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The Historians Corner

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JAMES B. ALLEN, *Editor*

DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH: THREE VIGNETTES FROM MORMON HISTORY

"The Historians Corner" is devoted to presenting documents, vignettes, and other short items that add both interest and depth to our understanding of Mormon history. The emphasis of this "Corner" is on individuals, often little-known, whose experiences help give that personal touch to the story of the Church.

In this issue we present vignettes from the lives of three dedicated men who found three different ways to defend the faith they have espoused. These men had much in common, although probably none of them ever knew the others. Products of the Nineteenth century, they lived in a time when Mormonism was unpopular, both in the United States and abroad. Each was fully devoted to the Church and zealous in his desire to promote and defend it. On the other hand, the different circumstances under which they were called upon to speak out for Mormonism perhaps speak with some relevance to current times.

In the early years of Mormon history, it was not uncommon for Church members to be faced with violence. Mobs drove them from their homes in New York, Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. In the final months of the Ohio period Sidney Rigdon, a counselor to the prophet, reached the conclusion that he must

fight fire with fire. Being perhaps the most persuasive of all Mormon orators, with his blazing speeches he could stir the emotions of many. Although he did not advocate direct aggression, his harangues were openly militant and could easily lead to violence. Dr. F. Mark McKiernan, assistant professor of history at Idaho State University who recently completed a Ph.D. dissertation on the life of Sidney Rigdon, and who is a member of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, summarizes in the first of our vignettes the intent and impact of Rigdon's militant defense of the faith.

The more traditional way of publicly defending the faith is through missionary work. In our second selection, Dr. Richard O. Cowan, a member of the religion faculty at Brigham Young University, summarizes the intriguing story of Mischa Markow, a lone missionary to the Balkans at the end of the century. Markow was one of those little-known and unsung stalwarts of Mormon history. His odyssey in the Balkans beautifully illustrates the determination of Mormon missionaries in the face of almost insurmountable obstacles. He traveled alone, which seems unusual today but apparently reflects what happened to many missionaries of the time. He was jailed, ridiculed in, and banished from every country he visited; yet he felt a curious joy in missionary service and was willing to accept another call in later years.

Our third story concerns Josiah Hickman, a Mormon student who left Utah in 1892 to study at the University of Michigan. His journal is filled with the dual concern that has faced many a Mormon student now, as well as then: concern for achieving excellence in his educational pursuits, and an intense desire to represent well the Church. Dr. Martin B. Hickman, a grandson of Josiah and currently dean of the College of Social Science at Brigham Young University, has chosen one incident from his grandfather's journal to illustrate the approach that this Mormon student made to the problem of defending the faith. In that day oratorical contests were serious business among both students and faculty, and the use of proper grammatical style, persuasive logic, and dramatic illustrations were all important to the success of the contestant. The way one Mormon student chose to use such a contest to help place Mormonism in a more favorable light is the story of this vignette.