

This book addresses a particular and little-known form of writing, the prose dialogue, during the Late Antique period, when Christian authors adopted and transformed the dialogue form to suit the new needs of religious debate. Connected to, but departing from, the dialogues of classical antiquity, these new forms staged encounters between Christians and pagans, Jews, Manichaeans, and “heretical” fellow Christians. At times fiction, at others records of or scripts for actual debates, the dialogues give us a glimpse of Late Antique rhetoric as it was practiced and tell us about the theological arguments underpinning religious differences.

By offering the first comprehensive analysis of Christian dialogues in Greek and Syriac from the earliest examples to the end of the sixth century CE, *Christians in Conversation* shows that Christian authors saw the dialogue form as a suitable vehicle for argument and apologetic in the context of religious controversy, and argues that dialogues were intended as effective tools of opinion formation in Late Antique society. Most Christian dialogues are little studied, and often in isolation, but they vividly evoke the religious debates of the time and embody the cultural conventions and refinements that Late Antique men and women expected from such debates.