
FOREWORD

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History is a prologue of the future. Our vision today is the same vision we had when the International Society was started in 1989. Let me give you a bit of the history of the International Society so you will understand. Does anybody know John Harris? John was a friend of mine in Caracas, Venezuela (1980–82). We both left Venezuela in 1982, and I ended up in Taipei, Taiwan, in 1984. I remember sitting in sacrament meeting in Taipei, and I saw John. I was on the stand, and I saw him in the back. I thought, “What on earth is he doing here?” That was relevant to me, because I quickly learned when I went to Venezuela as a young attorney in 1980 that there was this whole group of returned missionaries who served their missions in Latin America that had progressed through graduate school and taken assignments with various employers in Latin America: the Mormon professionals of Latin America.

A number of years later, I was in Asia. I started to meet a network of professionals who had served their missions in Asia. And so I learned there was an Asia “Mormon Mafia.” When John came in, he disrupted my whole view of the world, because I thought, “What are you doing here? You’re supposed to be in Latin America.” He probably thought the same thing when he saw me: “What are you doing here? You speak Spanish, not Mandarin. What are you doing in Taiwan?”

That was the spark of the idea: “Gee, wouldn’t it be nice if all those ‘Mormon Mafia’ folks in Asia got to know all of the LDS corporate leaders in Latin America, and the two of them got to know all those serving in professional capacities in Europe?” That was the impetus behind the International Society.

In the spring of 1987, Brigham Young University professors Spencer Palmer and Ray Hillam came to Taipei, and they called me. Even though I had had classes from them, I did not know them personally. They said, “Could you get a group of the LDS professionals in Taiwan together for lunch so we can talk to them about BYU, the David M. Kennedy Center, and the international programs?” I said that I would be delighted to do that.

We did that, and afterward, they came over to our home for dinner and talked about it. We discussed the idea of having a way to network all of the Mormon professionals who were involved in international activities, whether it be academia, government, business, or law, etc. That was the beginning.

They said, “Why don’t we meet next summer at BYU when you’re home on leave?” They would pull together a group. In the interim, I had also met with Blaine Tueller, who was the special assistant to David M. Kennedy, ambassador-at-large for the Church. Blaine had much the same idea. He had been developing lists of members of the Church who were involved in international activities. That summer, we met together at the Kennedy Center on the BYU campus with probably twenty or twenty-five faculty members and started developing the idea of having a global group.

We created this Mormon community to (1) promote collegiality among members and friends of the Church who are involved or interested in international business, law, government, service, education, or

other professional activities; (2) provide support for BYU international programs; and (3) promote shared professional interests and concerns of society members.

I am convinced that part of the future of the International Society is to help build Zion, and we all have the obligation as members of the Church to do so. In many ways, we do that in our local wards as we participate in the various ecclesiastical activities, but as we do that, the Lord is not compartmentalizing our lives—we can also do it in our professional and personal capacities. This is a quote I love from the Prophet Joseph:

The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; they have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day; but they died without the sight; we are the favored people that God has made choice of to bring about the Latter-day glory; it is left for us to see, participate in and help to roll forward the Latter-day glory.¹

It is my hope that we as the International Society will catch the vision of how we in our professional lives and with our interest in the international world will be of assistance to the Lord in the building of his kingdom in the latter days.

NOTE

1. “The Temple,” an editorial published in *Times and Seasons*, 2 May 1842, 775.