dignity of the human person, or certain religious principles as to man's being made in the image of God. But Commager, though he does not actually deny such principles, tends to dismiss them as largely unnecessary and as smacking too much of the "idealistic," the "transcendental," and the "absolute" for his taste.

Unfortunately, though, unless there are real standards of human worth and dignity, somehow inherent in the very nature of things, Professor Commager's whole argument would appear to rest on very shaky foundations indeed. For "disastrous consequences" then becomes a sadly relative notion: what appears disastrous from our point of view may not appear so from the point of view of a Hitler or a Stalin, and what in Professor Commager's eyes seems to constitute social stagnation and stultification may in the eyes of a Senator McCarthy, say, be a sign of genuine progress and advance.

No, to meet the intellectual and moral crises of the present day, the somewhat naive pragmatic faith of a William James or a Justice Holmes may no longer suffice; instead, appeal may have to be made to men of somewhat sterner stuff in our Western tradition—a Plato or an Aristotle, perhaps even an Aquinas or a Calvin.

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*U. S. Grant and the American Military Tradition.* By Bruce Catton. (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1954, pp. x, 201. Bibliography and index. $3.00.)

This unpretentious volume of less than two hundred pages has more than usual significance. It is the first of a series, *The Library of American Biography*, edited by Oscar Handlin, Harvard professor and Pulitzer Prize winner. Further, it makes a good climax for Bruce Catton's studies of the Civil War, especially pertinent after *A Stillness at Appomattox*. Also one finds in it a significant contribution to recent writings that are recovering General Ulysses S. Grant from a tradition fixation that has discredited him.

The writer keeps well in line with the objectives of the new biography series not to study "the complete man, or the complete society but the points at which the two interact."
Thus bounded, Catton sets the stage in Part I which he entitles “End of the Golden Age.” Movement is rapid. He takes the reader to the Northwest for the initial setting and has no quarrel with the thesis that the American tradition born of the Revolution channeled through the Northwest. He focuses upon the fundamentals: freedom with its various ramifications and nationalism with the conviction, unique to the Northwest, that without Union, America was without destiny. Catton is convincing enough and he is no iconoclast.

In this Northwest he develops Hiram Ulysses Grant, a product of it, and hence, a typical American. His Yankee father—calculating, successful, boastful, and generally unpopular—has little bearing upon the development of the young man. There may be a little tradition tilt in Catton’s idea of a typical Yankee. Basically, Grant belonged to the characteristic population of the Northwest, mostly Southern in origin and Democratic in politics. Grant had a happy childhood, never knew privation. Catton rediscovers Grant, the horseman, a natural, the most skilled of America’s generals, though tradition never associates him with a mount. His military education was a product of his father’s Yankee expediency. He had no natural talent for the military but he became military; in that, he was the typical American.

Incidents in Grant’s life as a young lieutenant are cited when considered influential in what he later became. He tried only once to do a little dress parade with such ridiculous results that he lost all interest in gold braid. While stationed at St. Louis he courted successfully Julia Dent, and he made an enemy of one Colonel Buchanan. He also tried for an instructorship in mathematics at West Point.

Then came the Mexican War. Grant considered it an unjust war. Here one hesitates to go along with the writer without questioning his critical appraisal of the great tradition-making factor in Mexican War guilt. One would ask whether Grant’s views were current and not after-views and certainly not products of the Northwest environment. Grant was a regimental quartermaster in General Taylor’s campaign, managed to smell battle smoke a little, but most of all, he caught his military cue from “Old Rough and Ready.” General Zachary Taylor—slouchy, thorough, setting up his battles, and driving them through personally—was the prototype of America’s great general. Grant was with the Scott campaign,
still a quartermaster. It was Captain Lee who shone in this campaign—Captain Lee whose prototype was General Winfield Scott—the formal military man, parade perfect, author of the general plan letting subordinates take care of its execution. However, Grant did get a chance to perform one feat of valor, the San Cosme episode, for which he was breveted captain. He learned war from both Taylor and Scott.

The war over, Grant returned, married Julia Dent, did garrison duty in Great Lakes posts, and started a family. The instructorship project had vanished; and Grant, after the custom of the service, was transferred to the Pacific coast. Inflated prices of the gold rush era made his income as first lieutenant inadequate. He tried numerous money-making projects in order to bring his family west. Every venture was ill-starred to a degree that the writer's insistence on Grant's business ability seems a little incredible. It was then that the young captain turned to drink and was forced to resign. Catton thinks the particular bender that brought on the ultimatum to resign or stand trial was not out of pattern for the officer of the period, but that the commanding officer, Buchanan, bore malice. The most important aspect was that it established the whiskey bottle in the Grant tradition.

Grant's "hardscrabble" days are not over-stressed. His failure as woodcutter, farmer, and real estate man are not interpreted to vitiate his business ability. Neither is Catton concerned as to whether or not the older Grant gave his son a dirty job at Galena. During the period Grant looked seedy, was taciturn, both qualities rather natural to him. He wasn't licked. Julia never lost confidence in him. For tradition purposes, the period has tended to give meaning to the way his given name, Ulysses, was garbled as Useless.

The hour of destiny came. The Union was destroyed. Part II of the book is titled "The Great Commander." Catton leaves us without detail as to how Grant tamed the Seventh District "hoodlums" and produced the renowned Twenty-first Regiment. His initial campaign with this regiment in north Missouri taught him vital lessons. The author notes these, though he does not go into careful analysis. Grant at Mexico (on the north Missouri railroad) was not then guarding the Hannibal and St. Joe. It is a slip of no significance.
Shortly, Grant has his star. Washburn and John Rawlins enter the picture, and soon Grant has Lincoln's attention. He is in command at Cairo, key point on the Mississippi, and the river the key to the war. From Cairo to Appomattox the author establishes a clear channel through the career of Grant.

First came the Battle of Belmont, still hard to rationalize but conceded good practice and good for Union morale. When the Confederates violated Kentucky's neutrality it was Grant who seized Paducah and controlled the mouths of the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers. Then he insinuated the Henry and Donelson project into a niche of advantage for the Commander in Chief, executed them brilliantly, and developed his immortal "unconditional surrender." He survived his chief's jealousy, and fate put him in command at "bloody" Shiloh. He was not drunk at Shiloh, was as alert to surprise as any general of that period of the war, and his dogged persistence saved the battle. Grant was now temporarily eclipsed, placed in the shadow of the whiskey bottle, while Halleck concentrated on an objective that didn't exist and then dispersed his forces to a degree that destroyed the Union offensive.

The situation cleared, and it was Grant again. Vicksburg was the objective of the renewed offensive, and trials at a north approach proved futile. Grant made his plans, using what he had learned from Scott and Taylor. Strange, his only support was the military ogre, McClernand. He reported the plan in such a way that it could not be disallowed. The Vicksburg campaign was a masterpiece; the surrender contemporary with Lee's repulse at Gettysburg. The back of the Confederacy was broken at Vicksburg. Catton reaches his thesis climax here: Why should the author of this, the most brilliant campaign, go on in tradition as a stupid, head-on fighter who did nothing else and did that only on rare occasions when he was sober? Catton opens a new area here—the promulgation of this condemning tradition. One wishes he might do his next study in this area, and especially tell us why England extolled and studied Jackson and Lee, and how triumphant conservatism in the North endorsed Lee, the aristocrat, instead of Grant, the man of the people.

After Vicksburg, Grant was inevitable. Rosecrans with the Army of the Cumberland was in straits at Chattanooga. Grant was sent. All that was necessary was somebody to take charge and do something. This Grant did; though he was
not responsible for the complete reversal of situation, he got credit for it. The next step was three stars and supreme command.

Grant planned the remainder of the war just as he had the part of it already won. There was no break in continuity—development from the West and Sherman in charge. This was to be done of necessity by defeating the Confederate armies but more especially by destroying the power of the South to sustain armies. The major problem was in the East where the war couldn't be won but might be lost. The pattern was already set and couldn't be diverted. The only margin Grant had was manpower, and the question whether the Union would pay the price to drive Lee to the Richmond trenches, and the inevitable. The North paid the price, though political support turned on the West and Sherman's victory at Atlanta. In the spring came Appomattox and Grant stood supreme.

When, in Part III, Catton shifts Grant to the political field he faces his stiffest interpretative job. Grant's position made it inevitable that he would be an actor in the confused scene after Lincoln's death. In himself an epitome of the people, he could never transcend the fact to become their great mentor and guide. He made his terms of surrender stick, forced the quashing of the indictment of Lee for treason. When the fight developed between Johnson and Congress, as a military man he considered Congress supreme and naturally endorsed Congress. When he became president, as ultimately he would, he had a conception of the presidency that would assure his failure. It is interesting that Catton believes that for like reasons, no military man is well fitted for the presidency.

No revisionist could quarrel with Catton's interpretative analysis of the period. His picture of Andrew Johnson lacks a few touches; perhaps this is deliberate, since Grant's quarrel with Johnson was personal.

Grant was elected in 1869 by a small popular majority. Regardless, he was an epitome of the subconscious desires of the people: simple in person, not a politician, logical preserver of the results of the war, and embodiment of a return to "old times." His lack of qualification for the job showed up at once. He chose his cabinet independently and didn't tie the White House to political action. He inherited a number of
political obligations and a large official force that was the product of Congressional patronage. In this situation eyes that spotted defrauding contractors at Cairo were blind to the same thing in the political setting. Realizing something wrong, Grant developed a sort of frustration complex.

Catton makes a good case for constructive features in Grant's first administration, especially since a revolution had actually occurred. Able to pick generals he was equally incapable of judging great financial magnates of the period or of understanding their behavior; hence, he got credit for Credit Mobilier, Santa Domingo, and Black Friday. Conditions that produced the Tweed Ring and others, things that had no bearing whatsoever on his administration, were accredited to it. He won a second term on the Democrats' political blunder in accepting Greeley.

In Grant's second administration the author seems more concerned in case making. The development of Reconstruction threw Grant into the arms of the Radicals, and they used him and tarnished his fame. He was helpless in the avalanche of scandals that tradition attached to his administration. He was not elected for a third term.

As a private citizen, his old aimlessness returned. He made a wandering tour of the world, and the Old Liners boomed him for president on his return. He lent his name to a firm, a bucket shop, that swindled the public and pauperized him. Penniless, in the shadow of death, and in great pain, he fought his last battle, wrote his Memoirs, and left his family a respectable estate. He was the great general again in this, his last battle.

Catton's book is well written, fast moving, and interesting. It is a must for anyone interested in the period.

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Among the many Washington diaries of the Civil War period, perhaps the least in importance and significance is the diary left by Salmon P. Chase. The great Secretary of the