

Spiritual Courtesy and Consideration

PAUL H. DUNN

Thank you very much, President Holland. I know I speak on behalf of this wonderful student body when I express appreciation to Debbie for that marvelous musical number. I thought as she was rendering it, "I wonder what I was doing in the preexistence when all that talent was handed out." I asked my wife that once about music and me. She said, "I know. You skipped church that week." I'm glad Debbie didn't.

Seeing all these chairs placed in front of the podium reminds me of a little story concerning the lady who came to church who had a little trouble hearing, and she wore a hearing aid and sat as close to the pulpit as she could. The minister, being very considerate, would raise his voice so that she could hear better. He was quoting a text from the New Testament in his sermon concerning the second coming. Wanting to be sure he was heard, he raised his voice and said, "And I come quickly." The lady leaned forward to hear. He thought she couldn't make sense out of it, so he tried again. He repeated, "And I come quickly." Once more she cupped her hand and leaned to hear. So a third time he said with a raised voice, "I come quickly." About that time the pulpit gave way, and he fell in front of her, just at her feet. He looked up at her and said, "Oh, I'm so sorry, madam."

She said, "That's all right, sonny. You warned me three times."

These devotionals, along with your courses of study, are wonderful. As you learn new material, you are often reminded of your roles. I feel a little bit like the entrepreneur who, having made his fortune early in his young career, decided to try a life of adventure. He purchased a balloon with the intent of making a cross-country journey. Shortly after he departed with a companion, a large storm arose, and it caused them to drift. For many hours they were buffeted back and forth until they were hopelessly lost. When the storm passed, they found themselves passing over a mountain. On the road below they noticed a car. Two men were standing beside it. They thought they'd descend enough to get some help on where they were located. They let a little air out of the balloon and came down over the car, hovering for a second. The young

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adventurer hollered to the men on the road, "Can you tell us where we are?"

One of the men looked up and said, "You're in a balloon."

The young scout said to his companion, "You know, that man is a CPA."

His friend asked, "How would you know that?"

He replied, "The information he gave was accurate and precise but totally useless."

I suspect that most of what you get here is not useless, but of great value and worth.

As I came through the hall into the Marriott Center a little while ago, one enterprising freshman stopped me (you know how freshman are) and said, "Are you going to tell any sports stories?"

I said to her, "That's always a risk. I worry because many don't understand the nomenclature of sports talk." Her companion said, "Well, we do down here."

I said, "Let me test you." I turned to the young lady and asked, "Do you know what a *foul ball* is?"

She replied, "Well certainly. It's a dance for chickens!"

Watchful Eyes

I do have one sports story, in line with what President Holland was suggesting concerning our attitudes and our sportsmanship. I couldn't agree more with his counsel to us this morning [to be good sports and gracious hosts] than I already do. It is sound advice. We are always on display just because of who we are and what we represent. We are missionaries at every turn. I guess the question is, What do we teach as we project our image across the land?

I have an opportunity, as one of the general officers of the Church, to participate quite frequently with non-Latter-day-Saint groups of influence. Quite often I address PTA conventions, Boy Scout conventions, businessmen's conventions, sports conventions, and the like. I would say a good deal of my General

Authority time is spent literally as an ambassador of the Church before non-LDS groups, and it is interesting to me to see how careful they are to watch and to observe us for what we are and what we do. There are silent eyes, watching very, very carefully.

About a year and a half ago, my friend Billy Casper invited me to participate with him in his induction to the Golf Hall of Fame. Now that's a singular honor for an athlete, to be sure. They had quite a few notables there, and, along with the activity of the induction itself, I was invited to play in the pro-am tournament.

Do you ladies understand that kind of terminology? It is a one-day event where the amateurs are teamed up with the professionals in a golf tournament, and it is a spectacular thing for those who take part. I was paired off with two very fine amateurs and with Larry Nelson, the young golf professional who is making quite a name for himself. He's a devout Christian. We had tremendous opportunity for eighteen holes to talk about you and me and the restoration of the gospel. What I didn't know is how many Latter-day Saints (this was in North Carolina) would come out to watch a General Authority in a tournament. I think half the Saints from North Carolina to Florida came out, and they carried placards around encouraging and giving support. And many on the golf course were wondering who Elder Dunn was.

We reached the fifteenth hole, where the gallery begins (if you've followed golf tournaments, you appreciate that from about the fifteenth to the eighteenth hole the gallery increases in goodly number. The television cameras are often very active at that point). When I reached the fifteenth tee, the hole was a 205-yard, par-3, elevated green, and it was well trapped. In tournaments they go to special effort to make it a little more difficult. The two amateurs hit beautiful shots, with both balls hitting somewhere between 6 and 12 yards from the hole. Larry Nelson put his 6 feet from the hole. Now it was Elder Dunn's turn, and

many in the gallery were LDS. I could hear them saying, "Come on, Brother Dunn; come on, Brother Dunn."

Larry Nelson, the golf pro, walked over and said, "I never knew anybody with so many brothers and sisters." So again we had a chance to talk a little about the Church.

Well, a 205-yard, elevated green for me is somewhere between a 3-iron and a 5-wood. I debated. I have a little more accuracy and direction with a 5-wood. I removed it from the golf bag, teed up my ball, and hit a beautiful drive, but the lip of the sand trap just in front of the green caught the ball. The ball lodged itself right up under the lip. And I heard an "O-h-h-h" go out across the audience.

As I approached my next shot (there were the three balls on the green), the gallery tuned up again, "Come on, Brother Dunn; come on, Brother Dunn." I walked into the sand trap. In professional play, I guess you know, the rules are very strict. If the blade of that iron touches the sand, it is a two-stroke penalty. My ball was up under a lip. You could barely see the white. I took out a sand wedge and walked into the trap—it looked like the side of the Matterhorn. I planted my left foot so that it was almost eye level. I didn't bow my head, but I did say a little prayer. I said something to the effect, "Lord, I am doing this for you." I hit a shot out of there that I believe registered 8 on the Richter scale. It took out a large piece of turf and a shovel full of sand, and the ball went straight in the air about 40 feet. It came down two inches from the hole. Larry Nelson, the pro, walked over and said, "Paul, I gotta know more about your church."

We finished the round and had a little fun with it, and that gave me a great chance to discuss you and me and what we represent. I find wherever I go people are seeking and looking; they don't always know where to find; and you and I have wonderful opportunities to teach. I think you can be as much of a missionary at a ball game, if the climate is right, as you can

sometimes in a living room or knocking on a door.

Two Sides of a Coin

Let me in the spirit of what President Holland has suggested tell you of a little experience. I've decided to change my talk in the direction of his counsel. He mentioned in that thoughtful obituary of me that I attended Chapman College some years ago. It was a religiously oriented school, and I won't plague you with all the details as to why I selected that particular institution. I had just finished a baseball career that was brief. I was married, had two children, and was uneducated, so I had to start all over again as young people frequently do. I wanted to be a teacher. Seminaries had just been introduced into Southern California, and I thought I would like to teach young people.

When I was growing up, religion wasn't all that exciting to me—or fun. I had long believed religion didn't have to be stuffy. I think the Lord has a sense of humor, don't you? If he doesn't, some of us are in trouble. The gospel to me is positive. It lifts burdens; it doesn't add burdens. I worry about a few of our Saints who go around burden ridden. It suggests that either they don't understand the gospel or they are not applying the principles that lift the guilt, the uncertainty, the frustration, and the anxiety that lots of them have. You ought to be the happiest audience in the world, and I think you are; but I'd like to see you even happier. The gospel does that for me, and it's an exciting thing. It ought to radiate; our every action ought to suggest something good and positive and important.

Several years ago I went to Chapman College, and at the time I was the first Mormon to enroll in the school's history. It is a religiously oriented school. I majored in the New Testament because of my lack of background in the Bible. I was so rare they used to put me on display there every Friday—you know, a real,

live Mormon. Go look at him. I took time while at school to study our faith all the more diligently so it was kind of a two-pronged approach. I fell into the good graces of a marvelous professor of New Testament who later became a close friend of mine. In fact, I had the privilege 23 years later of performing his baptism—think of it—23 years of teaching and fellowshipping.

That fellowshipping started the first day I walked into a New Testament class. We met frequently during their so-called coffee breaks, and we would talk. We corresponded after I graduated. We had several personal meetings. I had him in my home. He later became critically ill. I left Salt Lake City on one assignment to the South, stopped off in Los Angeles, and went out to the Veterans Hospital to give him a priesthood blessing in a ward of about 200 men, none of whom belonged to the Church. It was interesting on that occasion to find that, when I called them to order the way the priesthood would do it, many others witnessing the scene were very interested. It's in that kind of environment I find the real power of what we are and what we have, if we are not embarrassed, or if we will take the lead and go with it.

He later joined the Church. I had the privilege of confirming him. A few years later it was my honor to perform the sealing for him and his wife right here in the Provo Temple. He later became a member of this faculty. He died two years ago. I had the privilege of speaking at his funeral. I met him, I taught him, I baptized him, I fellowshipped him, I performed his marriage, and I buried him. Can you think of anything I left out? It's that kind of wholeness that I think the gospel basically requires.

Well, we used to have a lot of fun in class. Many students were majoring in religion and preparing for the ministry. It became quite obvious in our class discussions that there were differences of opinion and interpretation of scripture. Dr. Davis kept things on a very high, friendly plane. Quite often during the

discussion if I hadn't spoken, Dr. Davis, would stop the class and say, "Hold it, we haven't heard from the Mormons yet." So that would give me a chance to respond on how we would interpret that particular scripture. And as you can appreciate, it would often be quite a contrast.

One day we were reading in chapter 21 of the fourth gospel, the book of John, verses 22 and 23. This is where John makes a request of the Savior to tarry on the earth till he comes again (do you remember?), and that wish was later granted also to the Three Nephites of Book of Mormon history. You should have heard the discussion and the interpretation given to that chapter by these ministers-to-be. They went back and forth for the better part of an hour: "Well, it means this—" "No, I think it means this—" Finally, when they looked almost exhausted, I raised my hand.

Dr. Davis said, "Mr. Dunn wants to speak."

I replied, "Would you gentlemen *really like to know* what that chapter means? The Mormons do have the answer."

"Speak."

So I opened my Doctrine and Covenants to section 7, which deals with the proper interpretation of John 21:22 and 23. You remember the Prophet Joseph Smith had a similar question some years ago, and he inquired of the Lord, and he received an answer which became the seventh section of the Doctrine and Covenants. When I finished reading the section, there was total silence in the room. Dr. Davis raised his hands again and said, "Good heavens, the Mormons even have John!"

It was about that time when the Los Angeles Temple was being readied for dedication, and I thought it would be a tremendous spiritual experience for the religion faculty and ministerial students to have a field trip to the Los Angeles Temple open house. It was my privilege to be assigned as their guide.

Now, if you know a lot about the Old Testament, you can appreciate that much of

what we do in the temple has a relationship, and most religions have no explanation for it. Well, these were men who were destined to be in the ministry, and they were fascinated with what they saw. They would stop as we would go from room to room and say, "What is that for? What do you do over there?" Where we could, we would give a little explanation. "Well, that's marvelous," they'd say. "We didn't know you Mormons did such things. Tremendous." We finally reached the celestial room, and you know how beautiful they all are in their appointment. Many would quietly approach me and say, "I hope we're not out of line, but what is that, and what do you do over there?" My friend, Guy, happened to see a couple of sealing rooms and a staircase that led up to a third one. He said, "Paul, I hope I'm not out of order, but where does that staircase go?" I couldn't resist the temptation.

"Oh," I said, "you shouldn't have asked."

"Oh, my goodness," he said, "I'm sorry, I hope I haven't been out of line."

I said, "No, but for you, I'll tell you if you won't tell anybody else."

"Oh," he said, "I promise."

I said, "You see that stairwell?"

"Yes."

I said, "There's a special room up there, and that's where John lives."

Well, it was that kind of a relationship that we shared with each other, and about a semester later he came to me and asked, "Could I ask you a favor?"

I said, "Please do."

He said, "You know, in addition to being a teacher here on the faculty, I am a part-time minister of the First Methodist Church in Glendale, California." (I grew up in Hollywood, California, and that's where I was living at the time.) He said, "You know, Paul, in our young married group, of which I am a sponsor, we are studying other religions, and we have never had a Mormon come and talk to

our group. Would you come and be a guest speaker?"

Well, I could see a chance to raise my grade, so I said, "Why, I'd be honored to."

So on the appointed day I drove over to the First Methodist Church in Glendale. And you know how many Protestant churches align themselves on existing corners, often competing at the same hour, and the traffic was horrendous this particular morning, so I made a pass around the building and came by once more trying to find a place to park. There was a gentleman standing just off the curb, and he was waving me down. So I pulled over and he said, "Are you Mr. Dunn?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Dr. Davis described your car. If you'll get out, this gentleman will park it for you."

(Now just a little editorial note: Have you ever noticed how many firesides we have invited special speakers where they had to park a long way off? Think of a LeGrand Richards when somebody wasn't thoughtful enough to be out there. I just testify from my General Authority's vantage point: It happens, even in the true Church. Spiritual courtesy and consideration are so vital to receiving the Lord's spirit.)

Well, I was escorted in, and we went down some stairs through a long corridor. And I stopped in my tracks. The refrain from the song "Come, Come, Ye Saints" was being played on an organ. I thought I was having a revelation. I said, "What's that?"

They said, "We're trying to set the stage for a Mormon talk."

I said, "Thank you." I walked through the door, and seated before me were two hundred young adults—in kind of an oversized Relief Society room, beautiful in appointment, with a large fireplace. On the mantle over the hearth were two large candelabras with many candles casting a soft light on a picture. Do you know what the picture was? The Salt Lake Temple

and the Tabernacle, framed. And I said, "Oh, thank you." There wasn't a peep in the audience, reverently listening to a strange hymn. I was escorted to the front of the room. I took my place; they had an appropriate devotional. Then Dr. Davis said some very nice things about me, as guest speaker, and turned the time to me. I tried as hard as I could to represent you properly, to teach some Methodists about the difference between Mormons and Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. When I had finished, there were about twenty minutes of inquiry, questions from the group that were thoughtful and courteous. I was then escorted to the back of the room, a benediction was offered, and one by one the couples filed out, saying such things as "Thank you, thank you. We haven't understood you people. You have helped us today. Thank you, thank you." Three days later I got one of the nicest notes I have ever received. It's still in my Book of Remembrance. Every time I hear the word *Methodist*, I feel *warm* and *good*. Could I, in the spirit of teaching a point here, turn the coin over for just a minute?

Another semester passed, and a wonderful friend of mine who was serving in our bishopric came to me and said, "Paul, we know you are over there at Chapman. Our Special Interest group is studying about the Holy Land. You know some of those Bible scholars at Chapman. Do you have any contacts that could come over and give us a lecture on the Holy Land?"

I said, "I think so." I approached my friend, Guy Davis. This was a man who received a very impressive honorarium when he'd go to other churches to lecture. Dr. Davis was one of the first who instituted student tours to the Holy Land 27 years ago, and he had developed a tremendous process of explaining and expressing the spirit of that wonderful place. I went to him and I said, "The Special Interest group in our church is having a lecture on the

Holy Land, and we wondered if you could come and talk to them."

"Oh," he said, "I'd be honored."

He checked his calendar and had to cancel out another Protestant appointment. I said, "Hold it; don't do that. We don't pay honorariums. You remember one of the unique differences of our church and all other churches is that we are a lay church. At best, I may be able to get you two cookies and a glass of punch."

"Don't worry," he said, "I'd be honored to come."

He came. On the night of the special event, since he did not know where our church was located, I decided to pick him up. It was a chance for another visit. The meeting was scheduled for 7:30. We arrived at the church at 7:15. There was a familiar sight. The ward was dark. No one around. I sat out in front of the chapel, giving him another little two-and-a-half-minute talk on the lay nature of the Mormon Church and how different we are from other faiths. 7:20, and from out of nowhere came the first Latter-day Saint with a set of keys. She opened a door, and lights went on, and then that interesting Mormon phenomenon occurred. Mormons came from everywhere. I thought some of them had parachuted in. One by one they scurried in. 7:25, I got out of the car and escorted my friend into the chapel. We stood in the foyer for several minutes. Nobody approached us. Finally a member of the bishopric went by, and I reached out and grabbed him. I said, "Your guest is here."

"Oh, yeah, thank you!"

We were escorted into the Relief Society room. The members were taking their seats. Have you ever watched a Mormon congregation as they gather? You know how interesting and a little different we are. I hope we never lose our informality—I like it. But there has to be some good taste and proper understanding as we exercise it. Finally, in came a lady with an armful of songbooks, and she distributed them. One by one people filled the Relief

Society room. The person who was conducting got up and thumbed through the songbook: "Anybody got a song they want to sing?" The prayer was quickly offered, and the meeting was turned to me. I tried to set the stage so the spirit would be right. You young leaders know the challenge of creating the spirit and the atmosphere for teaching, don't you? Sometimes we work against it. I wish you could have heard the lecture that night. Tremendously powerful. He was so delicate and sensitive not to offend Mormons, understanding our differences. There wasn't anything we couldn't have accepted, particularly as he interpreted some New Testament thinking. His part of the meeting was then concluded, and we opened it for questions. The first hand went up, and I'll never forget the comment. A well-meaning Latter-day Saint said, "Sir, by what authority do you teach all of this?" And one by one, similar questions followed. I finally had to stand up and say, "Folks, we have a guest here tonight. Thank you for understanding."

We ended on a high note. You Mormons have genius for recovery. You really do. As I drove my friend home that night, I gave him another little talk on the lay nature of the Mormon Church. But I have often thought as I have reflected back on those experiences: If you were a Baptist or a Catholic or a Jew coming from the east coast to California, and you went to the First Methodist Church in Glendale, and then you came to a wonderful only-true-Church ward in Hollywood, which church would you want to join? Now think about it. I appreciate that knowledge and understanding and rationale are vital tools in

learning truth. I submit again a very important principle of the gospel—that the Spirit is the revealing force. When the Spirit speaks to the spirit, a person comes to know, and this whole field of courtesy and delight, I think, is the vehicle through which the Spirit tends to move. You know, we all react on a feeling level. Have you ever noticed that?

Challenge

So I would challenge you, as you go forth to serve in your wonderful capacities: Remember who you are and what you are. People are watching, and they have a right to watch. My wife, who is a convert to this great Church, has that vast family out there who haven't yet seen the light. They watch us very carefully. They have a right to see that my children are different from other children. They have a right to see that Jeanne and I are doing things that we claim to be true in a way that's different from the other members of their family. And if we don't, then really, by comparison, what do we have?

God bless you wonderful students. I just testify the gospel is true. I'm glad you are my friends. I love you, I sustain you, I respect you, I honor you, I cherish your association, and I bear witness that you and I really do belong to Christ's church. And he is counting on us to share it in a wonderful way, whether it is in a golf tournament or in a fireside or in a walk across campus. And as the nation looks at this great ball game [with the University of Utah on television], they'll watch very carefully what you do and how you do it. May we have the sense and spirit to be good examples, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.