

Title: A Case Study of General George Gordon Meade: A Leadership Perspective Through the Lens of Good Work

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Just four days after being ordered to command of the Union's Army of the Potomac, George Gordon Meade defeated Robert E. Lee at the Battle of Gettysburg, a critical victory in the war. Nevertheless, he has been unjustly maligned, even though he rose to a high rank in spite of obstacles and controversy. Under constant attack and criticism by certain members of Congress and the press, Meade's reputation was so severely damaged that it still has not recovered in spite of recent research that largely vindicates Meade.

The literature has focused on Meade's military decisions and ignores his leadership. To analyze and evaluate Meade's leadership as a commander, this case study derived a theoretical position from the Good Work Research Product, described by Gardner, Csikszentmihali, & Damon (2001) in *Good Work: Where Excellence and Ethics Meet*. Guided by their methodology, this study describes Meade's Civil War experience as he viewed it and reveals an extremely competent, ethical commander who suffered great emotional and psychological stress, more from the treatment of his superiors than from the strain of war.

Shortly after Gettysburg, Lincoln erroneously decided that Meade did not want to engage Lee in another battle. Lincoln began to marginalize Meade and when General Grant arrived to travel with Meade's army, Meade's role became

minimal. Meade's marginalization usually manifested itself in the form of nonsupport from Lincoln, General-in-Chief Halleck, and Grant. The marginalization of Meade drained his energy, weakened his will to serve, and impaired his judgment. He contemplated resignation on at least two occasions, but small displays of support rejuvenated the general and he remained in command until the end of the war.

Meade deserves more credit than he has previously been allotted. He stopped Lee's string of decisive victories at a time when support for the war was waning in the North, allowing Lincoln to sustain the war and reunite the states. Meade also played a significant role in Grant's defeat of Lee. Despite the impediments to his leadership, Meade did "good work" and proved to be the right man at the right time.