

Bruce Hunt  
Project Description  
Fall 2009 ATP Semester Grant Application  
October 8, 2009

What Happened to God?:  
An Empirical Assessment of the Continuity Thesis in American Political Thought

My research question is "In what manner and to what extent do American clergymen have recourse to less orthodox portions of the Bible as one moves from America's colonial to revolutionary periods?" Presently, scholars agree that the political theory of the American founding is a blend of liberal and republican political thinking. While this understanding is important, it says nothing about how American political thought arrives at this consensus. More specifically, how is the religiously inspired thought of colonial America transformed into secular, enlightenment philosophy? Addressing this question through an empirical analysis of political sermons written between 1730 and 1805, I expect to find evidence indicating that American clergy have recourse to less orthodox parts of the Bible as America moves closer to 1776 which allows them to incorporate other, especially liberal, political thought into their sermons. Thus, evidence supporting my hypothesis will support the minimal continuity thesis, which rejects the proposition that America's revolutionary thought is a continuation of America's religiously inspired colonial thought.

In order to test for my hypothesis, this project employs an empirical methodology. I will follow the example of Donald Lutz (1983) in his study entitled "The Relative Influence of European Writers on Late Eighteenth-Century American Political Thought." Lutz uses a citation count from American political writings to measure relative influence of European writers on American political thought. As with that important work, I intend to use a citation count method of analysis to measure relative influence of the different elements of the Bible. My study will draw from political sermons of the late colonial era into the revolutionary era to measure the relative influence of elements of the Bible upon American political thought. Once this general picture has been established, the data can be used to guide a closer textual analysis of influences that would have otherwise been overlooked.

In order to provide a proper analysis of the empirical data that my honors thesis is producing, reference will have to be made to existing literature relevant to this endeavor. Additionally, I will require secondary literature on the primary text employed in this project, Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. These resources will be essential in developing a comprehensive assessment of Tocqueville and will provide context to my own analysis. These works are listed below, and make up the entirety of my proposed budget.

**Texts to Order for Fall 2009 ATP Semester Grant:  
Bruce Hunt**

Leo Strauss. 1950. *Natural Right and History*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

\$14.28 - Amazon

Leo Strauss. 1964. *The City and Man*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

\$10.30 - Amazon

Leo Strauss. 1980. *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

\$13.14 - Amazon

Leo Strauss. 1989. *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

\$17.10 - Amazon

Leo Strauss. 1968. *Liberalism Ancient and Modern*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

\$15.41 - Amazon

Joshua Mitchell. 1995. *The Fragility of Freedom: Tocqueville on Religion, Democracy, and the American Future*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

\$22.00 - Amazon

Sanford Kessler. 1984. *Tocqueville's Civil Religion: American Christianity and the Prospects for Freedom*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

\$31.95 - Amazon

Jack Lively. 1962. *The Social and Political Thought of Alexis de Tocqueville*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.

\$50.00 (used) - Amazon

Ken Masugi. 1991. *Interpreting Tocqueville's "Democracy in America."* Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield.

October 8, 2009

\$33.99 (used) - Amazon

Peter Augustine Lawler. 1993. *The Restless Mind: Alexis de Tocqueville on the Origin and perpetuation of Human Liberty*. Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield.

\$50.94 - Amazon

Marvin Zetterbaum. 1967. *Tocqueville and the Problem of Democracy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

\$28.92 – Amazon

Total - \$288.03