

**„What is good in people disposing of themselves
if they are not submitted to God?"**

The role of religion in Alexis de Tocqueville's conception of society

In the followings we intend to draw the main features of Tocqueville's conception of religion. To this, above all, the theoretical separation of the two periods of classical liberalism seems necessary. The issue of theoretically separating the liberalism belonging to the movement and the one belonging to settling in arises because Tocqueville, according to our aspect, from a particular point of view, can also be considered as the thinker of the transition between the two periods.

His main question is: how can one retain this kind of freedom within the frames of democracy?

In a democracy, above all the strengthening of freedom is needed. How? In practice, people need to be trained for democracy in such a way that society organizes itself in the form of self-governing bodies. Where is *the role of religion* here? In two important points: on the one hand, there must be a *guarantee for morals and ethics*, on the other hand, as a *church* separated from the state, itself operating as a *self-governing organization*, can function as a medium of retaining freedom.

When the political links are becoming loose, society can fall apart if the moral bond is not strong enough. So religion as the guarantee for this moral obligation is much more necessary in a republic than in monarchies and it is most necessary in democracies, whose spread is unstoppable. The American democracy, where the bodies of free citizens compose the people disposing of themselves, is able to operate just because the Americans considered it necessary to use religion in order to change democracy to a moral institution.

Tocqueville wants to show exactly the fact how important the lack of an established state religion and an established church is in democracies. It involves mutual advantages for the whole society.

The federation with different political powers can only be inconvenient for religion because religion is the pledge of stability independently of political changes and while it can perish by supporting politics, religion does not need the help of politics to stay alive.