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Chapter 7: The International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem The Most Influential & Controversial Christian Zionism Agency

1. The Historical Origins of the ICEJ

Of all the Christian Zionist organisations, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ) is probably the most influential and controversial. The founding of the International Christian Embassy in 1980 by Jan Willem van der Hoeven, in West Jerusalem near the home of the Israeli Prime Minister, represented the coming of age of Christian Zionism as a high profile, politically astute, international movement.

Ironically, it had originally been the home of the family of Dr Edward Said, the distinguished Palestinian-American academic, before being confiscated in 1948 when it was first given to the Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber. It then became the Chilean embassy before becoming the home of the ICEJ. This is itself a paradigm of the impact Christian Zionists such as the ICEJ have had upon the indigenous Palestinian people and Christian community, in particular.

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was formally opened in 1980 by the Jerusalem based committee of the thousand pilgrims who came to the first international Feast of Tabernacles celebration.¹

The timing was actually precipitated by the co-ordinated withdrawal of the last thirteen embassies still based in Jerusalem. From 1947, the majority of embassies had located in Tel Aviv in response to the partition plan agreed by the United Nations. The Dutch embassy and twelve Latin American embassies finally vacated Jerusalem in 1980 following the passing of the Jerusalem Bill by the Knesset in which Israel unilaterally declared Jerusalem to be their exclusive and undivided, eternal capital. Whether responding to threats of an Arab oil embargo or from a commitment to upholding international law, Wagner claims,

Israel had violated international law by this decision, and they would not grant legitimacy to such an illegal action. When Chile moved to Tel Aviv, Israel turned the building on Brenner Street over to the International Christian Embassy.²

The ICEJ placed a somewhat different emphasis on these same events.

In 1980 Israel declared Jerusalem to be her eternal, undivided capital. In reply, bringing the pressure of an oil boycott to bear, the Arab nations caused 13 countries to remove their embassies from Jerusalem and go down to Tel Aviv. The inspiration to establish a Christian Embassy was given at the time when Israel was celebrating the great annual Feast of Succot. Thereafter each year a Christian Celebration has been held at Succot, pledging loyalty to her charter, "Comfort, Comfort My people." (Isaiah 40:1)³

¹*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem*, (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 4.

²Donald E. Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, Herald Press, 1995), p. 97.

³*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem*, (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 6.

Their chief spokesman, Jan Willem van der Hoeven was more blunt claiming the ICEJ was 'birthed' on 30th September 1980,

...in a direct response to the world's cowardice and especially the cowardice of those nations which, unable to stand up to Arab blackmail, moved their embassies to Tel Aviv... Some of us, living as Christians in Israel, saw the nations' shameful rejection of Israel's right to her unified city. In response to their abandoning Jerusalem, we opened the International Christian Embassy on that sunny day of September 30, 1980...⁴

The ICEJ's promotional material elaborates further,

When the vision of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was first given it was expressed in the following concerns; to care for the Jewish people, especially for the newborn State of Israel which includes standing up for the Jews when they are attacked or discriminated against, and for Israel to live in peace and security.... to care that the world wide body of Christ will be rightly related to Israel in comfort, love and prayer for her well-being, to care for the nations whose destinies will be increasingly linked to the way in which they relate to Israel, the care and preparation for the coming of the Lord.⁵

In 1985 the ICEJ organised the first International Christian Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in the same hall used by Theodor Herzl to launch the Zionist movement in 1897.⁶

In 1993, the ICEJ had an international staff of 50 representing 12 different nationalities, together with a further 250 volunteers who assisted with annual events such as the Feast of Tabernacles Celebration. ICEJ 'ambassadors' also served in over 100 countries world-wide through a network of branches, national directors and regional boards working under the authority of its Jerusalem Executive.⁷ By 1997 the ICEJ claimed to have representatives in 80 countries.

The ICEJ draws its support almost exclusively from charismatic and evangelical fundamentalist Christians since, based on their particular form of literal interpretation of the Bible, they claim to "...have very warm feelings toward Israel."⁸ The ICEJ is strongest in the USA, Canada and South Africa, and also in Sweden, Germany and Singapore as well as having offices in other European, Asian and Central American countries, who are apparently experiencing "a tremendous move of the Holy Spirit."⁹

1.1 The Objectives of the ICEJ

⁴Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?* (Shippensburg, Pasadena, Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), pp. 151-152, 158.

⁵MECC, *What is Western Fundamentalist Christian Zionism?* rev. edn. (Limassol, Cyprus, Middle East Council of Churches, 1988), p. 11.

⁶Donald E. Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, Herald Press, 1995), p. 97.

⁷*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem*, (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 4.

⁸*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 25.

⁹*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 25.

From its foundation the 'charter' of the ICEJ has been to 'comfort' Israel. This has been defined in terms of encouraging and facilitating the 'restoration' of the Jews to Eretz Israel although the exact geographical extent of 'greater' Israel is usually left ambiguous.

*The embassy believes that God wants us to stimulate, encourage, and inspire Christians amongst the many nations concerning their role and task in the restoration of Israel. The Bible says that the destiny of nations, Christians, and even that of the church is linked to the way in which these groups respond to this restoration.*¹⁰

In 1993, the ICEJ declared itself to have nine objectives, many of which were overtly political as well as Zionist, but based, they claimed, on biblical grounds.

- *To show concern for the Jewish people and the reborn State of Israel, by being a focus of comfort "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God" (Isaiah 40:1)*
- *To be a centre where Christians can gain a biblical understanding of Israel, and learn to be rightly related to the nation "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise... But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made us one" (Ephesians 2:12-14)*
- *To present to Christians a true understanding of what is taking place in the Land today so that world events may be interpreted in the light of God's Word "Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea the set time is come. So the nations shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth Thy glory. When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory" (Psalm 102:13-16)*
- *To remind and encourage Christians to pray for Jerusalem and the Land of Israel "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isaiah 62:6-7)*
- *To stimulate Christian leaders, churches and organisations to become effective influences in their countries on behalf of the Jewish people "Now the Lord said unto Abram: I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3)*
- *To encourage Jewish people to return to their homeland "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the Land of Egypt; But, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither He had driven them; and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers" (Jeremiah 16:14-15)*

¹⁰*Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord* (Jerusalem, International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, 1991), brochure. See also 'About the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem' <http://www.icej.org.il/about.html> 7 January 1998.

- *To be a channel of fulfilment of God's promise that one day Israel and her Arab neighbours will live in peace under the blessing of God, in the middle of the earth "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance" (Isaiah 19:24-25)*
- *To begin or assist projects in Israel, including economic ventures, for the well being of all who live here "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matthew 25:40)*
- *To take part through these activities in preparing the way of the Lord and to anticipate His reign from Jerusalem "And it shall come to pass in the last days. That the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and all the nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3)¹¹*

1.2 The Priorities and Activities of the ICEJ

The main priorities of the ICEJ since its inception in 1980 have been to 'bring comfort' to Israel through the encouragement of Soviet and Eastern European Jews to emigrate to Israel; a social assistance programme for integrating Jewish immigrants into Israeli life; the sponsoring of an annual Christian Zionist Feast of Tabernacles Celebration in Jerusalem; and Diplomatic Banquets and Receptions through which church leaders and government officials around the world are lobbied on behalf of the State of Israel.

The ICEJ has also developed a sophisticated and professional news service which produces weekly radio and video programmes broadcast on four continents together with newsletters and periodicals such as the *Middle East Intelligence Digest*, a pro-Israeli summary of Israeli and Arab newspapers and journals, published in print and on their web site, as well as daily press releases distributed by email to over 3000 supporters world-wide. These are aimed, according to Jan Willem van der Hoeven, at countering "*increasingly warped and twisted*" coverage which apparently has a "*marked bias against Israel.*"¹² Reports in recent months have included:

Exposing a major Mideast myth: The Palestinian question is not central to regional peace (January 1997)

PLO incitement to violence continues unabated (January 1997)

The Deceived: Churches back the anti-Israeli cause (February 1997)

PLO's Christmas package of lies (February 1997)

Plotting war against Israel: Collaboration between Iran, Iraq, Syria, and the PLO Authority (March 1997)

Jewish settlements ARE in the US interest (March 1997)

Battle Stations: myths and facts about Har Homa (April 1997)

Arafat shares Hitler's determination to wipe out the Jews (June 1997)

¹¹*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 5.*

¹²Felix Corley, 'Is Radical Zionism an Option for Christians?' *Church of England Newspaper*, 7 February 1997, p. 7.

UN General Assembly united against Israel (June 1997)
The great British betrayal of the Zionist cause (June 1997)
Arabs and Iran form "anti-Israel" eastern front (September 1997)
PLO rhetoric becomes less nationalistic, increasingly religious (September 1997)
World expresses moral outrage at unsuccessful Israeli assassination attempt on Hamas (October 1997)
Anti-semitism in Arafat's Palestine (October 1997)
Attack is the best defense (January 1998)
Turning the screws: President Clinton loses patience with Israel (January 1998)
Tragic and deadly alliance: Churches in support of the Palestinian cause (February 1998)
Ultimate Blame: Who owes the Palestinians an apology? (April 1998)
*Jerusalem is Ours (May 1998)*¹³

A significant part of the ministry of the ICEJ also involves fund-raising from Western evangelical donors sympathetic to their mission. The ICEJ claims,

*The International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, North America, Europe and other parts of the world is established as a non-profit organisation. As a result, financial accountability is based on current laws of the land and as such records are open to public scrutiny.*¹⁴

While the Jerusalem Post claimed in 1985 that the ICEJ's monthly budget was in the region of \$80,000, Don Wagner notes, "...the ICEJ sources of income are veiled in secrecy"¹⁵ Likewise, Baruch Maoz laments that, "... No public record has ever been made of the sizable amounts of money the Embassy receives."¹⁶

The ICEJ's social assistance programme includes funding the families of needy Israeli policemen; remedial Hebrew courses for Jewish immigrants and educational material for Jewish schools; help with setting up a children's club in a new synagogue, and an ambulance for a Jewish settlement.¹⁷ Internationally, the ICEJ also admits to working closely with Israeli Embassies, Consulates as well as the Jewish Agency in channelling support and funds to Israel.¹⁸

1.3 Key Individuals Associated with the ICEJ

Two notable individuals associated with the founding of the ICEJ are Jan Willem van der Hoeven, their former spokesman and Johann Luckhoff, their Director.

Jan Willem van der Hoeven founded the ICEJ in 1980 and became their chief spokesman. In 1999 he was sacked because of his outspoken and controversial

¹³*Middle East Intelligence Digest*, International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, www.icej.org.il/digest.html

¹⁴*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 4.

¹⁵Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 100.

¹⁶Baruch Maoz, "The Christian Embassy in Jerusalem" *Mishkan*, 1/1990, no. 12. p. 5.

¹⁷*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), pp. 19-20.

¹⁸*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 23.

views,¹⁹ and formed another organisation, The International Christian Zionist Centre and organised an alternative Christian Zionist Feast of Tabernacles. He was born in 1940 in Holland, married a Palestinian and, before joining the ICEJ, was Warden of the Garden Tomb between 1968-1975.²⁰ In 1998, “*For his ceaseless efforts for a united and undivided Jerusalem*”, he received the “*Guardian of Israel Award*” by the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.²¹

The Canadian Friends of the International Christian Embassy are one of the strongest organisations linked to the ICEJ outside Jerusalem. An associate of theirs who has contributed extensively to their web site is the Revd Dr Edward Daniel Brotsky who is the Director Emeritus of Judeo-Christian Relations for the American Baptist Convention, Eastern States. He is also Executive Director of Judeo-Christian Relations for the *Hebrew Christian Witness* in Canada.²²

Speakers at the 1996 Third International Christian Zionist Congress included Peter Lewis, Paul Johnson, David Bar-Ilan, Jan-Willem van der Hoeven, Margaret Brearley and Moshe Sharon,²³ who it is presumed, were or are in sympathy with the work of the ICEJ.

1.4 Relationship with other Christian and Jewish Zionist Organisations

In North America, the ICEJ works closely with the political lobbying body, *Christian Israel Public Action Campaign* (CIPAC) which is affiliated to ICEJ.²⁴ It is also known that funds from the ICEJ have gone to support the *Jerusalem Temple Foundation* (JTF), founded by Terry Reisenhoover, an Auschwitz survivor who became a Christian, and Stanley Goldfoot, a former member of the Stern Gang together with 4 other American evangelical leaders. The JTF has funded Jewish terrorists and is committed to the destruction of the Dome of the Rock and rebuilding of the Jewish Temple.²⁵

The ICEJ advertises its annual Feast of Tabernacles celebrations in *Charisma* magazine and in 1995 jointly hosted a banquet, seminars on Israel and current

¹⁹Based on an interview with Tom Getman, Director of *World Vision*, Jerusalem, 30 May 1999, in part published as, 2‘Barak and the Bulldozers’, *Evangelicals Now*, August 1999.

²⁰Felix Corley, ‘Is Radical Zionism an Option for Christians?’ *Church of England Newspaper*, 7 February 1997, p. 7.

²¹Jan Willem van der Hoeven, ‘Christian Zionist Feast of Tabernacles’ invitation June 1999.

²²Edward Daniel Brotsky, “The Role of Gentile Christians in the Rebirth of the State of Israel.” *The Canadian Friends of the International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem*, www.cdn-friends-icej.ca/judeochr/rolegent/brthicej.html

²³*Christians and Israel, Essays in Biblical Zionism and Islamic Fundamentalism* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1996)

²⁴*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 25.

²⁵Louis Rapoport, ‘Slouching towards Armageddon: Links with Evangelicals’ *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, June 17-24, 1984; Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics, Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War* (Westport, Connecticut, Lawrence Hill, 1986), pp. 96-116

events in the Middle East, with Davidic praise and worship in conjunction with Pat Robertson's *700 Club* and *Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN)*.²⁶

Through their sister organisation, *Christian Travel Study Programs Inc*, run by the Revd. Dr. Randall D. Smith, part of the *International Christian Investment Corporation*, the ICEJ promotes and coordinates attendance at the annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration as well as study tour programmes of Israel.

On their web site, the ICEJ also recommends supporters to access daily email news releases from *Arutz 7*, a right-wing settler radio station operating from a ship off the Tel Aviv coast, and also from *The Freeman Centre for Strategic Studies*.²⁷ The *Freeman Centre* was founded in 1992 by Bernard J. Shapiro in Texas, with the support of other pro-Israeli political activists from around the world. Their web site, only created in 1997, has allegedly received over 16,000 visitors in the first year.

*The primary purpose of the Freeman Centre is to improve Israel's ability to survive in a hostile world. This will be accomplished through research into the military and strategic issues related to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the dissemination of that information to the Jewish community. Essential to Israel's survival, we feel, is the preservation of its present secure borders including Judea, Samaria, Gaza and the Golan Heights... In pursuit of these goals we intend to maximise solidarity with Israel among the Jewish community and combat media bias.*²⁸

The *Freeman Centre*, named after Harry W. Freeman, a Jewish American lawyer, draws controversial parallels between Hitler and the Arabs and the ambivalence of the West toward the Holocaust of the 1930's and one predicted for the 1990's.

*In 1934, Harry W. Freeman, was already lecturing about the dangers of Hitler and Nazism. He tried to arouse the Jewish community. Nobody listened. The Holocaust was not prevented. Today, in 1995 there are one billion Arab and Moslem people who plan a second Holocaust against the Jews of Israel. Their first stage is to use the so called "peace process" to weaken Israel and strip it of its strategic territories. They are being aided by the same hypocrites and accomplices in the West who failed to aid the Jews of Europe in their darkest hour. Unfortunately, even left-wing Israelis have fallen victim to the seductive lure of peace and have begun a policy of appeasement similar to that tried with Hitler. The results will be no different. A harsh reality faces the Jewish people and Israel. We all want peace... It is because our hunger for peace is so strong that we must be doubly cautious not to fall for a pseudo-peace that is really the wolf of war wrapped in sheep's clothing. Today none of us believe Chamberlain really negotiated "peace in our time" with Hitler. Why do some Jews believe that Peres and Rabin really negotiated peace with Arafat, one of today's Hitlers?*²⁹

²⁶Ed Tarkowski, 'Celebration of Tabernacles' www.cth.com.au/corp/despatch/vol73-false-tabernacles.html. See also *Charisma*, July 1995, pp. 63, 88-89.

²⁷International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, www.icej.org.il/digest.html

²⁸Freeman Centre for Strategic Studies, www.freeman.io.com/purpose.htm

²⁹Freeman Centre for Strategic Studies, www.freeman.io.com/purpose.htm

By recommending its supporters receive the *Freeman Centre's* 10-12 email broadcasts each week, it is assumed that the ICEJ endorses the bleak political analysis offered by this right-wing Zionist organisation.

In the United Kingdom, ICEJ has worked in partnership with the *Good News Travels Bus Company* which helps coordinate the transportation of Jews within the former Soviet Union to regional centres with airports for flights to Israel.³⁰

Although not mentioned in their promotional literature, since the mid-1980's, the ICEJ has also been closely associated with the politically subversive *Voice of Hope* radio station in Southern Lebanon.

*The Voice of Hope was formerly owned by Christian fundamentalist entrepreneur George Ortis, Sr., a supporter of renegade Lebanese army major Saad Haddad, whom Israel assisted with a militia and financial support in the Israeli-controlled sector of south Lebanon. The Voice of Hope station broadcasts to northern Israel and Lebanon frequent messages from Haddad, American Christian country-and-western music, and fundamentalist Christian radio programs.*³¹

Many of the staff working for the ICEJ worship on Sundays at Christ Church, an Anglican church, near the Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem, which is also the headquarters of the *Church's Ministry Among Jewish People* (CMJ) in Israel. Ray Lockhart, the then vicar of Christ Church, when invited to comment on the work of ICEJ, refused to express any criticism of it but welcomed its staff as church members.³²

Ironically, despite providing political and material support for Jews generally, the ICEJ distances itself from the Messianic Jewish communities within Israel. Baruch Maoz, Field Director for *Christian Witness to Israel*, for instance admits, "...I so much regret the Embassy's persistent refusal to enter into dialogue with those who voice concern over the path they have taken."³³ He is also critical of their unwillingness to use their influence to identify with or defend Messianic believers from persecution within Israel.

*Uncritical support has done little to earn the respect of the Jewish people. It has further exposed the fledgling Jewish Christian church in Israel to harassment, insufficiently undeterred by those in the country responsible for preserving democratic freedoms, because the Embassy and those whom it represents have not been willing to add substance to their discreet but ineffectual protests... The Embassy has yet to disprove the old dictum that barking dogs don't bite.*³⁴

2. The Theology of the ICEJ

ICEJ is a self appointed and self regulated 'Christian embassy'. Throughout their literature they insist somewhat pretentiously that they,

³⁰*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 24.

³¹Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 103.

³²Interview with Ray Lockhart, vicar of Christ Church, Jerusalem, September 1994.

³³Baruch Maoz, "The Christian Embassy in Jerusalem" *Mishkan*, 1/1990, no. 12. p. 2.

³⁴Baruch Maoz, "The Christian Embassy in Jerusalem" *Mishkan*, 1/1990, no. 12. p. 4.

*...represent Christians from all over the world who love Israel and the people of Israel... and ...represent Israel and what the Bible says about its destiny to the Christian world.*³⁵

*The Embassy does not represent any government, denomination, church organization, Christian busi-nessmen (sic), group or political party. It does represent the concern of millions of Bible-believing Christians who love and honour the Jewish people and who wish to obey the will of God concerning them.*³⁶

*Through this continuing presence in Israel we have been able to receive hundreds of Christian groups from around the world at the Embassy. Here face to face, they are encouraged, challenged and instructed concerning their relationship with Israel.*³⁷

Under a title, “*Your Embassy in Jerusalem*”, their web site affirms,

*Today, believers everywhere have an Embassy representing them in Jerusalem, a channel for international Christian concern and love for Israel.*³⁸

Both Palestinian and Messianic church leaders in Israel have distanced themselves from such declarations.

*The ICEJ has no right to claim to be speaking for evangelical Christianity. Far less can it claim to be God’s authorized voice in Israel... Its views are its own, no more and no less.*³⁹

At the Third International Christian Zionist Congress held in Jerusalem 25-29 February, 1996, under the auspices of the ICEJ, some 1,500 delegates from over 40 countries unanimously affirmed a proclamation of Christian Zionism which included the following tenets,

1. The Bible is the inspired Word of God and is the basis of our faith as Christians following the teachings of our Lord and the Apostles and the source of our motivation as Zionists.

2. God the Father, Almighty, chose the ancient nation and people of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to reveal His plan of redemption for the world. They remain elect of God, and without the Jewish nation His redemptive purposes for the world will not be completed.

³⁵*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 22.

³⁶*The International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem*, www.cdn-friends-icej.ca/judeochr/rolegent/brthicej.html

³⁷*Prepare ye The Way of the Lord* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, n.d.)

³⁸‘About the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem’ <http://www.icej.org.il/about.html> 7 January 1998.

³⁹John S. Ross, “Beyond Zionism: Evangelical Responsibility Toward Israel” *Mishkan*, 1/1990, no. 12. p. 16.

6. *The modern ingathering of the Jewish People to Eretz Israel and the rebirth of the nation of Israel are in fulfilment of biblical prophecies, as written in both Old and New Testaments.*

7. *Christian believers are instructed by Scripture to acknowledge the Hebraic roots of their faith and to actively assist and participate in the plan of God for the ingathering of the Jewish People and the restoration of the nation of Israel in our day.*

8. *The Lord in His zealous love for Israel and the Jewish People blesses and curses peoples and judges nations based upon their treatment of the Chosen People of Israel.*

9. *Concerning Jerusalem: It is the Holy City of the Jewish People and those of biblical faith. At the time appointed by God, Messiah will return to sit on the everlasting Throne of David in Jerusalem and will reign over all the world in righteousness and peace.*

10. *According to God's distribution of nations, the Land of Israel has been given to the Jewish People by God as an everlasting possession by an eternal covenant. The Jewish People have the absolute right to possess and dwell in the Land, including Judea, Samaria, Gaza and the Golan.⁴⁰*

2.1 Dispensational Roots

Jan Willem van der Hoeven and the others who founded the ICEJ in 1980 were drawn from Western evangelical, fundamentalist and charismatic circles. Virtually the entire ICEJ leadership are also dispensationalists, who, like Darby, Scofield and Lindsey, believe that the restoration of the Jews to Israel and the contemporary State of Israel is the fulfilment of biblical prophecy.⁴¹ For example, Johann Luckoff, the director of ICEJ wrote,

The return to Zion from exile a second time (Isa. 11:11) is a living testimony to God's faithfulness and his enduring covenant with the Jewish people.⁴²

In applying this passage from Isaiah literally to contemporary events rather than to those of Isaiah's generation, Luckoff is implicitly condoning the steps specified for achieving this 'return' and also the lands which they may occupy, mentioned just a few verses later in Isaiah 11.

In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea... They will swoop down on the slopes of Philistia to the west; together they will plunder the

⁴⁰*International Christian Zionist Congress Proclamation*, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. 25-29 February 1996.

⁴¹Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 100. See for example, Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?* (Shippensburg, Pasadena, Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), pp. 3-46 for similarities with Hal Lindsey's pessimistic dispensational forecasts found in *The Late Great Planet Earth* (London, Lakeland, 1970).

⁴²Johann Lukoff, *A Christian Response to Israel* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1985).

people to the east. They will lay hands on Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites will be subject to them. (Isaiah 11:11,14)

The ICEJ has consistently repudiated those who refused to acknowledge the central place of Israel within God's continuing purposes,

While Gentile believers have been grafted into that household of faith which is of Abraham (the commonwealth of Israel), replacement theology within the Christian faith, which does not recognize the ongoing biblical purposes for Israel and the Jewish People, is doctrinal error.⁴³

The ICEJ has disavowed evangelism among Jews, in part for pragmatic reasons, since this ensures the continued favour of the Israeli establishment, itself keen to have a compliant Christian Zionist presence to diffuse criticism of her policy toward Palestinians. A further reason arises from their dispensational theology. Evangelism is essentially unnecessary as the ICEJ believe that the Jewish nation, once restored to the Land of Israel, will collectively acknowledge their Messiah when he returns. Following Scofield, the ICEJ believe the petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" is therefore essentially for the future not the present. When asked by a reporter from the *Jerusalem Post* whether the ICEJ was actually a 'covert' missionary organisation working in Israel, van der Hoeven replied,

Not so. The Zionist Christians are different. Our objectives are not as you describe. We don't believe in conversion, we don't want to make the Jews into Christians... The Jewish religion must modify itself in the course of time - but on one point only, the identity of the Messiah... they must make the modification as a collective entity. Suborning individuals to secede would serve no purpose.⁴⁴

2.2 Literalist Hermeneutic

The ICEJ's theological position is essentially literalist and traditional dispensational, emphasising in contemporary events the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy concerning Israel. There appears little recognition, however, of the way in which the New Testament writers regard these promises as fulfilled, annulled and universalised in and through Jesus Christ. So for example, the promotional booklet of the ICEJ published in 1993 contains 30 biblical references, 25 of which are taken from the Old Testament and only five from the New Testament.⁴⁵ Repeatedly they insist their position on Israel is synonymous with 'the' biblical position. They appear unwilling, however, to acknowledge that Christians have historically reached a diversity of other conclusions based on the same passages.

In response to criticism from Kathy Kern of the *Christian Peacemakers Team* (CPT) in Hebron, for example, about the way in which the ICEJ 'blesses' Israel, their representative, Patrick Goodenough insisted,

⁴³*International Christian Zionist Congress Proclamation*, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. 25-29 February 1996.

⁴⁴Cited in John S. Ross, 'Beyond Zionism: Evangelical Responsibility Towards Israel' *Mishkan*, 1/1990 no. 12, p. 17

⁴⁵*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993).

*We are not a bunch of lunatics spreading a gospel of hatred against Arabs and we certainly do not justify human rights abuses against them. We simply believe the Bible. And that Bible, which we understand has not been revoked, makes it quite clear that God has given this land as an eternal inheritance to the Jewish people.*⁴⁶

The ICEJ also explicitly distinguishes the Church from Israel, speaking of “*the former and latter rains*”, and, “*His beloved people, both Jew and Gentile*”⁴⁷. Whereas the New Testament emphasises that Jesus Christ has made the two one⁴⁸, so that in Christ there is now neither Jew nor Gentile⁴⁹, the ICEJ insist on maintaining a distinction and superior status for those of Jewish ethnic descent, who remain, even apparently, apart from faith in Jesus Christ, the chosen people, “*His Jewish sons and daughters.*”⁵⁰

*In no uncertain terms God has made known His intention to regather the scattered Jewish people and to plant them in the land with His “whole heart and soul” (Jeremiah 32:41). We believe that in the present massive wave of Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel (almost 400,000 since September 1989), the world is witnessing one of the most startling prophetic fulfillments of our time - one that should deeply touch the heart of every Bible-believing Christian and provoke him to action. Since its inception in 1980 the vision for the release of Soviet Jewry has been a vital aspect of the work of the ICEJ. Along with a growing number of Christians internationally, we have seen the Soviet Jewry issue as pivotal in God’s unfolding plan for Israel and the nations... Moreover, it helped organise demonstrations at various Soviet Embassies to declare the Word of the Lord to “Give up!” His people (Isaiah 43:6), and sought to inform and challenge Christians to actively participate in the ongoing struggle... Now that the doors have actually opened, God has given the ICEJ and Christians in general unprecedented opportunities to become directly involved in the outworking of His promises. It is an amazing fact that God, through His prophets, long ago ordained that He would use Gentiles to bring back His Jewish sons and daughters.*⁵¹

2.3 Annual Feast of Tabernacles Celebration

The ICEJ has gained significant status within right-wing Jewish political circles for its sponsorship of an annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration at which the Prime Minister of Israel is invited to address Christian Zionists from around the world.

Every Prime Minister since 1980 has attended and addressed the celebration. ICEJ claim that this event, attended by up to five thousand pilgrims from over 100 nations,

⁴⁶Kathy Kern, ‘*Blessing Israel? Christian Embassy Responds*’ Christian Peacemakers Team, Internet:menno.org.cpt.news@MennoLink.org 2 November 1997.

⁴⁷*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 15.

⁴⁸Ephesians 2:14.

⁴⁹Galatians 3:28.

⁵⁰*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 9.

⁵¹*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 9.

is the largest single annual tourist event in Israel.⁵² Welcomed by the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, in 1985 alone the festival generated between 15 and 20 million U.S. Dollars for Israel.⁵³ In 1995 supporters attended from 90 countries including Egypt and Lebanon, together with 700 from Brazil and over 100 from Papua New Guinea.⁵⁴ They believe that the reintroduction of what they term “*Davidic worship*” through the Feast of Tabernacles is a “*prophetic foreshadowing*” of the celebration to be held during the Millennium after the Messiah returns. With reference to the Jewish festivals of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, and in fulfilment of Zechariah 14:16, the ICEJ claim,

*God commanded the people of Israel to keep three Feasts. Two of these have been fulfilled, and only one still awaits its final fulfilment... The final fulfilment of this Feast will take place when, during His reign, all nations will be commanded to come up to Jerusalem to worship the King each year and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles... The fact that we are already coming to celebrate this Feast gives it an international flavour, and a prophetic foreshadowing of that Feast of the Messiah that will be celebrated each year as the summit event of His earthly reign.*⁵⁵

In 1995, the Mayor of Jerusalem, Ehud Olmert gave an enthusiastic endorsement which the ICEJ used to promote their Feast of Tabernacles celebrations among Western Christian Zionists.

*I must admit that I am very excited to be your guest today. You are ambassadors of a different nature. All ambassadors are appointed by political figures, and you are appointed by your own deep convictions and your beliefs. And we share these beliefs. We may have different religions, but we together, all of us believe in the destiny of Jerusalem... When so many thousands of you coming in Succot, (Tabernacles) for us this is a very important confirmation of the bonds which are stronger than any spoken words... This is the belief in God and in the resurrection of all of us in this great city.*⁵⁶

The ICEJ’s preoccupation with a pre-Christian but futurist dispensational emphasis on Judaism is evident in this explanation and justification for their Feast of Tabernacle celebration.

The annual Celebration has become one of the world’s finest models of Davidic worship. It has grown to an event of eight evenings of worship using music, dance, drama and the spoken word in Jerusalem’s largest hall, a praise march through the streets, and a host of concerts and musical

⁵²Patrick Goodenough, ‘Jerusalem journalist hits back for Zionists’ *Church of England Newspaper*, 4 May 1997, p. 13. Latest statistics taken from ‘ICEJ Statement on the Millennium’ 11 January 1999. www.cdn-friends-icej.ca/2000.html

⁵³Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics, Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War* (Westport, Connecticut, Lawrence Hill, 1986), p. 120.

⁵⁴*Jewish Bulletin of Northern California*, ‘Mideast Report’, 13 October 1995, www.jewishsf.com/bk951013/imideast.htm

⁵⁵*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 15.

⁵⁶*Jerusalem’s 3000 Year Anniversary at Three Special Events* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1995),

offerings... At the Feast, pilgrims and local people-Jews, Arabs, and the Prime Minister himself-join together in singing and rejoicing over the God of Israel, who is bringing back "His sons from afar, and his daughters from the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 43:6,7)... Israel's needs and her central position in God's plan for these endtimes are presented in musical settings.⁵⁷

2.4 Reinterpretation of Christian Mission

It is acknowledged that at times in history Christians have initiated and participated in anti-Semitic activities. This is in part why the ICEJ has disavowed traditional methods of evangelism among Jews.

The Embassy, in response to its calling, has received a very clear mandate to be extremely cautious in how it proclaims God's Word to Zion. There must be sensitivity concerning the attitudes of the Jews towards the behaviour of so-called Christians in the past. We uphold that the Lord wants Israel to be far more than just a physically restored nation, and that He has brought them back to be given a new heart and a new spirit, and eventually to become a light and glory to the nations.⁵⁸

The ICEJ has consistently, however, reinterpreted the Christian faith and New Testament dispensationally, convinced that Old Testament prophecies, the Jewish people and the State of Israel remain central to God's present and future purposes, independent of and with disregard for the way in which these are interpreted, fulfilled or annulled in the New Testament.

Messianic believers in Israel, who share many of the Zionist presuppositions of the ICEJ, nevertheless distance themselves from the ICEJ's apparently contradictory non-evangelistic form of evangelicalism.

...the Embassy's repeated hedging on this issue gives credence to the growing conviction by some that the Embassy believes political and economic support in the name of Christ are all that is needed, and that evangelism is, at best, peripheral. Such an opinion is further strengthened by the oft-repeated reports (never publically denied by the Embassy) that participants in Embassy-related events in Israel are discouraged by Embassy staff from commending their faith to Jewish friends.⁵⁹

John Ross, deputy director of *Christian Witness to Israel* and a minister of the Free Church of Scotland insists:

The ICEJ further contradicts its evangelical claims by forbidding Christians involved in its events from any kind of evangelistic activity. Participants in the annual Christian Celebration of the Feast of Tabernacle organized by the Embassy, are instructed in the printed programmes when visiting Jewish

⁵⁷*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 14.

⁵⁸*Prepare ye The Way of the Lord*, (Jerusalem, ICEJ, n.d.)

⁵⁹Baruch Maoz, "The Christian Embassy in Jerusalem" *Mishkan*, 1/1990, no. 12. p. 3.

*homes: "Please do not leave tracts or attempt to proselytise. This can cause great offence."*⁶⁰

Ross concurs with George A. F. Knight in regarding this failure to engage in evangelism as "a form of religious anti-Semitism which is as basically evil as the philosophy of the Nazis."⁶¹

The ICEJ understand their "biblical responsibility toward the Jewish people"⁶² in terms of bringing "comfort" to Israel. They base this conviction on Isaiah 40 interpreting the passage as mandating political and practical support for Jews, encouraging them to make aliya and settle the land God promised to Abraham, including the Occupied Territories. In relation to support for Ethiopian Jews, for example, this is seen in terms of the hope that "...their long exile will be at an end-their reunion will be complete."⁶³ So for example, whereas Christians have traditionally understood Jesus to be referring to the way we should treat anyone in need, the ICEJ narrows and Zionises such promises as in Matthew 25:40.

To begin or assist projects in Israel, including economic ventures, for the well being of all who live here "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matthew 25:40)

Messianic Christians, while sharing similar Zionist aspirations as the ICEJ, nevertheless are critical of their reductionist approach to passages such as Isaiah 40. "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for..." (Isaiah 40:1-2). According to Isaiah 40:9 that comfort is brought about by proclaiming the good news to Zion, "Here is your God".

*The nature of the proclamation is to instruct Israel as to how her sins have been atoned for and how God's justice was fully satisfied. A materialistic interpretation of this significant passage tends to obscure the ultimate comfort for Jew and gentile alike, the ministry of the Messiah, and the servant of the Lord.*⁶⁴

The term "International Outreach," though traditionally understood by Christians to describe world-wide evangelisation through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, has been invested with new meaning by the ICEJ. Based on Old Testament prophecies in Jeremiah and Isaiah which were originally spoken to Jews in exile in Babylon, the ICEJ interpret the promise of salvation as finding its fulfilment in the 'return' of Jews to Zion.

⁶⁰John S. Ross, "Beyond Zionism: Evangelical Responsibility Toward Israel" *Mishkan*, 1/1990, no. 12. p. 17.

⁶¹Ross, "Beyond.", p. 24. Quoted by Vernon C. Grounds, *Evangelicals and Jews in an Age of Pluralism*, eds. Tanenbaum, Wilson and Rudin, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1978).

⁶²*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 10.

⁶³*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 18.

⁶⁴John S. Ross, "Beyond Zionism: Evangelical Responsibility Toward Israel" *Mishkan*, 1/1990, no. 12. p. 19.

The biblical mandate concerning the proclamation and the restoration of Israel is clear. It must be worldwide.

“Here the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare in the coastlands afar off, and say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.’” (Jeremiah 31:10)

“Behold, the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth, Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Lo, your salvation comes;’” (Isaiah 62:11a)

In the same sense that the first apostles were commissioned by the Lord to be his witnesses from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the earth, we also feel compelled to proclaim the word of Israel’s restoration, and the Christian’s response to it, to every country and in every place where there are believers.⁶⁵

The comparison of the ‘restoration’ ministry of the ICEJ with that of the apostolic commission to preach the gospel to the whole world is simply without precedent.

There is no evidence in Jesus’ teachings that Israel will be reconstituted as a state to serve as God’s primary vehicle in the latter days. Jesus in fact rejects this teaching in Acts 1:6-8. Not only does Jesus reject the futurist pro-Zionist state scenario, but he challenges true disciples with the task of taking the gospel into the entire world, including Jerusalem and the most difficult places. That mission has not changed, despite the revision of Christianity by the ICEJ...⁶⁶

The ICEJ has also reinterpreted the purposes of God for the Jewish people. They claim biblical justification for the belief that, “...the destiny of nations, of Christians, and of the Church” lie not in how individuals respond to the claims of Jesus Christ, but in terms of, “...their role in the restoration of Israel.”⁶⁷

The ICEJ has therefore consistently and repeatedly compromised the biblical mandate to proclaim the gospel to all people, including the Jews, yet continues to insist on designating itself as an evangelical organisation.

2.5 Eschatology: Signs of the Times

Although not stated as explicitly or graphically as by some other Christian Zionist authors, the ICEJ essentially holds to a traditional premillennial dispensationalist eschatology. Their eschatology is however more hopeful for the Jewish people than that of most premillennial dispensationalists.

We have a sense that we live in prophetic times. The Christian Embassy shares with many others a firm belief in “the coming of the Lord.” We also believe there are many biblical promises being fulfilled in our day which signify Messiah’s soon coming, and that the most remarkable sign of such an event is the ingathering of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel.⁶⁸

⁶⁵International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 22.

⁶⁶Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 112.

⁶⁷‘About the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem’ <http://www.icej.org.il/about.html> 7 January 1998.

⁶⁸‘ICEJ Statement on the Millennium’ Jerusalem, 11 January 1999. www.cdn-friends-icej.ca/2000.html

The immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel and the Occupied Territories, for example, is seen as evidence that these are indeed the Last Days and a necessary precursor before the 'spiritual restoration' of the Jews which will occur, before, during, or after the return of the Messiah.

Now is the time to act and speak on behalf of Soviet Jewry. Jeremiah prophesied (Jer. 14:14-15) that the greatest exodus of all will come from the north and other lands; it will be of such magnitude that memories of the deliverance from Egypt will be eclipsed. It is my belief that the spiritual restoration of Israel prophesied by Ezekiel for the latter days cannot happen until this promise is fulfilled.⁶⁹

Before the return of the Messiah, the ICEJ teach, like other dispensationalists, that there will be a final Battle of Armageddon, not so much of nations fighting against one another, but rather against Israel.

Nations will increasingly shut Israel out of their councils until they finally find themselves coming up against her at Armageddon (Zech. 14:2-3). Disaster will surely strike every nation that turns against Zion (Isa. 60:12)... Repeatedly the Bible states that the betrayal of Israel will be a major reason for the wrath of God being heaped upon the nations in the latter days.⁷⁰

In keeping with other contemporary dispensationalists, van der Hoeven has also speculated that the power of America and the Western nations are in decline, and that the Antichrist is alive today and will probably appear from within the European Community during the 1990's.⁷¹

The ICEJ have, however, publicly disassociated themselves from the apocalyptic dispensational speculations of some Christian Zionism such as Hal Lindsey and Grant Jeffries. Their understanding of the future of Israel,

...does NOT include the distasteful belief that "once all the Jews in the world emigrate to Israel, two-thirds of them will die in Armageddon (sic) and one-third convert to Christianity." There are some who call themselves Christian who subscribe to that teaching. We do not and have sought to refute it where possible.⁷²

It is left unclear, however, how the ICEJ views the impact of Armageddon on the Jewish people or State of Israel. The ICEJ represents, at least on the surface, a more optimistic, though non-evangelistic form of dispensational Christian Zionism. They claim that one day peace will reign on earth and that their objective is,

⁶⁹Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *A Christian Response to Israel*, Pamphlet quoted in Don Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon* (Scottsdale, Herald Press, 1995), p. 102

⁷⁰van der Hoeven, *Christian.*,

⁷¹Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Israel and the Nations* (Jerusalem, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem, 1988). Audiotape. Quoted in Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 102.

⁷²Kathy Kern, 'Blessing Israel? Christian Embassy Responds' Christian Peacemakers Team, menno.org.cpt.news@MennoLink.org 2 November 1997.

To be a channel of fulfilment of God's promise that one day Israel and her Arab neighbours will live in peace under the blessing of God, in the middle of the earth "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance" (Isaiah 19:24-25)⁷³

How this peace will be achieved and maintained and on what basis Jews will live on earth during any Millennium is not answered within the ICEJ literature. The implication may be drawn, however, that since they disavow evangelism among Jews before the Messiah returns, the ICEJ hold to a two covenant theology, one for the Jews based on unconditional and eternal promises made to Abraham and the Law, and the other primarily for Gentiles based on a personal faith in Jesus Christ.

The theology of the ICEJ is therefore consistent with traditional dispensationalism which has elevated a restored Israel to a superior role and position over the Church in the future purposes of God and in which the latter is downgraded and, as Darby taught, merely a 'parenthesis' to the former. Wagner offers this astute assessment of the theology of the ICEJ.

If the church is deemphasized and a modern secular/ethnic government assumes total authority, the Christian message is clearly undermined. The gospel of Jesus becomes secondary. The task of doing justice and proclaiming salvation in Jesus Christ is lost. The future survival of all nations, their prosperity and destiny, are made conditional on the degree to which they support the political state of Israel.⁷⁴

3. The Politics of the ICEJ

From its inception, the ICEJ has acknowledged that this is a controversial issue. In their leaflet used to recruit membership they ask the question, "*Is Standing With Israel a Political Act?*" Using an unusual quotation from Paul's letter to the Corinthians concerning the nature of the bodily resurrection, the ICEJ claim that political support for the State of Israel will lead to her spiritual renewal and, by implication, the return of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul clearly states "the spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual" (1 Cor. 15:46). The enemy realises only too clearly that natural Israel will ultimately become spiritual Israel and therefore invokes all the political forces of this world to destroy her. The fact that Israel is regathered as a nation means that she is again a political entity with borders and with neighbours who, sad to say, are hostile. The fact of Israel's political existence evokes prejudice and hostility in world forums such as those in New York and Geneva. Christians must therefore take a stand against this and counter lies with truth. This is not primarily political but a part of the warfare to help protect the Lord's people and to help preserve them for that time when the Lord will fulfil His promise in Ezekiel 37, Zechariah 12 and Joel 3. To stand with Israel politically and practically, therefore, has ultimate spiritual

⁷³*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 5.

⁷⁴Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 104.

*implications, even if Israel has to go through agonizing birthpangs to arrive at God's destiny for her.*⁷⁵

The ICEJ claim therefore that their support for the State of Israel is not primarily political but spiritual. They do, however, justify political involvement because of the criticisms made of Israel and the need to engage in this 'warfare'. Their defence of this political activity has been considerably softened in later publicity.

*We believe that Christians must take a stand against anti-Israel prejudice, and counter lies with truth. As such, our stand may be seen as a political one, but it is ultimately a part of the warfare to help protect the Lord's people and to help preserve them for that time when the Lord will fulfil all of His promises to them.*⁷⁶

Grace Halsell was an observer at the 1985 Christian Zionist Congress in Basel. Of the 36 hours of lectures given in three days she estimates that 1% of the time was given to the message of Christ and 99% to politics.⁷⁷ The ICEJ's ministry is, in fact, highly politicised in several significant ways.

3.1 Unconditional Support for the State of Israel

The ICEJ has, from its inception, carefully courted the favour of the Israeli right-wing Likud political establishment because of their common commitment to the realisation of Eretz Israel. ICEJ have also lobbied foreign governments on behalf of Israel through their Diplomatic Banquets.

*The ICEJ sponsors banquets and receptions in different countries through which Israel's ambassador and embassy can be introduced to the local Christian leaders and believers... The Israeli embassy and local Jewish communities have been very encouraged by these events. Another important purpose of these receptions is to speak prophetically to politicians and the leaders of the historical churches regarding the nations' and the Church's stand towards the Jewish people. The invitation cards are written so that they have a message in them concerning the restoration of Israel and recognising the Jewish roots of our faith. Even if the invited leader did not attend, a seed was planted by the invitation itself... The programme usually consists of a few short speeches, a presentation to the Israeli Ambassador and his wife, a response from him and some beautiful classical worship and Israeli music... Some of the countries in which receptions were held recently are: the Philippines, France, Spain, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Switzerland, New Zealand, Honduras, Canada and USA.*⁷⁸

The ICEJ makes wide use of testimonials by Jewish leaders.

⁷⁵*Prepare ye The Way of the Lord*, (Jerusalem, ICEJ, n.d.)

⁷⁶'About the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem' <http://www.icej.org.il/about.html> 7 January 1998.

⁷⁷Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics, Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War* (Westport, Connecticut, Lawrence Hill, 1986), p. 133.

⁷⁸*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 27.

On September 30th, 1980, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was opened in the presence of the world-renowned Mayor of the Holy City, Teddy Kollek. He commented, "This has been one of the most moving ceremonies I have ever attended in my life... The establishment of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was welcomed by Israelis from all walks of life."⁷⁹

Allow me to tell you how much I, and Israel, appreciate your [presence] here in Jerusalem, especially during these difficult days. Israel has experienced through her existence many difficulties. Therefore, whenever we see people that care, that are involved, and who show this by deeds, and b y words - we appreciate this. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin⁸⁰

We thank you all for being here, for coming here faithfully every year. Your faith gives us strength. We know that you are many but we know that you are representing many, many more. Mayor Teddy Kollek⁸¹

You have given life and relevance to Zechariah's prophecy that in time to come that nations shall come up from year to year to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. I cannot conclude without adding my appreciation for the Zionist Resolutions of your Basel Congress. Thank you all for coming. President Chaim Herzog.⁸²

Your sympathy, solidarity and belief in the future of Israel - this to us is tremendous. We consider you part of the fulfilment of the prophetic vision expressed by Zechariah in Chapter 14. Your presence here will always remain a golden page in the book of eternity in heaven. May the Lord bless you out of Zion. (Former) Chief Rabbi Shlomo Green.⁸³

Your decision to establish your Embassy in Jerusalem at a time when we were being abandoned because of our faith was an act of courage and a symbol of the closeness between us. Your gestures and acts gave us the feeling that we were not alone. The Late Prime Minister Menachem Begin.⁸⁴

The Christian Embassy in Jerusalem and your pilgrimage to this city carry a message which cannot be overlooked or discounted by governments or statesmen on all five continents. It is a message of truth, a message of conscience, a message of plurality, of decency, and of human brotherhood. (Former) Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.⁸⁵

⁷⁹*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 6.

⁸⁰*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 7.

⁸¹*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 7.

⁸²*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 7.

⁸³*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 7.

⁸⁴*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 7.

⁸⁵*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 7.

In 1988, the Israeli President, Chaim Herzog addressed the Second International Christian Zionist Congress, held in Jerusalem.

When the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was founded, I do not think that even its devoted leaders expected a mass movement of such dimensions to emerge in the course of a few years. Your understanding of the spiritual roots of Zionism and of the special nature of Jerusalem, are unfortunately far from universally held in other circles and movements. That you are joining us in celebrating the fortieth anniversary of Israel's establishment is indeed a logical outcome of your attachment to Scripture and to the people who have lived by Scripture throughout the centuries. Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the symbolic events of your movement: the Congress, born like Zionism in Basel, now reconvened in Jerusalem, and the annual pilgrimage to the Feast of Tabernacles, as foreseen by the Prophet Zechariah...⁸⁶

Donald Wagner attended the opening session of the Second International Christian Zionist Congress in 1988, at which the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir also spoke.

Shamir's speech was devoid of spiritual content and seemed insensitive to a Christian audience. The Christian Zionists, however, absolutely loved him, even when he chided Christians about their lack of loyalty to Jews. Shamir's remarks concentrated on the Palestinian Intifada, which he characterized as a "force of evil" that was "endeavouring to undermine the stability of the country and safety of its citizens." He added,

What is happening in Judea and Samaria and Gaza is a continuation of the Arab's war against the Jewish people. We have not returned to 'Eretz Israel' to be frightened by rocks and stones and firebombs. He we are and here we will stay forever.⁸⁷

Immediately, the crowd was on its feet cheering, applauding, and yelling, "Praise the Lord," with hands waving above heads. I was fascinated by the scene: a militant secular Zionist politician, still wanted by the British as a terrorist until his election in 1983, receiving the affirmation a great Christian evangelist might be accorded at a revival. Shamir concluded his speech in fifteen to eighteen minutes, then left the stage, praising the ICEJ as "true friends of Israel."⁸⁸

In 1991 the ICEJ received the Speaker of the Knesset's *Quality of Life Award*, donating the prize toward housing for recently arrived Soviet Jews. The citation included,

The Foundation recommends to award the prize to the International Christian Embassy for its continuous and energetic activity in education and information in Israel and abroad to strengthen the ties between Jews and Christians, for

⁸⁶*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 8.

⁸⁷Yitzhak Shamir, "Keynote Address," West Jerusalem: Second Christian Zionist Congress, April 10, 1988.

⁸⁸Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 99.

*its activity to bring understanding between Jews and Arabs in Israel and for its activity to deepen Jewish and Zionist awareness amongst Christians around the world and for encouraging immigration to Israel.*⁸⁹

In 1997, fighting to keep his coalition together and stalling the already delayed Oslo Peace Accord, Benjamin Netanyahu took the opportunity to seek support from Christian Zionists attending the ICEJ's annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration.

*I said we'll make all the possible efforts to achieve peace with our neighbours, but we need the help of our friends, and you are such friends. I think your support can make a world of difference. You represent here a large number of countries, many countries, and you represent here people who have influence in your societies, in your communities, in your governments. Now I don't have to tell you that the media isn't always scrupulously fair when it comes to Israel. You can counter those distortions. You can tell the story, our story in the world. All we need to triumph in this struggle, is for the truth to be told. You can do for us what no one else can do. I am counting on you. I am relying on you. I am relying on your friendship, on the constancy of your support, and I deeply appreciate it, in the name of my family, my wife, my children, but especially in the name of the Children of Israel, all of the People of Israel. We respect and appreciate, and thank you for your continual love for the State of Israel. Thank you very much.*⁹⁰

The following year, Netanyahu was similarly appreciative of the ICEJ's work on behalf of Israel.

*I came here to thank you for your support in our great endeavour. It has been consistent. It has been unreserved. And I have to tell you from my point of view as prime minister of Israel, it has been very, very effective. Thank you. The state of Israel is stronger because of your support and it needs this strength to resist undue pressure and threats... You are our friends. We know it, and we salute you. Thank you very much, and God bless you. Thank you.*⁹¹

With such impressive endorsements from the Israeli political Right, ICEJ has increasingly become the semi-official voice of a broad coalition of Christian Zionist organisations, frequently cultivated, exploited and quoted by the Israeli Government whenever a sympathetic Christian view point is needed to enhance their own policies, and rebut Western political or indigenous Christian criticism. When questioned about the tension the government of Israel must face when working with such Christian organisations, Daniel Rossing, the Director of Israeli Religious Affairs admitted,

⁸⁹*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 8.

⁹⁰Feast of the Tabernacles Conference, October 21, 1997, *Government of Israel Prime Minister's Office Virtual Library*, www.pmo.gov.il/english/library/sp-211097.html

⁹¹Feast of the Tabernacles Conference, October 5, 1998, *Government of Israel Prime Minister's Office Virtual Library*, www.pmo.gov.il/english/library/sp-051098.html

*We need support from where ever we can find it, but we keep these people on a very short leash.*⁹²

Wagner observes,

*Likud was also smart enough to know that the evangelical and fundamentalist communities represented Israel's largest potential block of political and economic support in the West*⁹³

In an amplification of the resolutions passed at the ICEJ Third International Christian Zionist Congress, held in February 1996, the following declarations reveal their explicit religio-political agenda.

Further, we are persuaded by the clear unction of our God to express the sense of this Congress on the following concerns before us this day,

1. Because of the sovereign purposes of God for the City, Jerusalem must remain undivided, under Israeli sovereignty, open to all peoples, the capitol of Israel only, and all nations should so concur and place their embassies here.

2. As a faith bound to love and forgiveness we are appreciative of the attempts by the Government of Israel to work tirelessly for peace. However, the truths of God are sovereign and it is written that the Land which He promised to His People is not to be partitioned... It would be further error for the nations to recognize a Palestinian state in any part of Eretz Israel.

3. To the extent the Palestinian Covenant or any successor instrument calls for the elimination of Israel or denies the right of Israel to exist within secure borders in Eretz Israel, it should be abolished.

4. The Golan is part of biblical Israel and is a vital strategic asset necessary for the security and defense of the entire country...

6C. The Islamic claim to Jerusalem, including its exclusive claim to the Temple Mount, is in direct contradiction to the clear biblical and historical significance of the city and its holiest site, and this claim is of later religio-political origin rather than arising from any Qur'anic text or early Muslim tradition...

7. While Gentile believers have been grafted into that household of faith which is of Abraham (the commonwealth of Israel), replacement theology within the Christian faith, which does not recognize the ongoing biblical purposes for Israel and the Jewish People, is doctrinal error.

8. Regarding Aliyah, we remain concerned for the fate of imperilled Jewish People in diverse places, and seek to encourage and assist in the continuing process of Return of the Exiles to Eretz Israel. To this end we commit to work with Israel and to encourage the Diaspora to fulfil the vision and goal of

⁹²Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 104.

⁹³Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 100.

*gathering to Israel the greater majority of all Jewish People from throughout the world.*⁹⁴

Summarising the political and economic activities of the ICEJ, the Canadian branch of the Friends of International Christian Embassy web site states,

*Since 1980, Christians in affiliation with the Embassy have defended the Jewish people on every front: the plight of Jews in Russia has been spoken to; anti-Semites have heard their answers; anti-Zionists charges in the United Nations have an answer; nations are encouraged to buy Israeli products and plant trees in Israel, and so forth. The Christian Embassy has earned great credibility with the government and the people of Israel.*⁹⁵

The ICEJ consistently endorses and defends right wing members of Likud and the smaller religious parties who are resolute in their commitment to confiscate, annexe and build further settlements in the Occupied Territories including Gaza and the Golan Heights.⁹⁶

Ironically, when challenged over their unquestioning support for the policies of the Israeli government, the ICEJ's denial reveals the extent of their right-wing agenda and their refusal to countenance any 'land for peace' deal with the Palestinians.

*We do not "throw unequivocal support behind Israeli government policy". We disagreed strongly, for example, with the decision by the current government to withdraw its troops from most of Hebron, the first Jewish city in history... Our support for Israel and the Jewish people is based not on Likud policy or Labour policy - but on our understanding of God's Word.*⁹⁷

The ICEJ disapproved of Netanyahu's Likud government because he failed to comply with the 'biblical' stand of his more Zionist right-wing coalition religious parties.

3.2 The Territorial Extent of Eretz Israel

Central to the ICEJ's political and theological position is the conviction that Eretz Israel belongs exclusively to the Jewish people by divine mandate.

The fourth resolution of the '*Declaration of the First International Christian Zionist Leadership Conference*' held under the auspices of the ICEJ in August 1985, was entitled, '*All Nations Should Recognize Judea and Samaria as Belonging to Israel.*' The position of the ICEJ on the Occupied Territories is indistinguishable from that of the Likud Party.

⁹⁴*International Christian Zionist Congress Proclamation*, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. 25-29 February 1996.

⁹⁵*The International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem*, www.cdn-friends-icej.ca/judeochr/rolegent/brthicej.html

⁹⁶Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 97.

⁹⁷Kathy Kern, '*Blessing Israel? Christian Embassy Responds*' Christian Peacemakers Team, menno.org.cpt.news@MennoLink.org 2 November 1997.

*The Congress declares that Judea and Samaria (inaccurately termed 'the West Bank') are, and by biblical right as well as international law and practice ought to be, a part of Israel.*⁹⁸

This claim is untrue. No other country in the world recognises Israel's claim to the Occupied Territories. On the basis of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, the international community through the United Nations has repeatedly condemned Israel's continued occupation of territory gained by war, for example in resolutions 242 and 338. The ICJ nevertheless uses biblical terms to invest this illegal occupation with an air of legitimacy, and thereby justify God's apparent favour toward one ethnic group at the expense of all others.

Jan Willem van der Hoeven offers a theological interpretation of recent historical events. Speaking of the war in 1967 he speculates:

*God wanted to give His people that part of the land which they did not receive in 1948, and by hardening the hearts of the different Arab leaders - Presidents Nasser and Assad and King Hussein - He impelled Israel to react. The result of what became known as the Six Day War was that Judea and Samaria - heartland of biblical Israel - and the ancient city of Jerusalem - King David's capital - were returned to their original owner... Thus, the Lord, by hardening the hearts of the Arab leaders, caused His people Israel to inherit the rest of the land, especially their ancient city, in a war of self defense! Until then, since 1949, Jordan had illegally held and occupied the "West Bank" and Jerusalem. Thus, when Israel recaptured Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem, they did not even take over a territory that legally belonged at that time to any nation! How few in the West have even realized this. God has His own sovereign way to fulfil His Word and promise.*⁹⁹

The conviction of the ICJ that the land belongs to the Jews by Divine mandate, similarly appears to override any enthusiasm for the democratic process in Israel. Speaking of the impending Israeli elections, van der Hoeven insisted, "*We don't care what the Israelis vote. We care what God says! And God gave this land to the Jews!*"¹⁰⁰

The *Third International Christian Zionist Congress* held in February 1996 reaffirmed a Proclamation which included the following amplification of these Zionist principles.

*According to God's distribution of nations, the Land of Israel has been given to the Jewish People by God as an everlasting possession by an eternal covenant. The Jewish People have the absolute right to possess and dwell in the Land, including Judea, Samaria, Gaza and the Golan.*¹⁰¹

⁹⁸*Declaration of the First International Christian Zionist Leadership Conference* (Jerusalem, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem, 1985)

⁹⁹Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?* (Shippensburg, Pasadena, Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), p. 151.

¹⁰⁰Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics, Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War* (Westport, Connecticut, Lawrence Hill, 1986), p. 133.

¹⁰¹*International Christian Zionist Congress Proclamation*, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. 25-29 February 1996.

Although not specified, it is implied that ‘the Land’ denotes a greater geographical territory than those locations mentioned since it ‘includes’ Judea, Samaria, Gaza and the Golan.

3.3 The Jewish Settlements in the Occupied Territories

The ICEJ’s support for the occupation and settlement of the West Bank is in part politically motivated as well as theological. They remain implacably opposed to the Oslo and Wye Peace Accords. Essentially the ICEJ uses the same arguments as those of secular Zionists.

Jan Willem van der Hoeven	Benyamin Netanyahu
<p><i>Today, most of the relatively uninformed journalists and politicians in the West are of the misguided opinion that as long as Israel withdraws from the “occupied territories,” namely Gaza, Judea and Samaria (the “West Bank”) and the Golan Heights, there will be a chance for peace in the Middle East. The reason they think this is there false perception of the conflict as basically over land - rather than the reality that what is being sought is the elimination of Israel from the map of the Middle East.</i>¹⁰²</p>	<p><i>Today too we are told that it is we who provoke terrorism. We provoke it by building apartments in Jerusalem, we provoke it by providing for the natural growth of our communities... The real provocation is not the tunnel, it is not a housing project, it is not the settlements. The real provocation is pure and simple. It is our existence here. That is what is causing the provocation. It is not a provocation. This is our country, this is the Land of Israel; it is the country that belongs to the people of Israel, and we have an inalienable right to this land.</i>¹⁰³</p>

In 1985 nine members of staff resigned from the ICEJ because the leadership were increasingly identified with the Likud party. The Rev. Audeh Rantisi, then Principal of the Evangelical Boys Home in Ramallah claimed the departures were precipitated by a decision on the part of the ICEJ to fund a Jewish settlement in the Occupied Territories. He went on to say,

*Christians have no embassy. Our message is that of reconciliation between ourselves and our sisters and brothers and with God. All efforts not geared for these principles will ultimately fail.*¹⁰⁴

Describing their ‘Social Assistance Programme’, to which they invite donations from supporters, the ICEJ admit that, ‘During the Intifada we supported, and today continue to support, projects in Jewish settlements in Judea-Samaria and Gaza.’¹⁰⁵

¹⁰²Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?* (Shippensburg, Pasadena, Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), p. 133.

¹⁰³Benyamin Netanyahu, Speech delivered to the ICEJ Feast of Tabernacles celebration, 21 October 1997. www.pmo.gov.il/english/library/sp-211097.html

¹⁰⁴“Resignations Damage Christian Embassy Credibility,” *Al-Fajr*, Jerusalem, March 21, 1985. Quoted in Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 107.

In their support for the confiscation, occupation and settlement of the West Bank, the ICEJ has, according to critics, turned God into “...a cosmic real estate agent who will allow one people to suffer and be removed from their cities and farms...” reducing, “...eternal truths to material terms. This truncated gospel of reductionism is inconsistent with the message of Jesus...”¹⁰⁶

3.4 Jerusalem the Eternal Undivided Capital of Israel

The ICEJ, like other Christian Zionists, regard Jerusalem as the undivided eternal capital of Israel, and central to God’s future purposes for the Jews on earth. At the opening ceremony of the ICEJ on 30th September 1980, the following forms part of the address given in the presence of the mayor of Jerusalem.

Dear Mr Teddy Kollek,

We are here from many different nations of the earth, representing, as we believe, millions of Christians who would have loved to be here with us...

These last weeks must not have been easy for you, as you have seen all the embassies, one after the other, leave Jerusalem where you have worked so hard to create a place where all people could be respected and live in freedom under the same roof of this eternal City.

You have worked hard, very hard, and for the first time in years Jerusalem was an open City where all religions could conduct their affairs in freedom. There was nothing wrong when, in the last UN resolution, it said that Jerusalem should be a city where all religions should practice their faith in freedom. What was wrong, however, was that the UN did not admit that, since the City was united under Israel 13 years ago, this right has already been granted to all! To silence the fact and imply that it is not so, was a gross distortion. But we know better.

Today, we open in this, your City, the International Christian Embassy and, because we believe in God, the God of Israel, and in the promises of His Book, the Bible, we will remain in Jerusalem to pray for its peace and work for its good, knowing that in the end, all shall be well.

May this International Christian Embassy then, be a sign of hope; hope for your people, and hope for your City so that it may become what it was always destined to be under Israel - a new dawn for all mankind.¹⁰⁷

Jan Willem van der Hoeven, whose book *Babylon or Jerusalem*, incidentally, carries a foreword by Teddy Kollek, sees the prediction of Jesus made in Luke 21:24 to have now been fulfilled in the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem.

Finally, after nearly 2,000 long years, the Jewish people were reunited with their ancient city and capital. Jerusalem - literally trodden under foot by so many different nations - was back in the fold of her own people just as Christ had foretold: “...Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). The enormous importance of this change of guard has been overlooked, not just by many nations, but by most

¹⁰⁵International Christian Embassy, www.icej.org.il/about.html

¹⁰⁶Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁷Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?* (Shippensburg, Pasadena, Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), pp. 159-160.

*churches as well. Although it had been foretold by Christ, it failed to ring a bell with most of His own followers.*¹⁰⁸

In 1992, the ICEJ sponsored various receptions marking the 25th anniversary of what they referred to as the “*Reunification of Jerusalem.*”¹⁰⁹ In 1996 this position was reiterated.

*Because of the sovereign purposes of God for the City, Jerusalem must remain undivided, under Israeli sovereignty, open to all peoples, the capitol of Israel only, and all nations should so concur and place their embassies here.*¹¹⁰

In 1997 the ICEJ gave support to a full page advert placed in the New York Times on 18 April 1997 entitled, “*Christians Call for a United Jerusalem*” signed by 10 evangelical and fundamentalist leaders including Pat Robertson, chairman of *Christian Broadcasting Network* and president of the *Christian Coalition*; Oral Roberts, founder and chancellor of Oral Roberts University; Jerry Falwell pastor of Liberty Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg and founder of *Moral Majority*; Ed McAteer, President of the *Religious Roundtable*; and David Allen Lewis, President of *Christians United for Israel*.

*We, the undersigned Christian spiritual leaders, communicating weekly to more than 100 million Christian Americans, are proud to join together in supporting the continued sovereignty of the State of Israel over the holy city of Jerusalem. We support Israel’s efforts to reach reconciliation with its Arab neighbors, but we believe that Jerusalem or any portion of it shall not be negotiable in the peace process. Jerusalem must remain undivided as the eternal capital of the Jewish people.*¹¹¹

The signatories wished to “*remind the world*” that:

Jerusalem suffered through 19 years of Arab occupation until 1967, a dark period when Christians and Jews alike were denied access to their holy places and thousands of Arab Christians felt compelled to leave the city. Now for the first time in 2000 years, the City of god (sic) is accessible to people of all faiths... Since 1967, the Israeli government has demonstrated sensitivity to the concerns and needs of all Jerusalem’s residents, including the Palestinians...Israel’s biblical right to Jerusalem as a sovereign capital is by divine mandate and is secured by God’s irrevocable covenant...

Readers were invited to:

¹⁰⁸Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?* (Shippensburg, Pasadena, Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), p. 152.

¹⁰⁹*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 24.

¹¹⁰*International Christian Zionist Congress Proclamation*, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. 25-29 February 1996.D

¹¹¹‘Christians Call for a United Jerusalem’ *New York Times*, 18 April 1997, www.cdn-friends-icej.ca/united.html

*Join us in our holy mission to ensure that Jerusalem will remain the undivided, eternal capital of Israel. The battle for Jerusalem has begun, and it is time for believers in Christ to support our Jewish brethren and the State of Israel. The time for unity with the Jewish people is now.*¹¹²

With the final status peace talks with the Palestinians about to resume, in 1999 the ICEJ launched their own world-wide petition to demonstrate 'Christian' support for Israel's sovereign rule over Jerusalem to be presented to the Israeli government in March 2000 during the next Christian Zionist Congress, when "...tremendous pressure will be exerted to re-divide the city."

The time is rapidly approaching when Israeli-Palestinian peace talks will focus on the final status of Jerusalem and other key issues. The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem is launching a petition drive to demonstrate Christian support for Israel's claim to Jerusalem at this crucial time when tremendous pressure will be exerted to re-divide the city. We are asking Christians from all over the world to endorse and sign this petition, which will be featured in a document of support presented to the state of Israel in March 2000, [God willing] during the planning meeting for the next Christian Zionist Congress.

The petition invited supporters to add their signature to the following resolution:

*We the undersigned, support Israel's exclusive claim to sovereignty over united Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. We commend Israel for its exemplary record in guaranteeing access to the biblical sites in Jerusalem and throughout Israel, and support the continuation of Israel in this role.*¹¹³

Tom Getman, director of World Vision in Palestine, responded with an open letter to the ICEJ calling them 'either hopelessly naive or liars.'

Two things you may want to consider in your blatant partisan support:
*1. For 5000 years any time this city has been under the exclusive control of one power it has been the cause of untold bloodshed; and 2. Israel's so called "exemplary record in guaranteeing access to biblical sites" has been significantly sullied in recent years, and even over this past Easter weekend, when in and around the Old City, streets were blocked off to all traffic except Jewish Pessah worshippers. For those of us who could not get to Good Friday and Easter services, and for your Palestinian brothers and sisters in Christ who could not even get out of Bethlehem, you are setting yourselves up to be perceived as either hopelessly naive or liars. Jerusalem is the spiritual home for 2 billion people... Only 15 million are Jewish. The better part of wisdom would be for "God's chosen" to share it or they will absolutely guarantee being proven the world's rejected once again.*¹¹⁴

112'Christians Call for a United Jerusalem' *New York Times*, 18 April 1997, www.cdn-friends-icej.ca/united.html

¹¹³'*The Jerusalem Petition, Statement of Support*', ICEJ, Jerusalem, 9 April 1999.

¹¹⁴Tom Getman, 'A Response to Christian Zionist Exclusivism' *Cornerstone*, Issue 15, Spring 1999, p. 19.

In 2001, ICEJ participated together with Bridges for Peace in a Zionist protest at the possibility of Israel relinquishing its claim to the Old City and East Jerusalem as part of a US sponsored peace deal.

CHRISTIANS TO TAKE PART IN JERUSALEM RALLY

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has had a tremendous response from Christians worldwide to our call for Christians to participate in the planned mass rally "Jerusalem, We Pledge To You," set for this evening, January 8 near Jaffa Gate. The non-partisan rally is being called to timely and visibly demonstrate the abiding, historic status of Jerusalem as the heart and soul of the Jewish people and faith, and to pledge loyalty to an undivided Jerusalem for future Jewish generations.

At 5:00 pm local time (10:00 am EST), thousands of Jews will join hands in a human chain around the Old City. At 6:30 pm (11:30 am EST), the rally will be held at Jaffa Gate, with the expected main speakers including Israel's President Moshe Katsav, Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert and former Supreme Court Justice Moshe Landau, among others. We expect many Christians in the Land of Israel to attend and witness this Jewish pledge of loyalty to a united Jerusalem. Several hundred subscribers to the ICEJ NEWS SERVICE from across the globe responded that they would like to help with this event in their home country. Here is how:

1. PRAYER: Please be praying for this event as it is being held. We appreciate your faithfulness to uphold us in prayer - for a safe and peaceful rally that sends a clear message worldwide concerning the ancient biblical connection of Jews to Jerusalem.

2. PETITION DRIVE: In recent months, we have had several thousand new subscribers to the news service who perhaps are not familiar with our JERUSALEM PETITION. Over the past year, the ICEJ has been conducting a petition drive to demonstrate worldwide Christian support for a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty and open to all faiths. More than 115,000 signatures from 122 nations have been collected so far, and the petition has been endorsed by ministries representing another 15 million Christians. The ICEJ also will be joining in a petition initiative being planned in conjunction with other Israel-based Christian ministries to stress broad Christian support for Israel's continuing role as guardian of biblical holy sites in Jerusalem and throughout the Land of Israel. Other participants in this international drive to collect millions of signatures include Bridges For Peace, Christian Friends of Israel and the Galilee Experience, among others.¹¹⁵

3.5 The Rebuilding of the Jewish Temple

The ICEJ have been careful to avoid controversy, at least publically, concerning the Zionist conviction that the Jewish temple must be rebuilt.

In an open letter to Benjamin Netanyahu, then Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, the ICEJ affirmed its commitment that like Moslems, Jews be able to worship again on the Temple Mount, implicitly within a rebuilt Jewish Temple.

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem fervently hopes and prays that the day will soon come that the Temple Mount-or as the Bible calls it, the

¹¹⁵International Christian Embassy, Special Alert, 8 January 2000.

*Mountain of the Lord-will no longer be a reason for religious divisiveness, but a place where all mankind will unite in worship to God according to His declared purposes. The Bible foresees the day when all nations will flow to the Mountain of the Lord irrespective of race or colour, and says that: 'His house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.'*¹¹⁶

In his book, *Babylon or Jerusalem?*, Jan Willem van der Hoeven insists that a new Temple will one day be built on the Temple Mount. He quotes from the speech made by Teddy Kollek, then mayor of Jerusalem, at the 1985 Feast of Tabernacles celebration, held at the Binyanei Ha'Uma auditorium. Behind him was a futuristic painting of Jerusalem showing a rebuilt Jewish Temple.

*Thank you for being here, for coming here faithfully, every year. Your faith gives us strength... I am glad I am speaking here against the background of this beautiful painting of Jerusalem. It is not yet the Jerusalem of today. If you look properly, you will see that the Temple, the Holy of Holies, has been restored!.. Our return is the first sign that the city will be existing again as it is in this painting!*¹¹⁷

At the *Third International Christian Zionist Congress* held under the auspices of the ICEJ in 1996 the following more explicit affirmation was endorsed.

*The Islamic claim to Jerusalem, including its exclusive claim to the Temple Mount, is in direct contradiction to the clear biblical and historical significance of the city and its holiest site, and this claim is of later religio-political origin rather than arising from any Qur'anic text or early Muslim tradition...*¹¹⁸

Jan Willem van der Hoeven provides the theological grounds for the uniqueness of Jerusalem and the future Jewish Temple. Quoting passages such as Zechariah 1:16; 2:4-5; 2:10-12; 6:15 & 8:2-3 he insists,

Thus the uniqueness of Jerusalem certainly does not lie in its reputation as a city holy to three religions or even in the fact that it is the capital of Israel. The uniqueness of this city is that it was assuredly God's dwelling place, and although He and His shekinah presence left it for a long time, he nonetheless promises, again and again, to come back to Jerusalem in the person of the Son of David, the messiah King, who will literally rule over this city...

Quoting from Isaiah 2:2-4, van der Hoeven continues:

This verse is so clear and magnificent in its description of the wonderful future that lies ahead for Jerusalem and with its focal point the soon-coming King

¹¹⁶Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?* (Shippensburg, Pasadena, Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), p. 169.

¹¹⁷Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?* (Shippensburg, Pasadena, Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), p. 163.

¹¹⁸*International Christian Zionist Congress Proclamation*, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. 25-29 February 1996.

and Messiah and the House of the Lord that will be established on the Mountain of the Lord! 119

Van der Hoeven regards as prophetic the words of the rabbinical advisor of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel who participated in one of the ICEJ's Feast of Tabernacles celebrations.

Your visit to the Holy City of Jerusalem, the City of David, at this special time of the year is most appropriate. When the Holy Temple stood in all its glory in Jerusalem 2000 years ago - the sacrificial service during the Feast of Tabernacles commanded a unique universal dimension. Offerings were brought not only for the benefit of the Jewish people but for all the nations of the world... For all mankind. Regrettably we have no great Temple today, at least not at this moment... We welcome you with open arms and blessing and thank you for your vital support and efforts on behalf of the Jewish people, Israel and Zionism to realise the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 2. "And it shall come to pass in the end of days that the mountain of God's House shall be established at the top of the mountains... And many peoples shall go and say: Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the House of the G-d of Jacob...120

Where even many Messianic Christians disagree with the ICEJ is over the means by which the Jewish Temple will allegedly be rebuilt. The ICEJ has been implicated in funding the Jerusalem Temple Foundation (JTF) founded by a notorious Jewish terrorist, Stanley Goldfoot and five leading American evangelicals.¹²¹ Terry Reisenhoover is the chairman and Goldfoot its international secretary. According to the Israeli newspaper *Davar*, as a member of the Stern Gang, Goldfoot was responsible for planting the bomb at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem on 22nd July 1946 which killed 100 British soldiers and officials.¹²² In 1948 he was also convicted and jailed by an Israeli court for the murder of UN envoy Count Bernadotte.¹²³ Goldfoot has subsequently been influential in raising large sums of money, allegedly up to \$100 million a year¹²⁴, for the JTF through American Christian TV and Radio stations and evangelical churches.

Goldfoot has admitted to receiving funds from the ICEJ. When questioned, Jan Willem van der Hoeven denied direct involvement in efforts to see the Jewish Temple rebuilt in place of the Dome of the Rock. However, he admitted that, "...when supporters volunteer to give money for building a temple, he directs them to

¹¹⁹Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?* (Shippensburg, Pasadena, Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), pp. 173-174.

¹²⁰Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?* (Shippensburg, Pasadena, Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), pp. 176-177.

¹²¹Louis Rapoport, 'Slouching towards Armageddon: Links with Evangelicals' *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, June 17-24, 1984.

¹²²Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics, Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War* (Westport, Connecticut, Lawrence Hill, 1986), pp. 96-97.

¹²³Louis Rapoport, 'Slouching towards Armageddon: Links with Evangelicals' *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, June 17-24, 1984.

¹²⁴Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics, Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War* (Westport, Connecticut, Lawrence Hill, 1986), p. 106.

Goldfoot.” The ICEJ also sells an audio tape about plans to construct a Jewish Temple on Haram al-Sharif.¹²⁵

In 1983, a group of 29 Jewish fundamentalists attacked the Al Aqsa Mosque and were arrested and tried by an Israeli court. The JTF paid the legal costs for their defence and release. Indirectly the ICEJ, through the JTF also funds Jewish organisations such as the Ateret Cohanim yeshiva, which trains Jewish priests in preparation for the reintroduction of sacrifices in a rebuilt third Temple.¹²⁶

Professor Gordon Welty of Wright State University, Ohio, a sociologist and anthropologist, explains the apparent contradiction of evangelical Christians support for Jewish terrorists.

Their power is to keep inconsistencies in airtight compartments, so that they themselves never recognize these inconsistencies... If the money a muscular Christian donates to the Jewish terrorists buys the dynamite that destroys the mosque, the muscular Christian will say simply, “It was an act of God.”¹²⁷

3.6 Attitudes toward Arabs and Palestinians

Although the ICEJ claims to have sponsored humanitarian projects among Arab Palestinians, they are consistently critical of Islam and Arabs generally and have been a divisive influence between Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Christians. A newsletter published in 1987, for example, listed five ways in which the ICEJ supporters could ‘*come against the spirit of Islam*’¹²⁸ Comparisons between Hitler and Arabs are also made frequently within ICEJ material.

Just as there was a definite ideology behind the hatred and atrocities of Hitler and the Nazis, there is one behind the hatred and wars by the Arabs against the Jews and people of Israel. It is not just a question of “their land” being taken; it has far deeper origins, one of the principle ones being the influence and ideology of Islam... Aiming for the universally declared Muslim goal - that Palestine as a country will revert to Islamic rule and sovereignty.¹²⁹

Israel has been in struggle for survival since its beginning. Our job is to stand on God’s Word against all opposition and to be vessels of mercy for the Jewish people (Romans 11:31).¹³⁰

This stand with Israel extends to criticism of both international as well as Palestinian Christian leaders.

¹²⁵Halsell, *Prophecy.*, p. 98.

¹²⁶<http://www.earlham.edu/~pols/17Fall97/middleeast/christian.htm>

¹²⁷Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics, Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War* (Westport, Connecticut, Lawrence Hill, 1986), p. 115.

¹²⁸*Newsletter*, (Pittsburgh, Pasadena, Christian Embassy Consulate, 1987), Quoted in Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 105.

¹²⁹Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?* (Shippensburg, Pasadena, Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), pp. 132-133.

¹³⁰*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 11.

It was only a few years ago that South African Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu came to Israel and the Holy Land for what was a highly politicized visit. On Christmas Eve, when he and his host, Bishop Samir Kafity of St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem, visited Bethlehem's fields of Ephrata, where the angels once sang "Peace on earth - goodwill unto men!" Quite a different kind of chant was awaiting the two bishops of the church. About 8,000 Palestinian youths - organized for this occasion - greeted the clergy with the song: "ANC-PLO, Israel - no."

As they chanted, neither bishop rebuked them nor attempted to make them stop. Apparently, what was meant to be seen and heard in front of all the television cameras of the world was that this was the Christmas message and song which the bishops wanted mankind to hear.¹³¹

It is the *Middle East Council of Churches*, however, who receive the strongest criticisms from the ICEJ. Jan Willem van der Hoeven's dispensational cynicism toward the established Church is no where more clearly elucidated.

The World Council of Churches - through its near East Council of Churches for the Middle East and National Council of Churches for the United States - is at least ideologically, often firmly, in the camp of the Palestinian Liberation Movement. Their concern nearly always falls on the side of Israel's enemies, hardly ever on Israel's side. Through their frequently misguided and unilateral statements, they present an evil and negative influence.

Maybe we should not be too surprised about this present allegiance of the traditional Church to sometimes violent or murderous people or organizations. Isn't this as it has often been during the long history of the Church?¹³²

The Middle East Council of Churches, have responded by repudiating the ICEJ as a 'self-proclaimed' Zionist institution who, 'have allowed the Christian faith and biblical interpretation to become subservient to the policies of the modern state of Israel.'¹³³

By insisting that Israel has the exclusive right to the Occupied Territories, the ICEJ also denies the reciprocal right of the Palestinians to political autonomy or statehood.

...the truths of God are sovereign and it is written that the Land which He promised to His People is not to be partitioned... It would be further error for the nations to recognize a Palestinian state in any part of Eretz Israel. To the extent the Palestinian Covenant or any successor instrument calls for the elimination of Israel or denies the right of Israel to exist within secure borders in Eretz Israel, it should be abolished.¹³⁴

¹³¹Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?* (Shippensburg, Pasadena, Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), pp. 48-49.

¹³²Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?* (Shippensburg, Pasadena, Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), pp. 49-50.

¹³³Middle East Council of Churches, *What is Western Fundamentalist Christian Zionism?* (Limassol, Cyprus, MECC, 1988).

¹³⁴*International Christian Zionist Congress Proclamation*, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. 25-29 February 1996.

In 1997, Jan Willem van der Hoeven, the then chief-spokesman for the ICEJ was even more outspoken,

*The Palestinians have taken by the sword everything that doesn't belong to them. Palestinians are under Israeli occupation because they asked for it... It was not because Israel was so aggressive, but because they wanted to throw the Israelis into the sea. The Jews are kind enough to let them live here without killing them.*¹³⁵

Based on that interview with van der Hoeven, Felix Corley claims,

*He has little sympathy for Palestinians, except for those like his wife who are prepared to accept Israeli rule.*¹³⁶

Patrick Goodenough, of the ICEJ's *Middle East Digest* responded to that critical report published in *The Church of England Newspaper*, with the following,

*Corley speaks of the local churchmen who are critical of the ICEJ's 'political interpretations of Scripture'. Point: many Palestinian clergy have long used the Scripture to back their pro-PLO positions. They have stood quietly by as Yasser Arafat labelled Jesus 'the first Palestinian revolutionary' and - as recently as March - while his followers erected three crosses at a protest site in Jerusalem. We hear no church voices decrying such blasphemous abuse of the symbols of our faith by the followers of another. I hardly think these churchmen are in a position to accuse anyone of abusing the Bible for political ends.*¹³⁷

Although insisting many Palestinians identify with their perspective on Israel, the ICEJ claim it is not possible to include this perspective in their radio or television programmes due to threats of intimidation.

*Unfortunately it is not possible to include Arab speakers as their participation in a programme favourable to Israel would endanger their lives.*¹³⁸

The result of the ICEJ's uncritical endorsement of Zionism essentially demonises the Palestinians and, 'negates Palestinian claims to their land, livelihood, beliefs and very presence in the land.'¹³⁹

3.7 Criticism of the Palestinian Authority and of a Palestinian State

Like other Zionist organisations, the ICEJ consistently refuses to acknowledge a distinction between the Palestinian Authority and the PLO, equating the Palestinian

¹³⁵Felix Corley, 'Is Radical Zionism an Option for Christians?' *Church of England Newspaper*, 7 February 1997, p. 7.

¹³⁶Felix Corley, 'Is Radical Zionism an Option for Christians?' *Church of England Newspaper*, 7 February 1997, p. 7.

¹³⁷Patrick Goodenough, 'Jerusalem journalist hits back for Zionists' *Church of England Newspaper*, 4 May 1997, p. 13.

¹³⁸*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 29.

¹³⁹Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 106.

government with a former terrorist organisation. For example, in their *Middle East Intelligence Digest*, recent articles have been entitled, “*Jihad! PLO incitement to violence continues unabated.*” (January 1997) “*PLO’s Christmas package of lies*” (February 1997); “*PLO official: “Our religion comes first*” (January 1998).¹⁴⁰

Critical of the Israeli government’s decision to allow limited Palestinian autonomy in Bethlehem, the ICEJ was quoted in the *Sunday Times* on Christmas Eve 1995 predicting that the celebrations that night would, ‘...look more like Arafat’s birthday than that of Jesus.’¹⁴¹ In 1995 the ICEJ organised a gathering in Bethlehem of a thousand visiting Christians who,

*...called on the Israeli government to keep the town under its control. These visitors expressed deep concern for the Christians in Bethlehem and the area, who they believe are too afraid to say how they feel about the handover.*¹⁴²

Describing as ‘madness’ the hand-over of much of Hebron to the Palestinian Authority, Jan Willem van der Hoeven insisted, “*The Jews have the divine right to live wherever they choose in their own land.*”¹⁴³ On the issue of negotiations with Syria over the Golan Heights, van der Hoeven supported the claims of the Jewish settlers there that,

*The Golan is part of biblical Israel and is a vital strategic asset necessary for the security and defense of the entire country...*¹⁴⁴

At the annual ICEJ *Feast of Tabernacles* celebration on 21st October 1997, the then Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu received an enthusiastic response to his explanation for his government’s unwillingness to tolerate a Palestinian State.

We are often asked, why is it that we oppose a Palestinian State? Well, a sovereign state can raise a large army, produce or import conventional or even non-conventional weapons. It can form alliances with radical regimes like Iraq or Iran. It can control our water, the water resources under the land, and the air space above the land. Have you flown to Israel recently? Follow the airplane. As you cross the shoreline, look at your watch. Within one minute you’ll be crossing the narrow strip that Israel formed before 1967. Within two minutes you’d be over the mountains of Samaria. You’d be going over areas that are now controlled by the Palestinian Authority. This is a wonderful country, a huge people, a great people, but a tiny country, and the creation of an independent Palestinian state which inevitably will be an armed

¹⁴⁰*Middle East Intelligence Digest*, International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, www.icej.org.il/digest.html

¹⁴¹Andy Goldberg, ‘Christmas dissent hits Bethlehem...’ *Sunday Times*, 24th December 1995, p. 14.

¹⁴²Unpublished letter from Patrick Goodenough of the Middle East Digest, ICEJ, to the *Church of England Newspaper*, 29 April 1997.

¹⁴³Felix Corley, ‘Is Radical Zionism an Option for Christians?’ *Church of England Newspaper*, 7 February 1997, p. 7.

¹⁴⁴*International Christian Zionist Congress Proclamation*, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. 25-29 February 1996.

*Palestinian state could endanger the one Jewish State. We will go on trying and striving to achieve a modus vivendi with the Palestinians which will give them self-rule, and our hand is stretched out for peace.*¹⁴⁵

At the *Feast of Tabernacles* a year later in 1998, Netanyahu returned to the same theme using similar arguments:

*And you can see these rogue states, from North Korea at the edge of Asia, to Iraq and Iran right here, who are creating an unstable and potentially violent and dangerous world for us.... Israel is leading the world, along with the United States, in giving an answer, giving a defence to peaceful societies, against these new threats, against these new missiles. But we know that we cannot allow the establishment of a Palestinian state in our country which would be an ally of these regimes, which could threaten us from the hills that surround this city, the hills that overlook Tel Aviv.*¹⁴⁶

The ICEJ's antipathy toward the Palestinian Authority is personified in their hatred of Yasser Arafat. For example, their Middle East Intelligence Digest in June 1997 included an article entitled, '*Evil that will not die: Arafat shares Hitler's determination to wipe out the Jews.*'¹⁴⁷ Writing of the events of May 1997, when within a week Israel observed Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes' Remembrance Day, and a few days later remembered those civilians who had died through terrorism since 1949, the ICEJ condemned the Israeli President, Ezer Weizman for also meeting with Yasser Arafat. The ICEJ also claim to know Arafat's intentions long after the Oslo and Wye peace accords were signed.

Astonishingly, Weizman chose during that very week of mourning, to meet Yasser Arafat, the man who more than any other embodies the same specific hatred of the Jews as that which fuelled the Holocaust, and who has dedicated his life to wreaking death and pain on the Jewish people, and to tearing from them their historical homeland and haven state. One wonders what manner of deception has duped Israelis into believing that there is anything really different between Hitler and Arafat. To Hitler the Jews were vermin. He depicted them as such and swore to destroy them once and for all. And he went a long way towards achieving that goal. To Arafat the Jews are "dogs, filth and dirt," with whom he has promised to "settle accounts in the future". Were he to have his way, the Palestinian state he is trying to negotiate out of Israel would be the springboard used to wipe the Middle East clean of the Jewish state... Likewise, Arafat's inability to wipe out the Jews does not make him any less a perpetrator of genocide that he would be were he able to succeed. And it remains in his heart to succeed... In 1991 US President George Bush called Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, who was then threatening

¹⁴⁵Benyamin Netanyahu, 'Feast of Tabernacles Conference Speech', International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. 21 October 1997. www.pmo.gov.il/library/sp-211097.html

¹⁴⁶Benyamin Netanyahu, 'Feast of Tabernacles Conference Speech', International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. 5 October 1998. www.pmo.gov.il/library/sp-051098.html

¹⁴⁷'Evil that will not die', *Middle East Intelligence Digest*, International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, June 1997, www.cdn-friends-icej.ca/medigest/june97/evil.html

*to gas Israel, "worse than Hitler". Yasser Arafat is far more deserving of that title.*¹⁴⁸

3.8 The Emigration of Soviet Jews to Israel

The ICEJ has been proactive in encouraging, coercing and facilitating the immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel/Palestine. This is based on the theological conviction that it is God's intention to "...bring back His people..."¹⁴⁹ to Palestine. Claiming that an estimated 3 million Jews still live in the "land of the north" ICEJ believe,

*God has promised an exodus that would exceed in greatness the Exodus from Egypt.*¹⁵⁰

During the period 1990-1992 the ICEJ raised several million dollars to fund special flights to Israel of Soviet Jews. The following description gives an impression of the early days of this ministry.

*On May 28, 1990, in the early hours of the morning, the first Christian sponsored flight of Soviet Jews arrived at Israel's Ben Gurion Airport. As the weary new immigrants descended from the El Al plane to the crowd of joyful, singing Christians waiting, many broke into tears. Like electricity the news was spread throughout the Israeli media later that day. It was like a prophetic moment in time that touched people across the nation and spread during weeks and months to Christians worldwide. The branches of the ICEJ have now sponsored more than forty flights on new immigrants. The airlift project, which is still going on, has led the way for more cooperation with the Jewish Agency in this tremendous challenge to bring the Jewish people home*¹⁵¹.

Since 1991 the ICEJ have also worked in partnership with the UK based Good News Travel Bus Company and Jewish Agency to bus Soviet Jews to several Eastern European cities such as Warsaw from where they could be flown to Israel. In one year they claim to have assisted 1500 Soviet Jews from the Ukraine to reach Israel in this way.

*In order to meet this larger challenge, the ICEJ is now building an internal transportation network in the Ukraine consisting of buses, mini-buses and family cars to transport Jews from different cities and towns to local airports. Apartments are also being leased to serve as local offices and temporary hostels for emigrants in transit.*¹⁵²

The ICEJ conceded that by 1992, the number of Soviet immigrants was declining and therefore a new, more intimidating strategy was devised, to persuade Jews to leave Russia for Israel. Jeremiah had promised repentant Jews of his own day they

148'Evil that will not die', *Middle East Intelligence Digest*, International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, June 1997, www.cdn-friends-icej.ca/medigest/june97/evil.html

¹⁴⁹*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 11.

¹⁵⁰*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 11.

¹⁵¹*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 9.

¹⁵²*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 10.

would eventually return to Israel from their Babylonian captivity. Under the banner 'The "Fishers" Task,' the ICEJ applied Jeremiah 16:16 to their own work.

"But now I will send for many fishermen," declares the LORD, "and they will catch them. After that I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them down on every mountain and hill and from the crevices of the rocks."

Believing that "Many Jews in the former USSR are sitting on the fence concerning Israel," the ICEJ initiated the production of 'educational' material and videos distributed among Jewish communities in the Soviet Union to persuade Jews to leave before it was too late. Using a concert tour and a double-decker bus equipped with a theatre and audio-visual exhibition about Israel, an ICEJ team also toured the Soviet Union between 1990-1992. Reinterpreting Jeremiah 16, the ICEJ claimed,

*The task of the fisher is to encourage them with a 'good report' of the land like Joshua and Caleb, before God sends the hunters. The biblical fact is that in Israel, they have a 'future and a hope'...*¹⁵³

The implication is clear, as in pre-war Germany the Jews should leave before 'God sends the hunters' and it is too late. Jan Willem van der Hoeven is convinced that even Jews living in the United States will emigrate to Palestine and that God may use anti-Semitism to achieve it.

*I pray that... Even if it takes anti-Semitism in America, God may use it to get his millions back to Israel. So we must have enough room there. So if we have six million American Jews coming we cannot give up the West Bank, can we?*¹⁵⁴

To consolidate their ministry in Eastern Europe, the ICEJ founded the Raoul Wallenberg Centre in Budapest in Hungary, named after the Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Jews from the Nazi holocaust. This became their Eastern European headquarters co-ordinating efforts to encourage Jews in the former USSR and Eastern Europe to make aliyah and emigrate to Israel.

In 1996, at the Third International Christian Zionist Congress, the following affirmation was endorsed.

*Regarding Aliyah, we remain concerned for the fate of imperiled Jewish People in diverse places, and seek to encourage and assist in the continuing process of Return of the Exiles to Eretz Israel. To this end we commit to work with Israel and to encourage the Diaspora to fulfill the vision and goal of gathering to Israel the greater majority of all Jewish People from throughout the world.*¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 10.

¹⁵⁴Jan Willem van der Hoeven, Israel cassette, talk given at Uppsala, Sweden, Livets Ord, 2 December 1990, cited in Lester Wikstrom's "The Return of the Jews and the Return of Jesus: Christian Zionism in the 1970's and 1980's." *Al-Liqa Journal* 3 (May 1994), p. 76.

¹⁵⁵*International Christian Zionist Congress Proclamation*, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. 25-29 February 1996.

Controversially, the ICEJ has been active in encouraging Soviet Jews to move into new settlements in East Jerusalem and the Occupied Territories, largely oblivious of the fact that they were being used to displace the indigenous Palestinians, in violation of international law.

During the October 1991 Feast of Tabernacles festivities, representatives from twelve countries presented checks to Prime Minister Shamir to finance the settlements. Shamir told them that the arrival of Soviet and Ethiopian Jews confirms that we are “living in a period of the fulfillment of prophecy and miracles.” 156

3.9 Economic and Financial Assistance for Israel

Part of the ICEJ's 'outreach' involves promoting ways of helping Israel economically. ICEJ, for example, encourages supporters to invest in Israel through purchasing shares in the International Christian Investment Corporation.

*This money, injected into Israel by Christians, wisely invested, will draw a yearly dividend for the investors. Those who wish to be involved in the Embassy's economic outreach, the importing of Israeli products, joint ventures, breaking of the Arab boycott, or opening Israeli shops can write for further information... By helping Israel economically and financially we are seeing the beginning of the fulfilment of the prophecy that one day the wealth of the nations will flow to Israel.*¹⁵⁷

During the 1980's the ICEJ was also politically active in the destabilisation of Central America, as a channel for the funding of the United States backed Contras.

*When the ICEJ proudly established an “embassy” in Honduras and in Guatemala, they worked closely with the government of Israel in bringing funds into the countries. ICEJ was granted diplomatic status in both countries and allowed to bring goods and funds into the country without inspection by customs agents. In September 1988, the investigative journal Israeli Foreign Affairs noted that the ICEJ “ambassador to Honduras,” Marta Rodriguez, told journalist Deborah Preusch that ICEJ had brought in vehicles and other items for the Contras. Other fundamentalist Christian groups that cooperated with ICEJ, include Gospel Crusade of Bradenton, Florida, whose head, Gerald Derstine, is a founding member of ICEJ. This project, in close cooperation with the Israeli government and its embassies in Guatemala and Honduras, operated in total violation of United States law and policy.*¹⁵⁸

It is interesting to speculate whether the ICEJ was also involved in sanctions busting or brokering the close military and economic co-operation between Israel and South Africa during the apartheid era.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 109.

¹⁵⁷*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 28.

¹⁵⁸Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 109. See also Tom Barry & Debra Preusch, “Ambassadors of Zion” *The Christian Century*, 25th January 1989, p. 79.

¹⁵⁹See Marwan Buheiry, ‘Implications of the Israel-South Africa Alliance’ *All in the Name of the Bible*, eds. Hassan Haddad & Donald Wagner, (Brattleboro, Vermont, Amana, 1986), pp. 71-77.

3.10 Lobbying of the United States Government on Behalf of Israel

ICEJ has been particularly active in lobbying the US and other governments in co-operation with, and on behalf of, the State of Israel.

Following the unilateral declaration by the Israeli government that Jerusalem was now their exclusive and undivided eternal capital, Jan Willem van der Hoeven wrote an open letter reprinted by the *Jerusalem Post*, rebuking Alexander Haig, the American Secretary for State, for criticising Israel's actions.

Sir, The recent statement by the new U.S. Secretary of State concerning the status of Jerusalem, and the implied criticism of the unilateral unification of this city under Israeli sovereignty, came as a disappointment. We did not expect this from the present U.S. Administration.

Millions of Christian believers all over the world know that this land was promised to the Jews as an "eternal possession" and that, in due time, after being dispersed, they were to return to this "land of their fathers". This surely included their ancient city of Jerusalem too.

We, therefore, are not opposed to this reuniting of Israel's capital, but oppose the call for internationalization of this city in the name of the interests of the three religions - as if we felt unhappy with the present situation.

Since Israel took control of this city, the rights of the three religious groups - Jews, Christians and Moslems - have been respected. To make a call for a change in the present situation, implying that there is not already this respect granted and guaranteed by Israel, is a deceptive insinuation that is contrary to the truth...

Does Israel have to believe that in an international arrangement the UN will take better care of this city than Israel is doing now? A UN body that continually manipulates Israel in one-sided criticism, is expected to suddenly become righteous and objective in dealing with Jerusalem? Who will convince the Israelis of such a coming miracle?

Really, Mr. Haig, what better solution can you suggest for us, than the one we now have under Israel?¹⁶⁰

Wagner has traced both the impact and extent of the ICEJ's political lobbying activities in the USA over many years, and gives several examples.

On February 23, 1984, the ICEJ sent Richard A. Hellman to Washington D.C., to testify before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign relations, arguing that the U.S. Government should move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. In the course of his testimony, Hellman claimed that the ICEJ was a "spiritual rather than political" organization. The Israeli lobby AIPAC organized the pro-Israel testimony and included Rev. Jerry Falwell of the Moral Majority... In February 1991, at the National Prayer Network for Israel, right wing political activist Ed McAteer announced the founding of Christian Israel Public Affairs Committee (CIPAC), modelled after the powerful Israeli lobby AIPAC. Its board of directors included AIPAC director Tom Dine and Herbert Zweibon, president of Americans for a Safe Israel, another powerful pro-Israeli lobby

¹⁶⁰Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?* (Shippensburg, Pasadena, Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), pp. 153-154.

organization. Both groups have for fifteen years espoused a Likud political ideology. The goals of CIPAC matched those of AIPAC but added the Christian dispensational rationale. Its director, Richard Hellman, former aide of U.S. Senator Howard Baker, has been a long term ICEJ supporter. The major emphasis of CIPAC became supporting \$10 billion in U.S. loan guarantees for Israel toward the settlement of Soviet Jews in Israel and the West Bank. During the fall of 1991 and winter spring of 1992, CIPAC, like AIPAC, found significant opposition to their lobbying for the loan guarantees from the Bush administration. The administration linked the loan guarantees to the illegal construction of settlements in the Occupied Territories, which it decried as an "obstacle to peace in the Middle East." ICEJ spokesman Jan Willem van der Hoeven told the *Jerusalem Post* that the "religious Christian community finds the Bush administration's policy on the loan guarantees totally unacceptable." He estimated that eighty percent of America's 40 million Bible Belt Christians would support the guarantees.¹⁶¹

During the Second Christian Zionist Congress, held in April 1988, a member of the Swiss government and member of Parliament from Bern encouraged participation in the ICEJ's political lobbying activities.

*He urged participants to form a political party in their own countries in cooperation with ICEJ and to campaign vigorously in their home countries for PLO offices to be removed.*¹⁶²

A specific example of the intervention of the ICEJ over the status of Jerusalem concerns the controversial opening of the tunnel along the Temple Mount.

3.11 Coverage of the Jerusalem Tunnel Incident

In October 1996, Benjamin Netanyahu the then Israeli Prime Minister spoke at the Jerusalem 3000 rally organised by the ICEJ, to support Israel's sovereignty over Jerusalem. Following the provocative opening of an underground tunnel by the Israelis from the Western Wall underneath the Moslem Quarter, he was cheered when he insisted the tunnel, '*...is open. It will stay open. It will always stay open.*'¹⁶³

The following year at the annual *Feast of Tabernacles* celebration on 21st October 1997, Netanyahu thanked representatives of the ICEJ for their solidarity over this incident, and the thousand or so participants who had visited the tunnel. His response indicates something of his Zionist martyrdom complex.

Now those of you who were here last year will remember that Israel was under the shadow of the tunnel crisis of the time. We opened the door at one end of a 2000-year-old archaeological tunnel to facilitate the movements of tourists, and the whole world attacked us in unprecedented fury. We committed an unpardonable sin. Now you supported us at that time and we shall always remember that. But the interesting thing is that we seem to be a believing minority resisting the world. I'm bringing up this memory to remind you that sometimes the whole world can be wrong. How many of you have

¹⁶¹Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 108.

¹⁶²Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 108.

¹⁶³Patrick Cockburn, *Independent*. 30 September 1996, p. 9.

*visited the tunnel? That's very good - the remainder have to do a visit yourself.*¹⁶⁴

The political activities of the ICEJ on behalf of Israel therefore, have been, and continue to be, both significant and comprehensive.

4. A Critical Summary of the Distinctive Christian Zionism of ICEJ

The ICEJ's distinctive form of Christian Zionism is best summarised in their own words in the following way.

*To show concern for the Jewish people and the reborn State of Israel, by being a focus of comfort... To stimulate Christian leaders, churches and organisations to become effective influences in their countries on behalf of the Jewish people.*¹⁶⁵

*Biblical Christian Zionism includes the following basic tenets: Belief that the restoration of the modern State of Israel is no political accident, but rather a visible fulfillment of God's word and promise (Isa. 11:10-12; Jer. 31:10-20).*¹⁶⁶

Among the indigenous Palestinian Christian community there is nothing but disdain for the ICEJ. The Revd Audeh Rantisi of Ramallah speaks for many.

*I think you can call it anything but Christian. This embassy is really working for the Jews in order that they occupy the land. For example we have 205 settlements on the West Bank. Two thirds of the money that goes to set up these settlements has come from people like the Christian Embassy, who look forward to bringing Jews here. If the Jews are God's people who are we, the devils? If people claim that God gave them the land here in order to kick out the owners of the land I feel there is something very wrong with the Christian church.*¹⁶⁷

Historically, it is significant that the same convictions which guided the early British Christian Zionists such as Thomas Brightman and Henry Finch, later to become central to the dispensationalism of John Nelson Darby and Cyrus Scofield's Reference Bible, also undergird the work of the ICEJ today.¹⁶⁸ The ICEJ is a self-appointed and self-regulated organisation unaccountable to the wider Christian community and working against the interests of the indigenous Christian community of the Middle East.

Theologically, the ICEJ has, without precedent, reinterpreted the Christian mandate from proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ 'to the Jew first' into a highly politicised gospel serving the expansionist agenda of the contemporary state of Israel. The ICEJ's justification of Israel's racist and apartheid policies on biblical grounds is

¹⁶⁴Benyamin Netanyahu, 'Feast of Tabernacles Conference Speech', International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. 21 October 1997. www.pmo.gov.il/library/sp-211097.html

¹⁶⁵*International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 5.

¹⁶⁶*The Second Christian Zionist Congress* (Jerusalem, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem, 1988)

¹⁶⁷From an interview with Audeh Rantisi, May 25th 1999, Ramallah, West Bank.

¹⁶⁸Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 101.

contributing to the undermining of Christian witness among both Jews and Moslems, as well as the destruction of the indigenous Christian presence in the Holy Land. Many regard this as nothing less than apostasy and, “*an anachronistic return to the Judaizing tendency the early church rejected at the first ecumenical council, recorded in Acts 15.*”¹⁶⁹

Politically, the ICEJ has repeatedly identified itself uncritically and unconditionally with the Israeli political Right, defending from international criticism, Israel’s military occupation and settlement expansion programme within Syria’s Golan Heights and the Palestinian Occupied Territories. The ICEJ has from its inception remained implacably opposed to the aspirations of the Palestinians for political autonomy in the pre-1967 borders of the West Bank, a shared Jerusalem, or the right of return for refugees.

Wagner offers seven reasons why the ICEJ should be rejected as a ‘Christian’ organisation. The following is a summary of his arguments.

1. *The ICEJ allows the gospel and lordship of Jesus Christ to become subservient to the modern political ideology of Zionism.*
2. *The International Christian Embassy is guilty of the sin of idolatry by worshipping state power in Israel and benefiting from its praises.*
3. *The ICEJ obscures the call to reconciliation in the Christian gospel, especially as it applies to Palestinians and Israelis.*
4. *The ICEJ reduces the gospel to material and partisan political dimensions while it ignores the ultimate principles of the Christian message and its immediate kingdom implications.*
5. *The ICEJ has become a heretical cult by reducing the Christian church to a mere “parenthesis” and by rejecting the local Christian community.*
6. *The ICEJ represents anti-mission activity in the Middle East, in relation to both Islam and Judaism.*
7. *The ICEJ does not take Jesus Christ as its alpha and omega but focuses on Zionism in theory and practice.*¹⁷⁰

The ICEJ is essentially a sectarian, pseudo-Christian organisation of dispensational origins which has unconditionally endorsed contemporary political Israel as the exclusive fulfilment of God’s promises and purposes made under the Old Covenant. In doing so they have ignored or disregarded the means by which these promises and purposes find their ultimate fulfilment in Jesus Christ and his Church made up of both Jews and Gentiles.

*Revised 05 April 2026
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¹⁶⁹Wagner, *Anxious.*, p. 104.

¹⁷⁰Wagner, *Anxious.*, pp. 109-113.