

Was there an active Jewish-Christian polemic in fourth-century Persia, and if so, what were the issues debated? Aphrahat's Demonstrations, a fourth-century adversus Judaeos text, clearly indicates that fourth-century Persian Christians were interested in the debate. Is there evidence of this polemic in the rabbinic literature? Despite the lack of a comparable Jewish or rabbinic adversus Christianos literature, there is evidence, both from Aphrahat and the Rabbis that this polemic was not one sided. This book attempts to fill in both sides to the polemic.

The observance of Passover, the Sabbath, dietary laws and circumcision, as well as the future redemption, the ingathering, the election of Israel, the Messiah, and virginity are among the topics Aphrahat addresses and to which the Rabbis "respond."

Establishing the existence of fourth-century Jewish-Christian polemical conversations not only illuminates the areas of conflict between Jews and Christians in Persian Mesopotamia, but it also determines how the external political situation influenced these confrontations. In addition it allows one to reflect on the nature of rabbinic reactions to Christianity, as well as the literary, linguistic and textual resources that the Rabbis and the leaders of the Syriac Christian communities shared in common.