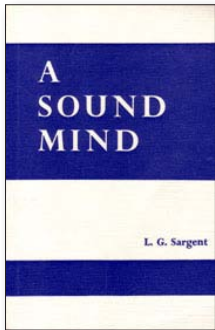


Developing the mind of Christ

Geoff Henstock



A Sound Mind.
L. G. Sargent, 1971.
206 pages.
Available from The
Christadelphian, [www.](http://www.thechristadelphian.com)
[thechristadelphian.com](http://www.thechristadelphian.com).
Price: £5.00 plus
postage.

IT MAY SEEM ODD in 2010 to review a book first published nearly forty years ago, but as it is still in print, readily available and very profitable it is worth reminding older readers of its value and alerting younger readers to its existence. The book under review is the collection of essays and articles written by the late Brother L. G. Sargent, first published in 1971 under the title, *A Sound Mind*.*

Readers of his expositional works on the Sermon on the Mount (*The Teaching of the Master*), the Gospel of Mark (*The Gospel of the Son of God*) and Ecclesiastes and Job (*Ecclesiastes and Other Studies*) will already be acquainted with Brother Sargent as both a fine Bible student and an excellent writer. *A Sound Mind* introduces its readers to a wider canvass than these three major works; it exhibits the breadth of the author's Biblical interests, his wide and varied reading in related fields and his sensitive attention to the spiritual needs of his brothers and sisters.

Challenges to faith

Brother Sargent was appointed Editor of the *Christadelphian* following the death of Brother John Carter, and served throughout the remainder of the 1960s. These were tumultuous years for the Western world, and the Brotherhood was not immune from the challenges confronting the wider community in which it witnessed to God's truth. Many of the articles reflect the pressures and issues that arose within the Brotherhood in those years. It is a testimony to the wise manner in

which Brother Sargent deals with these problems that his remarks remain so fresh and relevant today. While tackling the issues head-on, Brother Sargent does so in a balanced and nuanced way that ensures he rises above the polemics of debates which caused so much heartache. In doing so he brings out the most edifying aspects of the Bible's teaching on the various issues he addresses. His essay on the Memorial Name is a case in point and is particularly commended.

The book opens with the essay from which the title is drawn. It is a thought-provoking piece with a message that is perhaps even more appropriate today than it was when it was first written. Drawing in particular on the advice of Paul in the Pastoral Epistles, the author deals with the problems that arise when brothers and sisters become obsessed by a particular opinion or view which is disruptive. Each generation faces its own challenges in this regard: some of these disputes have been peculiar to a point in history; other disruptive views have re-emerged periodically in successive generations. The power of Brother Sargent's observations in this essay lies in the fact that they are relevant to a wide range of issues, and it will repay thoughtful and repeated contemplation.

Helpful exposition

There is much of value from an expositional perspective in this book. The essay about Rehoboam, for instance, offers useful insights, while the essay on the sign of the Son of man is instructive. A series of articles on the first principles of the faith, under the collected heading of "Foundations", tackles these familiar themes in ways which broaden our thinking and draw out many of the moral implications implicit in these subjects and which we can sometimes overlook. This section is followed by a series of seven articles on "The risen Lord," which unpacks many facets of the doctrine of the resurrection and its power in the life of a believer.

* First reviewed by the *Testimony* in February 1972.

There is pervading the book a strong sense of a wonder in the grace of God extended to men and women through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not surprising, therefore, that the atonement should feature in several of the entries. A highlight in this regard is a piece which emphasises the sacrificial elements of our Lord's death.

Practical issues

The practical elements of our first principles are addressed incidentally in many of the articles. One in particular, entitled "Christ's service and war," deals not just with our attitude to service in the armed forces but more generally with our relationship to the state. This is an example of the material in the book that remains highly relevant to readers today, for there are in our midst some that are arguing that Christadelphians are free to become involved in protest movements, voting and other aspects of secular politics. This is unhelpful to our long-held and well-recognised stand on conscientious objection, while manifesting a failure to grasp the significance of the full testimony of Scripture on the subject.

Brother Sargent was well read and intellectually gifted. He valued the insights available from the writings of many students, both within our community and elsewhere; he certainly was no enemy of or stranger to scholarship. Many of the pieces included under the heading "Editorial articles" deal with the inspiration of the Bible and the confidence we should place on the revealed Word of God. Some in our community in the days of Brother Roberts challenged this and developed a theory of partial inspiration, which made shipwreck of the faith of many. In Brother Sargent's day there were some who sought to make a distinction between inspiration and revelation, and this likewise undermined the faith of many. Brother Sargent responded to this debate with articles which are well worth re-reading today. A chapter entitled "The implanted Word," which addresses these issues, concludes with this eloquent summary:

"There is much intellectual pride in the world today, and intellectual pride is inimical to the truth of God. Let us be ready always to accept truth but beware of pride, for pride is the

ultimate sin. It can come to us in many forms, and none is more insidious than the appeal to intellect and the authority of scholarship. Where facts are concerned we must recognise the claims of scholarship, but in many ways bearing especially on faith in the Bible, fact and judgement or opinion are so interwoven as to be very difficult to disentangle. The 'wisdom of the world' starts its thinking from presuppositions which govern its conclusions, and where the presuppositions are false the conclusions will be also, no matter how learnedly and persuasively they are presented."

Wise counsel

There is always a need for the Brotherhood to respond to challenges that emerge and remain relevant to evolving trends in the wider community. Brother Sargent's appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the ecclesia, both in his own day and in the past, and his awareness of the legacy we inherited from former generations, equipped him to address calls for change in a constructive and balanced way. This comes out very well in an article entitled, "That which is committed to our trust," and also in a curious little piece entitled, "To communicate forget not," with which the book concludes. While the wise man's advice not to say "that the former days were better than these" (Eccl. 7:10) means we should never allow ourselves to be bound unnecessarily by that which was done in the past, Brother Sargent's approach ensures that we will always apply the apostle's advice to "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).

A Sound Mind is one of the gems of Christadelphian literature that deserves to be widely known and read. It is a showcase of beautiful, thoughtful writing by a gentle brother who clearly loved his God, his Lord and the Word of God. Those who know Brother Sargent's writings will enjoy reacquainting themselves with his thoughts, while those who have not yet had that privilege will relish the experience. If you have a copy, take it down from the shelf and re-read it. If you do not already have a copy, purchase one while it is still in print. Either way, there is a treat in store for any who open the pages of *A Sound Mind*.

We are compelled to see in Jesus the conscious action of a free and independent personality deliberately submitting himself to do God's will. Anything less would make his life a mere seeming and nullify his sacrifice. Atonement would be impossible apart from Christ's freewill, and his life and death are final proof that freewill is a fact.

L. G. Sargent, "Christ and freewill", *A Sound Mind*, p. 54.