

Now That Took Faith!

By PAUL J. SCHARF

As much as it might seem to stretch the barriers of time, I was taught to preach by a man who sat under the ministry of none other than Dr. Henry (Harry) Allan Ironside—the so-called “archbishop of fundamentalism.”

In fact, Dr. Ironside is my spiritual and theological grandfather on at least two different counts.

First, he was indeed the pastor of my practical theology professor in seminary—Dr. Ralph Turk, one of my own mentors. Dr. Turk spent his earliest years in The Moody Church, where Ironside served as pastor from 1930 to 1948.

Secondly, Ironside was one of the original leaders of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, through which I am privileged to serve as a church ministries representative.

I first remember hearing about Ironside from Pastor Bob Taylor on the *Rejoice in the Lord* telecast from Pensacola Christian College. Taylor would refer to “old Dr. Ironside’s” commentaries on a regular basis in his preaching, as I recall.

Those commentaries, in fact, provide expositions of 48 books of the Bible in 32 volumes, and they continue to be well worth consulting. Ironside authored many additional books and pamphlets. His treatise called *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* endures to this day as the authoritative response to ultra-dispensationalism.

Ironside came from a Plymouth Brethren background and was self-taught, but clearly had a superior intellect. His path may not offer the best model for modern preparation for ministry, and his approach may not be universally applicable. He read incessantly, and had the ability to speak and write eloquently, skillfully and powerfully, but with simplicity.ⁱⁱ His giftedness took him to the highest levels of the Christian world of his day—not only pastoring The Moody Church, but speaking relentlessly across the nation. He held seats on the boards of numerous Christian institutions, and had a well-known connection to Dallas Theological Seminary and its co-founder, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer.ⁱⁱⁱ Together, they were involved in The Friends of Israel from its earliest days.^{iv}

I can just picture Ironside, sitting in his office at The Moody Church, and—assuming he’d mastered the use of the telephone by that time—answering a call from Philadelphia to be part of a meeting to discuss how to rescue Jewish refugees from the throes of a new and unprecedented wave of persecution. It was less than a month old, and would come to be known as the Holocaust. Answering such a call must have really taken some faith!

I would imagine that it also involved a willingness to risk a great deal of prestige, if nothing else. Americans could not yet possibly comprehend the horrors that were about

to come, and reportedly 71 percent agreed with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt that Jewish immigration should not be increased.^v

But displaying faith related to the people of Israel was nothing new for Ironside. I was paging through his commentary on Revelation recently, and was fascinated by the fold-out chart at the front.^{vi} It speaks of Israel being “regathered in unbelief” during the first three-and-a-half years of the coming seven-year tribulation—the 70th week of Daniel.

But here is the amazing thing about that chart. The book was first published in 1920, with a new edition in 1930. I am not certain when the chart first appeared, but it was “Designed by Dr. H. A. Ironside,” so I assume it was included at least by the 1930 edition—when the Jewish people were still “scattered” (also from the chart) throughout the world. That was more than eight years (he wrote the “Preface to the 1930 Edition” in September) before *Kristallnacht* and the launch of the Holocaust—and the launch of The Friends of Israel. When Ironside answered the call to go to Philadelphia, he was acting on that which he already believed and taught—and had put into print.

I hope future generations of fundamentalists will always remember “old Dr. Ironside.” I especially commend his commentaries to you. As you read them, perhaps you’ll begin to gain an appreciation for his amazing, self-taught wisdom ... and his profound faith.

Paul J. Scharf (M.A., M.Div., Faith Baptist Theological Seminary) is a church ministries representative for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, based in Columbus, WI, and serving in the Midwest. For more information on his ministry, visit sermonaudio.com/pscharf or foi.org/scharf, or email pscharf@foi.org.

ⁱ You can freely access this document here: Harry Ironside; “Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth;” Rapture Ready; n.d.; <https://www.raptureready.com/wrongly-dividing-word-truth-harry-ironside/>; Internet; accessed 22 June 2022.

ⁱⁱ A total of 22 of his sermons are available on SermonAudio.com. See the listing at https://www.sermonaudio.com/search.asp?speakeronly=true&currsection=sermonsspeaker&keyword=Harry_A._Ironsides; Internet; accessed 22 June 2022.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Probably no other name appears on as many letterheads as does H.A. Ironside’s. Though he does not belong to any denomination, he is on the board of advisers or board of reference of practically every mission board and philanthropic agency known to fundamentalism.... His name behind an organization is an ‘open sesame’ to fundamentalists pocketbooks and pulpits everywhere.” Donald E. Hoke; “Harry Ironside;” Moody Church Media; 1944; <https://www.moodymedia.org/articles/harry-ironside/>; Internet; accessed 22 June 2022.

^{iv} For details on FOI’s history, see “Our History;” The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry; <https://www.foi.org/vision/history/>; Internet; accessed 22 June 2022. According to Dr. Jim Showers, Ironside and Chafer were still “on our Committee in 1942.” See “Inside View;” Israel My Glory;” Nov.-Dec. 2017; <https://israelmyglory.org/article/inside-view-nov-dec-2017/>; Internet; accessed 23 June 2022.

^v “Public Opinion Polls After Kristallnacht” (poll attributed to American Institute of Public Opinion) and “Roosevelt Denounces Nazis;” in “Americans and the Holocaust;” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; n.d.; <https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/main/us-public-opinion-after-kristallnacht-1938/>; Internet; accessed 22 June 2022.

^{vi} H. A. Ironside. *Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1930).