

# **EXAMPLE**

**1**

**FORDHAM UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY RESEARCH GRANT  
FUNDING JUSTIFICATION NARRATIVE**

**Abstract**

If awarded, a Fordham-funded Faculty Research Grant would constitute a critical contribution to the successful publication of my book—under contract with the prestigious Italian academic press Leo S. Olschki—*In the Light of the Angels: Angelology and Cosmology in Dante's Divina Commedia*.

The first organic study of angelic operations in the *Divina Commedia*, perhaps the most complex and important poetic work of the Middle Ages, *In the Light of the Angels* sets Dante Alighieri's angelology within the context of the medieval theological and philosophical debate on angelic nature and functions. Its central thesis is that angelic operations play an essential structural role in Dante's cosmo-ethical system and that Dante's angelology represents a conscious synthesis of different traditions rather than a syncretism of classical and theological elements. Through an examination of the *Commedia's* three canticles, particularly the *Paradiso*, I demonstrate that Dante redefined in philosophical terms angelic contemplative and active operations to attribute to angels a soteriological function that plays a crucial role in structuring the work's eschatological cosmology. This is a novel reinterpretation not only of Dante's cosmology, but also of his archetypal work's key figures, including the heavenly messenger in *inferno* IX, the angels on the purgatorial terraces, and even one of the most well-known characters in the history of world literature: Beatrice.

**Background**

The angels of the *Divina Commedia* have been the focus of my research since I was a graduate student, with several articles—one published and two forthcoming—laying the foundation not only for the research that resulted in my current monograph (completed with the kind assistance of a 2008-09 Fordham Faculty Fellowship), but also its invitation to be included in a book series present in university libraries worldwide. I am privileged to have this opportunity for *In the Light of the Angels* to be published in the company of a collection that has benefited scholars both in the United States and in Italy for generations.

Critical to this invitation was my discovery that angelology provides us with a privileged perspective to look at the *Commedia* from the point of view of its author, perceiving Dante's intent to reconcile not just the spiritual and material sides of universe, but also the traditions of thought that stem from Scriptural and classical wisdoms. While prior scholarship has shown the direct and indirect influence of contemporary thought on Dante's vision of the cosmos, with many disciplines converging to form a coherent design, most studies of Dante's angels have focused only on either their theological (Romano Guardini, Diego Sbacchi) or classical sources (Stephen Bemrose); they have not even attempted to consider these metaphysical beings in the context of the medieval science and thought that also enriched the microcosm of the *Commedia*. A few scholars, such as Carlo Zanini and Edmund G. Gardner, have tried to establish—but with only with partial success—a structural correspondence between the hierarchical ordering of the angels and that of the heavens in *Paradiso*. Recent research has also shown the relevance of metaphysics (from the seminal works by Bruno Nardi to the recent contribution by Christian Moeves), the strategic importance of astrology (Alison Cornish, Richard Kay), and the complexity of Dante's cosmology (Giorgio Stabile, Cesare Vasoli, Giuseppe Mazzotta). However, no one has attempted to weave these individual threads of analysis into the whole cloth that both emulates and is necessary to understand the rich tapestry of Dante's creative angelology. It is

by such an act of holistic integration that *In the Light of the Angels* will close current scholarship's interstitial spaces, enabling an unbroken apprehension of Dante's cosmology and characters through a novel reading of its angelic figures.

### **Contribution**

Although angels played a crucial role in the theological and philosophical debates of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and they are a pervasive presence in three canticles of Dante's poem, the angelic figures of the *Commedia* have received limited critical attention. They are considered part of the structural order of the poem, but the effects of angelic operations in interpreting that architecture and its major inhabitants have been unfortunately relegated to the margins. *In the Light of the Angels* corrects this approach by restoring angels to Dante's original place of primacy: the fulcrum on which the relation between creation and cosmology hinges. I argue that by grounding angelology on philosophical premises Dante made angels the nexus that ties together human and divine worlds and assures the equilibrium of time and eternity, necessity and freedom.

Specifically, Dante needed to design a mechanism that connected the Empyrean to the material part of the universe. Angelic operations provided such a link, but to shape angels as intermediaries between the spiritual universe of theology and the concrete world of physics raised a series of philosophical issues that Dante needed to address, concerning the nature and operations of angelic creatures. Mainstream medieval angelology did not provide Dante with all the answers he needed, and it does not fully explain the originality and complexity of Dante's soteriological vision of angelic operations. His adaptation and combination of Neo-Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines of angelic Intelligences need to be considered as Dante's attempt to shape angelic structure to suit his ambitious design of a cosmological angelology.

To substantiate this reading, my book shows that the philosophical foundations of Dante's angelology—and the interlacing of Patristic, Dionysian, and Aristotelian traditions that characterize its composite nature—serve the purpose of placing the cosmological and illuminative functions of angels at the core of the conceptual harmonization of creation and cosmology in the *Commedia*. Moreover, angels are not only central to the cosmological design of the *Commedia*, but are also crucial to the poetic harmony of the three canticles. They constitute the exemplars upon which Dante modeled Beatrice's operations, and those of other angelic figures that intervene in the poem, a discovery that casts light on Dante's own writing. By extending to the poem the metaphor of mirrors as applied to the angelic mode of illumination, I argue that Dante's poetry is similar to an angelic language of revelation that manifests what is otherwise obscure—as do Beatrice and the angels of his imagination. From this perspective, the *Commedia* emerges as an illuminated and illuminating 'angelic' operation intended to elicit in its readers the desire to undertake a cognitive voyage beyond the pillars of reason to pursue virtue in view of salvation.

### **Cost**

Because my book proposes a new analysis of one of the most relevant works of the Italian Middle Ages, the prestigious and well-known academic Italian publisher Leo Olschki has invited me to publish *In the Light of the Angels* in his series "Biblioteca dell' Archivum Romanicum" (<http://www.olschki.it>). Many prominent scholars have published path-breaking works with Olschki, including Bruno Nardi, Vittore Branca, Eugenio Garin, Umberto Eco, Marco Ariani, Robert Hollander, Guglielmo Gorni, Pier Giorgio Padoan, and many others. As only a few and not very prestigious university presses exist in Italy, non-university affiliated academic publishers such as Olschki print most academic publications in Italy—a trend throughout Europe. In order to publish works relevant to scholars in the various disciplines,

these publishers by necessity request financial contribution (“subvention”) to cover their printing costs. Far from being vanity presses, they have on the contrary a well-established academic reputation, and their selectiveness is guaranteed by the affirmed scholarly standing of their editors. Only after a careful and attentive reading, and in consultation with specialists of the field, is a manuscript sent for publication accepted. It is therefore a great honor for me that Olschki accepted my book in its prestigious series “Biblioteca dell’ Archivum Romanicum”.

As mentioned in the attached contract, the subvention cost for the publication of my book is €4,400 (about \$ 6,300 at the current exchange rate), which would partially cover the cost of printing a book of about 200 pages. I would be very grateful to Fordham for a partial or total coverage of this amount. The financial support I am requesting is of crucial importance for the publication of my research, which will not be supported by any other external grant or fellowship. I have submitted requests to other University resources for publication support and these applications are pending decision. However, due to their budget considerations and timing of decision, as well as the fact that no one of these resources could cover the whole of my expenses, I have been encouraged to apply to the FRG for the amount requested.

### **Conclusion**

*In the Light of the Angels* will promote new insight into one of the most neglected and misinterpreted aspects of Dante’s *Divina Commedia*, raise the profile of my scholarship on medieval studies and Dante, and highlight the role of Fordham’s Modern languages and Literatures Department in this field.

# **EXAMPLE**

**2**



## **Abstract**

If awarded, a Faculty Research Grant would support the successful publication of my book *The Jew, the Cathedral, and the City* by Cambridge University Press. This text's value to scholars rests in part on its being accompanied by the faithful photographic reproduction of the artistic subjects of its discussion, the cost of which—but for Fordham's support and that of external funders I have been able to attain—would unfortunately force either a compromise in the quality of the finished book or my own financial penalty for its publication.

Specifically, in the thirteenth century, sculptures of Synagoga and Ecclesia – paired female personifications of the Synagogue defeated and the Church triumphant – became a favored motif on cathedral façades in France and Germany. Throughout the generations leading up to this era, the Jews of northern Europe prospered financially and intellectually, a trend that ran counter to the long-standing Christian conception of Jews as relics of the pre-history of the Church. In my book, *The Jew, the Cathedral, and the City*, I use the examples of the cathedrals at Reims, Bamberg, and Strasbourg to examine the sculptures as elements within the urban Jewish-Christian encounter. I explore the roots of the Synagoga-Ecclesia motif in antiquity and argue that, within the context of the cathedral façade, the figures conveyed a political message of Christian ascendancy and Jewish submission.

A Faculty Research Grant would offset the costs I incurred in securing the 162 images my contracted publisher, Cambridge UP, has allowed and agreed were ideal for the illustration of the

book, about two-thirds of which were acquired from image banks and other institutions that charge fees for reproduction rights. In total I have paid \$6025.49 out-of-pocket to cover these costs, which do not yet include the extra cost that will be incurred by their actual reproduction.

## **Background**

My work on high medieval sculptures of Synagoga and Ecclesia places an art-historical theme in political and religious context. I consider the sculptures in relation to the sacred and ritual life of the cathedrals they adorn as well as to the larger urban contexts they inhabit. Synagoga and Ecclesia became a favored theme on northern European cathedral façades in the early thirteenth century. This was just the era in which Jewish populations in the cities of France and Germany were expanding and thriving. This was also an age when clerical and secular rulers were increasingly anxious about Jewish prosperity and sometimes scorn for Christianity. I argue that the theme of Synagoga and Ecclesia, in the context of the cathedral façade, asserted a political message of the righteousness of Christian authority and Jewish submission.

My work makes contributions to the fields of art history, medieval studies and Jewish-Christian studies. As evident on my c.v., I have been invited to present my work to audiences within all of these fields. Publication of my work in the leading journal for medieval art history, *Gesta*, suggests the acceptance of my arguments among art historians, and my award of the Van Courtlandt Elliott Prize for best first article in Medieval Studies from the Medieval Academy of America – an award granted to one article per year in all areas of medieval studies (including history, literature, theology, etc.) – indicates the broader relevance of my research.

## **Contribution**

The motif of Ecclesia and Synagoga is well-known to medievalists and has been analyzed as a pictorial type in iconographic encyclopedias and in two focused studies on the theme (one published in 1894, another in 1970). All such discussions review a wide range of instances of the motif, appearing in carved ivories, manuscript illuminations, enamels, sculptures, paintings and stained glass from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries. Within these different media, Synagoga and Ecclesia are recognized as visual projections variously of the Christian notion of the progress of history from the era of the law to the age of grace, the triumph of Christianity over Judaism or the harmony between the Old and the New Testaments. Most existing studies coordinate analysis of images with discussion of the shifting status of Jews, both in the conceptual realm of the theologian and the more tangible realm of economic, political and social history. But the expansive reach of the existing studies precludes sustained interrogation of the motivations behind or the reception of any given instance of the Synagoga-Ecclesia motif, and there has been almost no consideration of how interactions between Jews and Christians informed the formulation of the theme.

My book *The Jew, the Cathedral and the City: Synagoga and Ecclesia in the Thirteenth Century* takes a narrow focus that allows probing investigations considering the particular popularity of the Synagoga-Ecclesia motif for cathedral façade programs in the second quarter of the thirteenth century. I structure the study around the decorative ensembles at the cathedrals of Reims, Bamberg and Strasbourg, analyzing at each site the relevant construction history, the larger iconographic setting, the local status of Jews and trans-regional political preoccupations of the cathedral administration. This approach allows for examination of the theme in the years that it

was first introduced to broad urban audiences and for exploration of how the figures were perceived by city dwellers in sacred, political and social terms.

### **Cost**

I am pleased that Cambridge UP's enthusiasm for my manuscript has led them to make an exception to their standard practice of allowing only 70 images in an art-historical book and are instead allowing me 162. The costs for such a rich illustrative program, however, are high. Not only does Cambridge UP require extra money to absorb their production costs, but about two-thirds of the pictures for the book were acquired from image banks and other institutions which charge fees for reproduction rights.

I am pleased that I have been granted \$2,500 from the Medieval Academy of America Book Subvention Fund for the project. The entirety of this award will be used by Cambridge UP to cover the extra production required for my book.

In addition, I have been granted \$2,500 from Fordham's Ames Fund for Junior Faculty. I am very grateful for this generous award which will offset some of the costs I have incurred securing images and publication permissions. I am also seeking funds from the Arts and Sciences Deans Council to offset some of my costs.

Here is a breakdown of fees I paid to each institution for images:

NYU Aphrodisias Excavations 10/14/09	20.00
Bibliothèque nationale de France 10/18/09	29.74

Diözesanmuseum Bamberg 10/19/09	44.60
Musées de Strasbourg 10/22/09	109.52
Art Resource, bill 10/23/09	585.00
Staatsbibliothek Bamberg 11/9/09	29.98
Deutsche Fotothek, Dresden 11/13/09	19.00
Neil Schwartz design (Maps) 11/23/09	150.00
Bibliothèque municipale de Reims 12/5/09	8.90
Art Resource, bill 12/11/09	5028.75
TOTAL: \$6025.49	

Subtracting the Ames grant from this total leaves \$3525.49. So I submit this request in the hopes that the committee reviewing Faculty Research Grant applications can offer an award that will cover some of this amount.

### **Conclusion**

I recognize that it is unusual to apply for money for a project that has already been completed or to reimburse costs already paid out. At the time of the 2009 FRG application deadline I did not yet know if my book would be accepted to Cambridge University Press, nor did I have a sense of the price for illustrations. I hope that the Review Committee will consider my project worthy of funding and can help offset some of the costs I have incurred.