



# **Tocqueville on American Character: Why Tocqueville's Brilliant Exploration of the American Spirit is as Vital and Important Today as It Was Nearly Two Hundred Years Ago**

*Michael A. Ledeen*

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In 1831, Alexis De Tocqueville, a twenty-six-year-old French aristocrat, spent nine months travelling across the United States. From the East Coast to the frontier, from the Canadian border to New Orleans, Tocqueville observed the American people and the revolutionary country they'd created. His celebrated *Democracy in America*, the most quoted work on America ever written, presented the new Americans with a degree of understanding no one had accomplished before or has since. Astonished at the pace of daily life and stimulated by people at all levels of society, Tocqueville recognized that Americans were driven by a series of internal conflicts: simultaneously religious and materialistic; individualistic and yet deeply involved in community affairs; isolationist and interventionist; pragmatic and ideological.

Noted author Michael Ledeen takes a fresh look at Tocqueville's insights into our national psyche and asks whether Americans' national character, which Tocqueville believed to be wholly admirable, has fallen into moral decay and religious indifference.

Michael Ledeen's sparkling new exploration has some surprising answers and provides a lively new look at a time when character is at the center of our national debate.

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