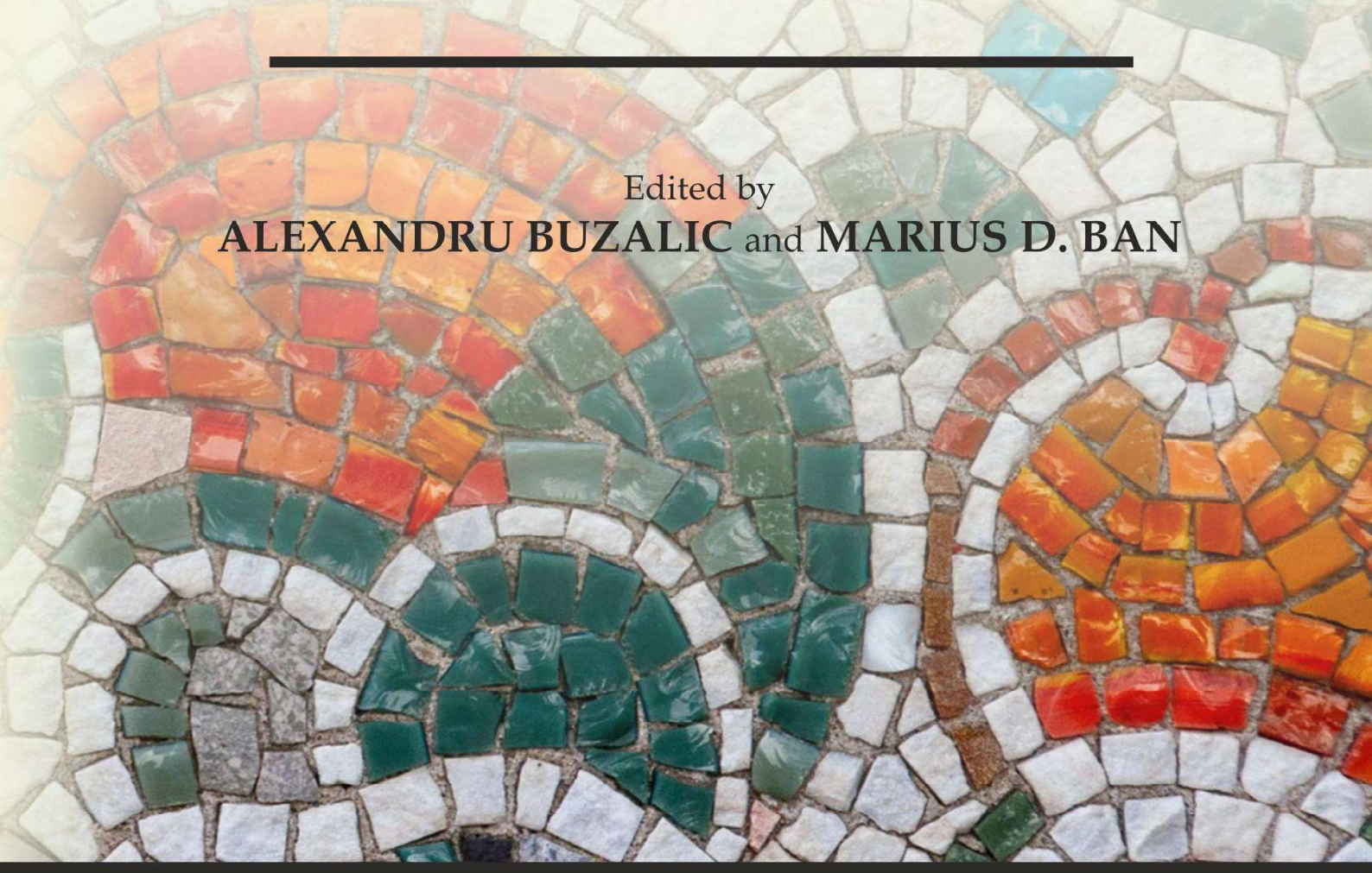
# NAVIGATING CROSSROADS

## Reimagining Christian Apologetics Between Tradition and Contemporary Public Discourse



Edited by
**ALEXANDRU BUZALIC** and **MARIUS D. BAN**

Presa Universitară Clujeană

# NAVIGATING CROSSROADS

## Reimagining Christian Apologetics Between Tradition and Contemporary Public Discourse

Edited by
ALEXANDRU BUZALIC and MARIUS D. BAN

# NAVIGATING CROSSROADS

## Reimagining Christian Apologetics
## Between Tradition and Contemporary Public Discourse

**Edited by**
**ALEXANDRU BUZALIC and MARIUS D. BAN**

**PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ**
**2026**

*Referenți științifici:*

**Prof. univ. dr. habil. Cristian Barta**

**Conf. univ. dr. Emil Bartoș**

**ISBN 978-606-37-2491-6**

© 2026 EDITORII VOLUMULUI. Toate drepturile rezervate.
Reproducerea integrală sau parţială a textului, prin orice mijloace, fără acordul editorilor, este interzisă şi se pedepseşte conform legii.

Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai
Presa Universitară Clujeană
Director: Codruţa Săcelean
Str. B.P. Hasdeu nr. 51
400371 Cluj-Napoca, România
Tel.: (+40) 744 687 884
E-mail: editura@ubbcluj.ro
editura.ubbcluj.ro | libraria.ubbcluj.ro

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction ..... 7
*Alexandru Buzalic and Marius D. Ban*

**I.**
**Theoretical Foundations and Historical Contexts**

From Apologetics to Fundamental Theology ..... 15
*Alexandru Buzalic*

Athanasius of Alexandria: Apologist ..... 33
*Lucian Dîncă*

Can Mysticism Be Apologetical? Philosophical Foundations of Meister Eckhart's Mysticism ..... 59
*Daniel Fărcaș*

**II.**
**Philosophical and Theological Explorations**

The Metaphysical Legacy of Martin Luther: His Relation to Immanuel Kant and Martin Heidegger ..... 81
*Bogdan Alexandru Man*

Michel Henry: An Introduction to Phenomenological Apologetics ..... 99
*Daniel Tomuleț*

The Imagination of Faith: Towards a Hermeneutic of the Christian Imaginary ..... 115
*Ovidiu Moldovan*

## III.
## Comparative Insights and Public Witness

The Limits of Science and Their Transgression in the Works of the New Atheists ..... 125
*Florin-Toader Tomoioagă*

Apologetics as Ecclesial Formation: Equipping the Church for Public Witness ..... 135
*Samuil Maruşca*

Apologetics and Cultural Witness: Learning from C. S. Lewis and Tomáš Halík ..... 159
*Alister McGrath*

Apologetics after the End of Apologetics: A Tentative Kenotic Approach ..... 175
*Teofil Stanciu*

The Blessing in the Clenched Fist: Conversational Apologetics as Public Witness ..... 187
*Marius D. Ban*

List of Contributors ..... 207

# INTRODUCTION

**Alexandru Buzalic and Marius D. Ban**

## Why apologetics, and why now?

We put the question to ourselves before we put it to anyone else. In the Western academy, the word has for some time been weighed and found wanting, and that verdict is increasingly heard here too, in a country where Christian identification remains widespread. For many who hear it, apologetics now names a confidence about what can be proved that few people any longer share. Has postmodern criticism not warned theologians against pressing upon the world a single total account of reality and of how a life is to be lived, in a culture that has learned to distrust anyone who claims to possess one? And if the warning holds, is apologetics not precisely the discipline that ought by now to have quietly closed its doors, leaving the church to speak in some other way, or not at all? These are the questions that brought us together, and they are why the title of this volume names a crossroads rather than a road. A discipline standing where several ways meet must decide how, and whether, to go on.

And yet apologetics has been part of the life of the church from the beginning, and it has never taken only one form. It is there in Justin addressing an emperor, in Athanasius defending the Nicene faith amid accusation and exile, in Eckhart pressing an argument before the masters at Paris, and in Luther refusing the terms on which the question had been put to him. What we have inherited under the name – the modern and classical form, with its proofs and probabilities – is one episode in that history and not its whole. Apologetics has always been less uniform than the caricature allows, and often it is the caricature that is rejected when apologetics itself is rejected.

This volume grew out of the International Conference on the Philosophy of Religion and Apologetics, held in Oradea on 5 and 6 April 2024, convened by the Evangelical Institute for Religious Studies together with the Oradea Department of the Faculty of Greek-Catholic Theology of Babeș-Bolyai University. We framed the meeting from the outset as a question rather than a programme: not simply whether the arguments still hold, which is a question the discipline has asked itself often enough, but whether Christian speech still has a place in public and on what terms it could be offered there. What does it mean to speak about God before people who did not ask, in a culture increasingly fluent in explaining religion and often less willing to listen to it? The conference ranged more widely than the present volume, taking in theodicy, revelation, the sacred, faith under technological change, and the old question of philosophy as ancilla or magistra of theology. The book retains that original question while extending the conversation through contributions added in the course of its preparation. We were especially glad to welcome Alister McGrath of the University of Oxford, whose scientific training and long work in Christian apologetics brought to the conference an unusually broad perspective.

One feature of that gathering has carried into the book, and it matters more than it may appear. The contributors come from Evangelical, Anglican, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Greek Catholic communities. We did not ask them to agree, and they do not. What they share is a willingness to put the question in public and to hear it answered out of a tradition other than their own. That willingness is, when one thinks about it, close to the willingness apologetics itself is now being asked to show towards the world outside it.

At the centre of the volume is not a single programme but a shared pressure: the difficulty facing Christian speech today is not principally a shortage of good arguments. A discipline that understands itself only as the supply of good arguments may continue speaking past the people it means to address. Some of the essays gathered here press further, holding that the modern apologetic project was not merely insufficient but misconceived. The volume is better for not resolving that disagreement in advance. What emerges is not a defence of apologetics exactly as it was, but a series of attempts to resist both the temptation to shout and the temptation to fall

silent, and to ask again what Christian witness might look like when it is offered publicly under conditions of genuine disagreement.

We have arranged the essays in three parts. The first attends to foundations and history, to where the discipline came from and what it has been. The second turns to philosophy and theology, to concepts on which any renewed account of apologetics will have to draw. The third moves outward, to comparison and public witness, to what this speech looks like when it is offered to others. The order is not a hierarchy. It is a movement from the ground upward and from the study outward, into the square.

We begin with Alexandru Buzalic, whose essay traces the long passage from apologetics to fundamental theology. For him, the decisive turn is the aggiornamento that prepared the Second Vatican Council, after which the discipline ceases to be only a defence mounted from behind the ramparts of a besieged city and becomes a discipline of dialogue and of the frontier, answering contestation with argument, misunderstanding with hermeneutics, and indifference with conversation.

Two essays in historical register follow. Lucian Dîncă returns to Athanasius of Alexandria, not only as the theologian of the Nicene faith but as an apologist who defended himself and his church amid accusations, exiles, and doctrinal conflict. His account recovers a form of apology shaped by concrete dispute and public justification rather than by the later model of a systematic treatise. Daniel Fărcaș then asks a question the discipline has rarely put to itself: can mysticism be apologetical? Taking Meister Eckhart as his case, he examines whether a form of knowledge that exceeds discursive reason can nonetheless carry apologetic force, and what an experiential apologetics grounded in immediacy and contemplation might mean.

The second part opens with Bogdan Alexandru Man's study of Luther's metaphysical legacy. He follows Luther's distinction between the theology of glory and the theology of the cross, and the Deus absconditus that accompanies it, into a discussion of Kant and Heidegger, tracing resonances between a theological critique of metaphysical confidence and two major philosophical projects of modernity.

Daniel Tomuleț describes what he calls the crisis of abstraction. Christianity, he argues, was itself rendered as a metaphysical system, with the result that apologetics became a discourse about another discourse. Reading Michel Henry, he proposes a shift from metaphysical abstraction towards phenomenological truth and, finally, towards the truth of life as the place in which revelation is received and lived.

Ovidiu Moldovan then asks how the resources of theological knowing might be extended through the imagination of faith. His essay develops a hermeneutic of the Christian imaginary around the relation between imagination, narrative, and identity, and asks what these categories contribute to the way faith is understood and communicated.

The third part turns outward. Florin-Toader Tomoioagă examines the limits of science and their transgression in the work of the New Atheists. His concern is not to oppose scientific inquiry but to distinguish it from philosophical and ideological claims made in its name, and to defend a model of complementarity between scientific and theological forms of knowledge.

Samuil Marușca returns the question to the congregation. He examines the place of apologetics in the life of the church, weighs the risks of both intellectualism and anti-intellectualism, and argues for apologetic formation through preaching, Bible study, workshops, leadership development, and public witness. Whatever else apologetics may be, his essay insists that it is also a practice in which a community forms its members for speech beyond itself.

Alister McGrath sets two figures side by side, C. S. Lewis and Tomáš Halík, as models of apologetics understood as cultural witness. The comparison points towards a form of public engagement that is intellectually serious without being combative and that remains sensitive to the difference between post-Christian and post-Marxist cultural settings.

Teofil Stanciu takes up Myron Penner's declaration of the end of apologetics and asks what follows if the critique is granted. A change of tone, he argues, will not suffice. His tentative alternative is kenotic: learning the language of the other, listening before answering, accepting

vulnerability as part of the encounter, and joining words to an embodied Christian witness.

The volume closes with Marius D. Ban, who argues that under the conditions Charles Taylor calls secularity in the third sense, apologetics has been left with two unsatisfactory courses: withdrawal from public speech and the continuation of classical argument at a level where the contest is no longer held. His proposal is that the form of speech such conditions require is testimony, given before others and left open to a judgement the speaker does not control. On that account, withdrawal is not necessarily the modest option it can be made to look.

A word about what this book is not. It is not a manual, nor was it intended as one. We did not ask the contributors to agree, and we have not edited them towards agreement. Some of these essays recover what apologetics has been and show how much of it remains available to us; others ask what it may have to become. We take the two tasks to belong together, since a discipline cannot be reimagined by anyone who has not first troubled to know it. What we hoped to gather, and what we believe is here, is a set of sustained attempts to describe how understanding is reached where common ground cannot simply be assumed, what the church has to become in order to speak credibly, and what it costs to say something in public that one cannot compel another person to accept. If a single claim runs beneath them, it is that the confidence proper to Christian speech was never only the confidence of a proof, and that recovering the difference is part of the work now before us. That is the crossroads of our title.



ISBN 978-606-37-2491-6