I started listening, I was hooked. I enjoyed the missionary discussions and liked the missionaries, and I enjoyed learning what they taught. To be honest, I didn’t read the Book of Mormon, and I didn’t pray about the church very much. However, after several months of discussion, with the rest of my family I wanted to join the church.

Since we hadn’t been to church yet, the missionaries arranged for us to attend the next Sunday so that we could be baptized the Saturday after that—the first one of February 1962. Sitting on the left side of the chapel, watching the meeting begin, I was not particularly impressed. It looked very much like the Protestant services I was accustomed to, except that there were more people on the stand, the table for communion—what Latter-day Saints call the sacrament—was to the right of the room rather than in the middle, those to say the prayers over the

sacramental emblems were surprisingly young, and the meeting was shockingly informal and unpolished. Though I had decided to be baptized, as yet I remained a curious onlooker more than a convert.

As the sacrament was blessed and passed, the bread came to me. In my former church, the Disciples of Christ, we believed that everyone present should take the sacramental emblems, and though the missionaries had told my parents that this wasn't the Latter-day Saint practice, no one had told me. As the bread tray came around, I took a piece and put it in my mouth out of habit.

As I placed the bread in my mouth, I was overcome by the most intense spiritual experience I had ever had. Instantly I knew something of what Paul had experienced on the road to Damascus. Without being especially worthy of it, without having sought it any more than superficially, I had been touched by the Holy Ghost. My entire soul—body and spirit—was electrified and on fire. Now, rather than thinking that it would be a good idea to be a Mormon, that Latter-day Saint theology was interesting, and so on, I knew that I had to join this church. I was no longer an interested spectator. I knew that what I had learned from the missionaries and what I would learn later was true. I knew that Joseph Smith was a prophet, as was David O. McKay, the prophet at the time. Though I had as yet read only a passage here and a passage there in the Book of Mormon, I knew it was the word of God. Though I had believed in Christ all my life, for the first time I knew that Jesus Christ had died for my sins and I understood something of what that meant.

With that experience, I suppose there was a sense in which I could still choose not to be baptized. Nevertheless, there was a more profound sense in which I no longer had any choice. I knew that my life from that point on would be inextricably bound to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I didn't know what that entailed, but I knew it was true.

I do not know why I was privileged to have such an experience when many others are not. I cannot explain what happened. I only know that the experience has provided an anchor for my soul, a memory to which I can return in recollection when I begin to falter, a mem-

ory that returns me to the ordering of the gospel and the order of the church. Recollecting this moment of my life returns my memory to me and, more importantly, returns me to it. The experience is something for which I am deeply and eternally grateful.

That first taste of the sacrament has been the most important spiritual experience of my life because it converted me, changing my life. However, since then I have, on the whole, lived a relatively mundane life; though spiritual experiences are common, they are rarely dramatic. I do not regret that. It is important to learn to see the spiritual in the mundane, to find spirituality even when not emotionally wrought, to recognize that the Spirit usually brings peace (John 14:27) and speaks quietly. That is more important than having dramatic experiences, and we must be wary of equating our emotional and our spiritual lives. Nevertheless, my first experience with the sacrament was not the only such emotionally powerful spiritual experience I have had.

Shortly after we were baptized, my father was assigned to the Korean Military Advisory Group for the South Korean Army and was allowed to take his family to Korea with him. We were privileged to grow up in the church while in Korea, to be taught and guided by such families as the Terrys and the Hogans, and to be inspired by wonderful Korean Saints like Rhee Honam and Kim Cha Bong. In those days in Korea we did not have stake or district conferences for people in the armed services. We had “servicemen’s retreats,” occasions when those who could get time off could go to Seoul and spend two or three days meeting and sharing testimonies. Elder Gordon B. Hinckley was the visiting General Authority for Asia, and he was often able to attend our retreats, so they were a special occasion for us.

One year, during late fall or winter, we had a retreat in Seoul, and Elder Hinckley attended. As we met in our final meeting, a testimony meeting, many bore their testimonies, including my younger brother. I recall nothing said in those testimonies (though President Hinckley has such a prodigious memory that he can still tell what my brother said), but I felt the Spirit as strongly then as I had when I first received my testimony. I particularly remember Elder Hinckley bearing his

testimony, telling us that the Spirit in our meeting was as strong as he had ever felt it, as strong even as he had felt it in meetings of the Twelve in the temple. He said that there were angels in the room witnessing our testimonies.

I knew that what he said was true. I could see no angels. Tears were streaming down my face so heavily that I couldn't see anything, much less angels. But I knew again, absolutely knew, what I had learned with my first experience with the Spirit: the church is true; the priesthood is real, and it is the power of God. I had a feeling that I take to be a premonition of what it means finally to be sanctified, for like King Benjamin's people, for a time I had "no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2). I could not and did not want to separate myself from the church that made such an experience possible or from the gospel taught in that church, pointing as it does to salvation in Jesus Christ. That experience with the Spirit in the presence of one of the Twelve became another anchor for my soul.

The Lord has not ceased to give me such anchors. One of the more recent was in August of 1994. My second son, Matthew, was to return from his mission to Pôrto Alegre, Brazil. He asked that his mother and I meet him and do some traveling, but we couldn't. However, we compromised and I went to Pôrto Alegre to pick him up. Matthew and I stayed in Pôrto Alegre for a few days and then set out to São Paulo by bus. The day we were to leave for Curitiba, we discovered that we would have to wait until late afternoon to get the bus, but we had already checked out of our hotel and didn't have anything left that we wanted to do in Pôrto Alegre.

Matthew had the idea to take a bus to some point midway between Pôrto Alegre and Curitiba, spend the day there, and then catch the bus to Curitiba as it came through our stopping point at night. He asked the woman selling tickets to tell us a good place to go. "Rosário," she said. "It is a nice resort town with a beach." We bought our tickets and headed to Rosário.

When we stepped from the bus in Rosário, we were surprised. There were mountains, but no beach. We were obviously inland and

rather high. We decided to get some lunch and see what Rosário had to offer. If worst came to worst, we could sit in the bus station and read.

As we turned the corner of one of the first streets we passed, two boys, one a teenager and the other perhaps eleven, came running down the street shouting, “Elders! Elders!” Matthew stopped and talked with them, explaining that although I was wearing a white shirt and tie, only one of us was a missionary and that we were to be there for only a few hours. They were excited anyway, not caring that I wasn’t a missionary as long as someone was. We must go to see their mother. The older boy ran off to find her, and the younger boy led us toward her. As we came around another corner, a middle-aged woman came running down the street, tears flowing, also crying, “Elders! Elders!” Again Matthew explained that he was the only missionary there and that we would be there only a short time, but that was irrelevant to her. Her prayers had been answered. She said, “Fine, but have family home evening with us, please.”

We couldn’t refuse, so we agreed to go to their home early that evening for family home evening. We spent the afternoon in the town wandering around, buying some presents for Matthew’s sisters, and sitting in the park, reading and talking. Then we went to their tiny apartment above the woman’s small candy store. We visited with them and sang a hymn. Matthew taught a lesson, and we prayed with them. As we were finishing, the sister told us that we must visit a young man in town who was inactive. (I wasn’t sure how one knows that another is inactive when there is no branch or activity of the church in a town, but she knew—and she was right.)

We walked across the small town to the highway where this young man owned a truck stop. He fed us a gigantic, definitely nonvegetarian dinner and talked at length with Matthew. As Matthew later explained to me, the young man had had a dream the night before. In the dream the missionaries came to visit him and told him that he must return to church—and there we were. (He could attend church in a neighboring city by hitching a ride with truck drivers, but he had stopped doing so.)

I was thunderstruck. I could not believe the faith of these people. I could not believe how desperately they hunger for what I take for



granted. I could not believe how much the Lord loves them as individuals. I could not believe that he had used our seemingly chance wandering around Brazil to bless a few of his children. As I sat on the bus that night, I had difficulty sleeping, not because the bus was uncomfortable (which it was), but because I was so overcome with a vision of the love that the Father and the Son have for us, of the need for missionaries in places like Rosário, of the beautiful faith of people like those I had just met, of my own unworthiness in comparison to theirs, and of my ingratitude for the blessings I have received.

Those few hours in Rosário, Brazil, gave me a deepened appreciation for the love God has for his children. I was reminded that his love is not a general love but a love for each specific person. Though what we brought to the Saints in Rosário was relatively little, that we could be instruments for bringing it renewed my understanding of the Lord's power to save—to save from difficulty, from oppression, from loneliness, and especially from death and sin. It made me ashamed of taking for granted the access I have to the church and the temple, to inspired leadership and instruction. It showed me why the missionary effort is so important and must expand, for here was a group of ten or fifteen people to whom the church could not yet come because, in spite of the large numbers of young people who serve missions, there are still not enough missionaries in the field. Like the previous experiences, those few hours in Rosário became another anchor for my soul, something I recollect as a way to continue to remember the covenants I am part of and the obligations that have come to me.

I live in a world that gets its significance from memory: memory manifest in wedding rings and garments and sacramental emblems, in ordinances and practices and customs, in speech patterns and names and literature, in universities and libraries and classes. I have learned that I live not on my own breath but also on that of the Spirit, without which there is only recollection at best and no memory, without which emblems, ordinances, and society are dead and hollow shells. Memory—manifest in our speech, our customs and habits, our relations, our ordinances and commandments—transcends

and encompasses me, making the world I live in possible by giving it meaning and structure.

Recollection, calling various things to mind, isn't memory. Nevertheless, recollection can resituate us in memory. As I recollect—re-collect—my experiences with the Spirit, I take my place again in the memory that makes life possible and good, that strengthens and continues my testimony. Most Saints have experienced moments of spirituality to which their souls are anchored. Those who have not will—sometimes in answer to prayer, sometimes unbidden. My prayer is that, when we face doubt or difficulty, we will re-collect our souls by recollecting those anchoring experiences. And, though I have no authority to offer spiritual promises, based on my experience I promise that those who do so recollect will continue not only to recollect but also to remember the everlasting gospel, the covenants they have made, and the holy name of Jesus Christ.

