Fictional Jews at the End of Time: Conversion Narratives and Jewish Suffering in Evangelical Apocalyptic Novels

Mark Stover, Ph.D.
San Diego State University
Introduction

• Christian Apocalyptic Fiction based on Dispensational Premillennialism
  – Doctrine held only by Fundamentalist Christians
  – Relatively recent (1840s) in church history
  – “Rapture” takes all “true” Christians to heaven
  – 7 year “Tribulation period” (most Jews die)
  – Jesus comes back to reign on earth for 1000 years (remaining Jews convert to Christianity)
Themes of the Novels

• Christian triumphalism
• Horrific Jewish suffering (2\textsuperscript{nd} Holocaust)
• Jewish rejection of Christianity
• Antichrist rules the earth
• Ultimately, Jewish conversion to Christianity
Background of Authors

- Freelance writers
- Ministers and evangelists
- Journalists
- Financial Advisor
- Psychiatrist
- Founders of universities
- Television talk show host
The Second Holocaust

• Numbers vary, but between one half and two thirds of the Jewish population die during the 7 year Tribulation period

• 144,000 Jews convert to Christianity and become evangelists, eventually fleeing to Petra (in Jordan)

• Remaining Jews convert at Jesus’ return to earth
The Antichrist and the Jews

- Antichrist has special relationship with Jews
- Antichrist brokers a peace treaty in the Middle East
- Antichrist rebuilds temple in Jerusalem
- Antichrist ultimately turns against Israel and the worldwide Jewish community, desecrates the temple, and murders millions of Jews
Christian Proselytizing of Jews

• Evangelical Christianity is portrayed as “the truth” while Judaism is seen as “false”
• Arguments and debate must be accompanied by prayer for unbelievers
• Evidence for truth of Christianity is “overwhelming.”
• Only “blindness” keeps Jews from converting
Jewish Response to Proselytizing

- Skepticism
- Anger
- Hatred
- Sabotage
- Physical Violence (toward Christian missionaries)
- Ultimately, some Jews commit murder in response to Christian proselytizing
- Some Jews respond by converting to Christianity, but not without first arguing and debating
Why do Jews Reject Christianity in these Novels?

• Stubborn and “stiff-necked”
• Rebellious
• Spiritual blindness
• Materialistic
• Prideful
• Destiny requires the Jewish rejection of Jesus
Conversion Narratives

- Jewish converts to Christianity come from a variety of backgrounds: secular, religious, etc.
- American, Israeli, other nationalities
- Motifs:
  - Resistance, then belief
  - Inner conflict
  - Supernatural enlightenment
  - Recognition and acknowledgement of “self-deception”
Rabbis and Conversion to Christianity

- Most rabbis who convert are Orthodox in background
- Continue to call themselves “rabbis” and dress accordingly (kippah, Chasidic garb, etc.)
- First they argue, then they are “overwhelmed” by the “truth of messianic prophecies”
Jewish Converts to Christianity

• Some prefer not to be called “Christians”
• Emphasize their Jewish background
• Celebrate Jewish holidays but interpret them through Christian theology
• Deny accusations of apostasy and disloyalty
• 12 (tribes) x 12,000 = 144,000
• “Persecution” comes from both “unbelieving” Jews and the Antichrist
Summary and Conclusion

- 2\textsuperscript{nd} Holocaust is “tragic but inevitable”
- Proselytizing of Jews is crucial to “last days” scenarios in conversion narratives
- Converts are “persecuted” by Jews and by Antichrist (for different reasons)
- Connection between Jewish suffering, Jewish resistance to Christianity, and final conversion
- Philosemitism versus disparaging of Jews?
Evangelical Apocalyptic Novels
1991-2008

Questions?