

Authority Conflicts in the Mormon Battalion

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The history of the Mormon Battalion presents an interesting study of conflicting military and religious authority. With the exception of the commanding officer, initially all of the members of the battalion were also members of the Mormon Church, and its officers were chosen by the Church leaders and were entrusted with religious leadership as well as military supervision of the men. However, it proved to be difficult to be a military officer and a "brother in the priesthood" at the same time, especially when the highest officers of the battalion were non-Mormon. Unfortunately for the Mormon officers, some of the enlisted men held a higher rank in the priesthood than they and gradually began to assert their religious authority over that of their officers. By the time the battalion was discharged, the men were badly divided. Some chose to re-enlist, some chose to follow their senior captain, but the large majority chose to follow the men who had emerged as their religious leaders.

When Captain James Allen rode into the Mormon camp in July 1846, he carried a letter authorizing him to enlist a battalion of five hundred Mormons and march them to California to join General Kearney in the conquest of that area from Mexico. This letter instructed Captain Allen to permit the enlisted men to choose their commissioned officers, subject to his approval, and these officers would be permitted to choose the noncommissioned officers, also subject to the commanding officer's approval.¹ This selection was carried out in typical Church fashion, however, for the Church leader Brigham Young said that "If the Brethren wished him to nominate men for officers he should select men of judgment, experience and faith who would take care of the lives of their men."²

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¹Daniel Tyler, *A Concise History of the March of the Mormon Battalion* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Press, 1885), p. 113.

²Frank Golder, *The March of the Mormon Battalion* (New York: The Century Company, 1928), p. 123.

It was voted unanimously that President Young and his council nominate the officers for the several companies as far as they thought proper.³ Thus, the men were committed to obedience to their officers on the basis of their selection by the Church leaders as well as by military commission.

Just before leaving Council Bluffs, the officers selected were gathered together for instructions and counsel by Brigham Young and other Church leaders. Tyler reported this meeting as follows:

On Saturday, the 18th of July, 1846, President B. Young, H. C. Kimball, P. P. Pratt, W. Richards, John Taylor, and Wilford Woodruff met in private council with the commissioned and non commissioned officers, on the banks of the Missouri River, and there gave us their last charge and blessing, with a firm promise that, on condition of faithfulness on our part, our lives should be spared, our expedition should result in great good and our names should be held in honorable remembrance to all generations. They instructed the officers to be as fathers to the privates, to remember their prayers, to see that the name of the Diety was revered, and that virtue and cleanliness were strictly observed. They also instructed us to treat all men with kindness and never take that which did not belong to us, even from our worst enemies, not even in time of war if we could possibly prevent it; and in case we should come in contact with our enemies and be successful, we should treat prisoners with kindness and never take life when it could be avoided.⁴

Henry Standage added some items of interest in his journal. He wrote:

President Young instructed the captains to be fathers to their companies and to manage their affairs by the power and influence of the Priesthood; then they would have power to preserve their lives and the lives of their companies and escape difficulties. The President told them he would not be afraid to pledge his right hand that every man would return, alive, if they would perform their duties faithfully, without murmuring and go in the name of the Lord, be humble and pray every morning and every evening in their tents. A private soldier is as honorable as an officer, if he behaves as well. No one is distinguished as being better flesh and blood than another. Honor the calling of every man in his place. All the officers but three have been in the

³Golder, pp. 123-124.

⁴Tyler, pp. 128-129. (Also "Journal History of Mormon Battalion," M.S., July 18, 1846, hereafter referred to as "J.H.M.B.")

Temple. Let no man be without his undergarment and always wear a coat and vest; keep neat and clean, teach chastity, gentility and civility; swearing must not be admitted, insult no man; have no contentious conversation with the Missourian, Mexican, or any class of people; do not preach, only where people desire to hear, and then be wise men. Impose not your principles on any people; take your Bibles and Books of Mormon; burn cards if you have any.⁵

Tyler quotes Brigham Young as saying, "not one of those who might enlist would fall by the hands of the nation's foes, and that their only fighting would be with wild beasts."⁶ Further instructions were given the officers and men by letter. In a letter dated August 19, 1846, President Young said, ". . . If you are sick, live by faith, and let the surgeon's medicine alone if you want to live, using only such herbs and mild foods as are at your disposal."⁷ On the following day another letter was received addressed to the men and officers of the battalion, and after repeating the counsel that the officers act as fathers to the men, "counseling them in righteousness in all things," they were also instructed to remember the ordinances in case of sickness.⁸ These instructions in regard to sickness and faith-healing resulted in a great deal of misunderstanding and bitter experience on the part of the men.

It should be noted that President Young addressed all of his letters to Captain Jefferson Hunt, senior captain of the battalion, even though one of the General Authorities of the Church, Levi W. Hancock, was a member of the battalion. Hancock, who was one of the Seven Presidents of the Seventies, had volunteered as a musician in Company "E." Despite his high position in the Church, Brigham Young seems to have ignored him as far as any assignment of leadership is concerned. It is true that Henry Bigler believed that Hancock and David Pettigrew had been appointed by Brigham Young to "counsel, advise, and act as fathers to the men of the Battalion,"⁹ and that Golder refers to Hancock in a footnote as "chaplain and one of the musicians of the Battalion."¹⁰ How-

⁵"Journal History of the Church," M.S., July 18, 1846. Hereafter referred to as "Journal History."

⁶Tyler, p. 118.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁸"Journal History," August 20, 1846.

⁹*Utah Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 44.

¹⁰Golder, p. 147.

ever, there is no reliable evidence that Hancock had any official appointment as spiritual leader. On the contrary, he is never mentioned by Brigham Young in his communications with the battalion, and he makes no claim for such office in his own journal. Further evidence may be seen in the fact that Jefferson Hunt conducted most of the meetings, and although he usually called on Hancock to speak, Hunt was in charge. President Young apparently expected the officers to take the lead in spiritual affairs as well as in military. Since "all but three" had been to the temple, it was presumed that the officers could care for the spiritual needs of the men.

Levi Hancock first began to show signs of leadership about a month after the battalion had left Council Bluffs. On August 20, 1846, he recorded the following:

About this time I saw D. B. Huntington who told me that some of the brethren had defiled themselves and that many witnesses had seen it with their own eyes . . . I concluded that I would ponder upon the subject and see if there couldn't be some measures taken that would prevent more of such troubles in camp[;] therefore I called upon Capt. Hunt and told him we ought to have some meetings and he then appointed me to take charge of the same and then call on brother Wm. Hyde and Tyler to assist me and father Petigrew [sic] to open the meeting. I talked to the battalion as well as I knew how. I told them that they must not swear [swear] and take the name of the Lord in vane [vain], and told them that he who had sined [sinned] to do it no more for a long time¹¹

Several other men recorded their reactions to the meeting, but Sergeant William Coray's account is given in greater detail than the others. He wrote:

Levi W. Hancock, who was the highest ecclesiastical authority in the battalion, at this time opened the meeting. Elder Tyler spoke, followed by Hancock, Hyde, and Capt. Hunt; the latter told his feelings at considerable length and

¹¹Levi Hancock, Journal 16a, M.S., approximately August 20, 1846.

The importance of this meeting in Hancock's mind as well as insight into his religious nature may be determined from the following item recorded in his journal:

. . . having an opertunaty [opportunity] now finish the recording of the operations of the spirit upon me on the 21st day of August at Hurricane Hill. I thought the Lord spoke to me and told me my sins were all forgiven and what was done at the meeting August 20th was according to his spirit which overjoyed me so that I lay sometime in the spirit praising my God who is so good and kind as to manifest himself to me in such a manner.

with great animation. He fairly laid the ax at the root of the tree and discountenanced vice in the strongest terms; which imported a good spirit to the battalion and checked insubordination materially. Captain Hunt advised the Captains of companies to get their men together frequently and pray for them and teach them the principles of virtue and be united with each other.¹²

Tyler and Standage also gave similar reports of this meeting. Standage included David Pettigrew in his list of speakers.¹³ One week following this meeting, the Journal History records that "the officers in command called upon Elders David Pettigrew and Levi W. Hancock to take charge of the spiritual affairs of the camp."¹⁴

Apparently there were no serious conflicts of authority during this first month. Hancock had used his own initiative in approaching Captain Hunt concerning the meeting, and Hunt and the officers had recognized the need when they asked Hancock and Pettigrew to act as "spiritual advisors" to the men. A few days after this important meeting, word was received that Captain Allen had died, and with his death came the beginning of conflict in the battalion.

Captain Allen had assured the Mormon leaders that if he should leave the battalion, the senior captain would have the right to command. Accordingly, Jefferson Hunt took over. According to Hunt's report of this incident, he called the officers together and assigned Captain Hunter and Lieutenant Dykes to investigate his right to command. Two days later Captain Hunter produced the law on the subject, showing that it was Hunt's right to command. The following day, however, Lieutenant A. J. Smith rode into camp, having been sent by the commandant at Fort Leavenworth to offer his services to lead the battalion. In a letter to Brigham Young, Hunt reported:

The next day Lieut. Smith came up and I was made acquainted with him; he soon told me he desired to lead the Mormon Battalion to Santa Fe, and referred to the benefits

¹²"J.H.M.B.," August 20, 1846.

¹³Golder, p. 148.

David Pettigrew, familiarly known as "Father Pettigrew," was one of the oldest men in the battalion, being then in his fifty-sixth year. He had served as a member of the Nauvoo Stake High Council and had a fine record of Church activity.

¹⁴"Journal History," August 27, 1846.

we should receive from having a U. S. officer at our head. I told him it might or it might not be so, but for myself I was willing to risk marching the Mormon Battalion myself to Gen. Kearney. I was, however, but one and could only act as such; if he wished, I told him, he could see all the officers together and lay the matter before them and if a majority of them wished that he should lead us to Gen. Kearney I would consent. Accordingly, I notified all the officers and they were present in the evening, when Lieut. Smith laid his propositions[:] if our battalion were gone ahead, that the provision master was not acquainted with any of our officers and if we should overtake him and make out a requisition he could not officially know us, inasmuch as we had neither commissions nor certificates that we were officers. Major Walker, the paymaster general, addressed us; he candidly advised us to let Smith lead us, referring to the many difficulties we should have to meet if we undertook to go by ourselves. Our pilot informed us that it was the intention of Col. Price, who we all knew was our inveterate enemy, to attach us to his regiment if we did not accept of Smith.

There was nothing said by our officers one way or the other in the presence of Smith and the other officers, save by Adjutant G. O. Dykes, who stated our inability to make out correct pay rolls and other documents now wanting without some instruction and gave his views in favor of Smith. I questioned Smith very closely on his intentions, if he calculated to carry out the designs of Lieut. Col. Allen, stating that I would, under no consideration, resign my command to him, if he did not intend to carry out these designs; he replied that such was his intention. When they were all through, I requested that Lieut. Smith, the paymaster, pilot and doctor should withdraw. I then told the officers that it remained with them, after hearing what they had, to decide the question. The matter was talked over a little, when Capt. Higgins moved that Lieut. Smith should lead us to Santa Fe, which was seconded by Capt. Davis and carried unanimously. Smith was apprised of this and took command the next morning.¹⁵

Unfortunately, Lieutenant Smith proved to be a harsh disciplinarian, and the men of the battalion blamed their officers for accepting him as their commander without putting it to a vote of the men.¹⁶

¹⁵Golder, p. 156. Letter from Jefferson Hunt to Brigham Young concerning Smith's appointment, dated Santa Fe, Oct. 17. (See B. Y. History, M.S., 1893, p. 393.)

¹⁶Tyler, p. 226.

Accompanying Smith was Dr. Sanderson, who had been appointed to the position of battalion surgeon by Colonel Allen before he died.¹⁷ This officer was the cause of much of the dissension in the battalion, and was thoroughly disliked by the Mormon soldiers. Part of his unpopularity came from the fact that he was a Missourian and from his constant use of vulgar and profane language. The main difficulty was his refusal to respect the Mormons' belief in faith-healing. Tyler reported that some of the men who were sick were being carried in a wagon purchased by Sergeant Thomas S. Williams, although they had neglected to report themselves to Dr. Sanderson. This led to a severe altercation involving threats of violence between Williams and the commanding officer. Because of this, Sergeant N. V. Jones went to Lieutenant Smith and told him that the soldiers were loyal and respected their officers, but that they had religious scruples against taking mineral medicine. Smith said that he was not aware of this and did not want to force the men to do something that was against their religious convictions. He turned to Adjutant Dykes and asked if Jones' statements were true. Dykes replied "that there were no such religious scruples and that the Church authorities themselves took such medicines."¹⁸

Later, Hunt had told the Colonel that it was "rather against our religious faith," but when Tyler went to Hunt and insisted that the colonel be made to know that it was against the faith of the men, and that the malpractices of Sanderson should end, Hunt said that such actions by Tyler would raise a mutiny and said that nothing more could be done.¹⁹

Dykes' unfortunate answer plus Hunt's refusal to press the issue made an almost intolerable situation for the sick men of the battalion and led to a further loss of confidence on the part of the men in their officers. Tyler appears to reflect the feelings of most of the men when he attributes the deaths of several men to the administrations of arsenic and calomel at the hands of Dr. Sanderson.²⁰

¹⁷B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), V, p. 106-107.

¹⁸Tyler, p. 145.

Dykes was regarded by the Mormon soldiers as the source of much of their trouble—see Tyler, p. 148 and Golder, p. 187.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 160.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 158, 163, 186, 274.

On October 3, another council of officers was called to consider the suggestion that the battalion be divided temporarily, sending the strongest men ahead to keep the battalion from being discharged and to permit the rest to follow as rapidly as they could. This proposition was approved, being opposed only by "First Lieutenants James Pace, Andrew Lytle, Samuel Gulley and, we think, Lieutenant W. W. Willis, with invited guests, Levi W. Hancock, David Pettigrew, Sergeant William Hyde and others."²¹ This indicates, once again, the unofficial position held by these two men. It also indicates the source of some of the trouble caused between the officers and men. Brigham Young had counseled the officers not to allow the battalion to be divided on any account, and Colonel Allen had promised that it would not be divided. These men opposed the separation on the grounds that it was against the counsel of the Church leaders. Lieutenant Dykes maintained that there was no time to call councils, and that President Young did not know their present circumstances.²²

A few days later, at the last crossing of the Arkansas, the problem of division became more severe when it was determined that those who had accompanied the battalion but were not actually enlisted should be sent up the Arkansas River to Pueblo, Colorado, after it was learned that there was a small colony of Mormons wintering there. Standage remarked that "the officers were consenting to almost anything that Lt. Smith our Tyrant would propose."²³

Later in Santa Fe, after a conference with Colonel Doniphan, commandant of Santa Fe, and Lieutenant Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, who had been appointed by General Kearney to lead the battalion to California, the officers of the battalion agreed to accept their offer to "send all the sick, together with the remaining women and children that belonged to the battalion, to Pueblo to winter, with an escort, and with the privilege in the spring of intersecting the main body of the Church, and going westward with them at government expense."²⁴ Accordingly, eighty-six men, together with the women and children (with the exception of the wives of five of the men),

²¹Tyler, pp. 157-158.

²²*Ibid.*

²³Golder, p. 165.

²⁴History of Brigham Young, M.S., p. 387.

marched to Pueblo under the command of Captain James Brown. Still later, after leaving Santa Fe, fifty-five more men were declared to be too sick to make the rugged march to California and were sent back to Pueblo under the command of Lieutenant W. W. Willis. This left approximately three hundred and fifty men who made the march to California. Each of these divisions eventually worked to the advantage of the battalion as well as the other people involved; but, at the time of the division, the end results could not be seen, and it appeared to the men that their officers had betrayed them.

While the influence of the military leaders was declining, the prestige of Hancock and Pettigrew, the religious leaders, was rising. They had encouraged the resistance to the doctor's medicine and had advised against dividing the battalion. A few days out of Santa Fe another crisis developed that greatly enhanced their position of leadership in the eyes of the men.

The battalion had passed the point in the Rio Grande Valley where General Kearney's force had turned westward toward California, and the men were becoming apprehensive about the possibility of being marched into Mexico rather than into California as they had been promised. Colonel Cooke had sent out guides who had returned with reports that there was no water between them and the Gila River, a distance of about a hundred miles. A council of the staff and captains of companies was called, and the decision was made to proceed along the road, which led in a southwesterly direction. Tyler, in describing the situation, says:

A gloom was cast over the entire command. All of our hopes, conversations and songs, since we left Nauvoo were centered on California; somewhere among that broad domain we expected to join our families and friends.

In this critical moment, brother David Pettegrew [sic], better known as Father Pettegrew, owing to his silver locks and fatherly counsels, and Brother Levi W. Hancock, went from tent to tent, and in a low tone of voice counseled the men to "pray to the Lord to change the Colonel's mind." Then they invited a few to accompany them to a secret place where they could offer up their petitions and not be seen by those in camp. That night over three hundred fervent prayers ascended the throne of grace for that one favor.

On the morning of the 21st, the command resumed its journey marching in a southern direction for about two miles,

when it found that the road began to bear to the south-east instead of the south-west, as stated by the guides. The Colonel looked in the direction of the road, then to the south-west, then to the west, saying, "I don't want to get under General Wool, and lose my trip to California." He arose in his saddle and ordered a halt. He then said with firmness, "This is not my course. I was ordered to California, and," he added with an oath, "I will go there or die in the attempt!" Then, turning to the bugler, he said, "Blow the right."

At this juncture, Father Pettegrew involuntarily exclaimed, "God bless the Colonel!" The Colonel's head turned and his keen, penetrating eyes glanced around to discern whence the voice came, and then his grave, stern face for once softened and showed signs of satisfaction.²⁵

The battalion turned to the west and made their way to California, arriving in January 1847. Disciplinary problems on the long march as well as severe tests of physical endurance brought relations between the men and their officers to a breaking point. After reaching their destination, the battalion members were assigned occupation duty in various parts of southern California. An attempt was made to make a "spit-and-polish" military unit out of them and this added to the general dissatisfaction felt by the men. Standage expressed his feelings in the following way:

This is the closest place we have been in yet, to stand guard through the night and then be obliged to work on the fort through the day 10 hours, parade at retreat with our accouterments and do our own cooking, and especially as we can see no use of crowding business thus close. The fact is if our battalion officers who profess to be our brethren would act as fathers to us we could have easier times, but they seek to please the Gentiles and to gain favor at our expense.²⁶

Those who have been in the army know that soldierly grumbling at hardship and discipline is to be expected, but in this case the relationship between the men and their officers was slightly different. These officers had been selected by the leaders of the Church, and the men knew that they had been instructed to act as fathers to their men and to manage their affairs by the power of the priesthood. This rebellion

²⁵Tyler, pp. 206-207.

²⁶"Journal History," April 28, 1847.

against the officers was based on religious reasons rather than military discipline.

This division of opinion and loyalty came to a head when an attempt was made to get the battalion to re-enlist for another term. Colonel Stevenson,²⁷ in company with Captain Hunter, Sergeant Hyde, and Corporal Alexander, came from San Diego to Los Angeles on June 28, to try to get the battalion to re-enlist for six months, using a strange mixture of threats and promises, compliments and insults.²⁸ After listening to this speech the men were dismissed into the hands of their officers and were instructed by Captain Hunt to meet at a point a short distance from camp to discuss the problem. Captains Hunter, Hunt, and Davis, and Lieutenants Canfield and Dykes all spoke strongly in favor of the proposition.²⁹ Then David Pettigrew got the floor and said:

. . . that he thought it our duty to return and look after our outcast families; others could do as they thought best, but he believed that we had done all that we had set out to do, and that our offering was accepted and that our return would be sanctioned by the Church leaders.³⁰

The meeting was then adjourned because of the heat of the sun, and agreement was made to meet in the big tent at the fort at noon. Standage gave a detailed report of this meeting as follows:

This certainly is a very important crisis in the history of the travels of this Battalion of Latter-day Saints, everyone left to be led or walk by faith and the light of the spirit. None privileged to step forth and counsel us and our officers who were given to us as fathers during the service all seem to have run into many vices, except some. About 12 o'clock we met in the tent. Some spoke when it was agreed to appoint a committee to draft an article of writing, stating the terms on which the men would enlist. Captain Hunter, Captain Davis, and Father Pettegrew [sic] were chosen for the committee. As soon as the writing was completed we were again called together and the articles of agreement read. When several short speeches were made, some believing our mission ended the 17th of next month, and others the re-

²⁷Stevenson had succeeded Colonel Cooke when the latter went east with General Kearney. Bancroft, *History of California*, V, 450.

²⁸Tyler, pp. 293-294, contains a fairly long summary of the speech.

²⁹"Journal History," June 29, 1847.

³⁰Tyler, p. 295.

verse. Among the speakers was Sergeant Hyde of B Company, who spoke to the point of returning . . . he believed that God was satisfied. Sergeant Tyler made some good remarks on the subject. Father Pettegrew seemed warm on the subject His remarks were truly applicable. Captain Hunter hinted that he had heard that there was a prophet somewhere in the camp, he believed among the privates; if so, he wished that he would come forth and give us the word of the Lord on the subject Brother Levi Hancock spoke from the door of the tent, said that he had never influenced the men against the officers, either publicly or privately (some remarks had been made by Captain Hunter believing that someone had been trying to set the men at variance with the officers). Lieutenant Lytle spoke, denying ever using an influence against the officers. Meeting dispersed, 15 or 16 names being obtained for re-enlisting, news taken to the Colonel stating terms &c. which was rejected.³¹

This meeting revealed at least two things: First, it showed that most of the men preferred to take the advice of Pettigrew, Hancock, Hyde and Tyler in preference to the senior officers. The general desire of the men to get out of the army probably had something to do with this. Second, it also indicated that the officers suspected Hancock, and possibly Pettigrew and Lytle, of influencing the men against them.

In regard to Levi W. Hancock's activities, Tyler reported the following:

Brother Hancock was very zealous, and did his best to influence the men to live their religion taught under every circumstance. He was really deserving of much credit for the zeal and diligence he manifested in his missionary work among the brethren, but it was very apparent that some of the officers regarded his actions as officious, and entertained a feeling of jealousy towards him on that account. He, however, denied the imputation that he was prompted by any other than the purest of motives, and he retained the good feelings of the others and his influence among them, notwithstanding the prejudice that existed towards him among those few officers.³²

There is evidence, however, that Hancock did criticize the officers, even if he meant to do it in a spirit of kindness. Standage said that Lieutenant Holman had told him that Levi Hancock's course with the brethren would have led to an in-

³¹"Journal History," June 29, 1847.

³²Tyler, p. 266.

surrection had he not been checked.³³ More definite than that statement, however, is the report of a meeting held on February 15 by William Coray. It reads:

This evening Levi Hancock held a meeting at Lieutenant Dykes' quarters in which he stated that he hated to be under the necessity of telling the brethren his rights. He said, "The spirit of God should do it. Men have tried to take away my rights [meaning the captains] but I won't give them up to any man." He said that a number of the battalion brethren had met together and washed each other's feet, and annointed each other with oil, and that spirit of the Lord had testified to them that it was right.

In regards to preaching, "Brother Tyler is the man to preach to this battalion. I know it for it was revealed to me." After casting many insinuating remarks about the captains taking the lead when it was not their place, etc., he concluded by calling for an expression of the congregation whether Brother Tyler should preach next Sunday or not. . . . Wm. Hyde arose, stating that he had but little to say, but what he should say would be at the risk of all hazard. This was that Levi Hancock was his file leader and that he would obey his counsel, let the circumstances be what they may

In the meantime I sat still and listened to all that was said, but said naught myself. I found that Brother Levi and the captain who was present considered themselves insulted by having their appointment taken up before their time.³⁴

Coray said further that he did not know who was right, but he felt that both were wrong. He felt that Hancock had been wrong in stirring up enmity of the men against the officers, and that the officers had often been tyrannical and had set very poor examples for the men.³⁵

Part of Hancock's influence with the men seems to have come as a result of holding meetings with select groups in which the ceremony of washing each other's feet was practiced. Both Azariah Smith and Samuel Rogers reported such a meeting held on February 18, 1847, in which twelve men received the ordinance, and Rogers records meetings on Sunday, February 21; Wednesday, February 24; and Wednesday,

³³"Journal History," April 2, 1847.

³⁴William Coray, "J.H.M.B.," February 15, 1847.

³⁵*Ibid.*

March 11, in which a total of thirty-seven men participated in this ritual.³⁶

Hancock wrote a letter to Brigham Young in May giving him a report of his activities and feelings in regard to the condition of the battalion. Part of the letter read as follows:

. . . There has been some wickedness among some, but I called them together and talked as well as I could to them, and I warned them against swearing and cursing each other and fighting, as there has been all of this. Before I commenced this, I asked the Lord to direct me, and I called a meeting and asked if any man had anything against me; and if he had, to tell me then, so that I might repent. All hands said that I was clear from all, and that I had set a good example. I called on a man to come and wash my feet. He said that he would. I then washed his and he mine, and I said, "I forgive all men according to the revelations," and told them why I had done it, and how Jesus said: "If I have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet." All hands then went to washing feet. I told them that they must stop swearing as they had done, and swearing has now become unpopular in this camp. But about this time, a jealousy arose among us; some of the officers said that there was a secret conspiracy in the camp. I then called on all the brethren to bear testimony that I had taught nothing but against wickedness, and that I had a perfect right to do it wherever I was in any part of the earth. I have nothing against them, anyhow; but there are many things that look strange to me and that I do not "comprehendo" as the Spaniards say. Brother Jones, Hulet and others can tell better than I can write. One thing is; some officers putting out their hands to stop the wages of others, as has been the case in this battalion, and then be so full of religion that they imagine they have never sinned in their lives.³⁷

The results of Hancock's activities became apparent as the time of their enlistment drew to a close. A few days before their discharge, Standage wrote:

Our officers are becoming more and more like men, giving us as many privileges as they can conveniently. They have not been more than half as strict for a few days past. In fact, they seem to realize that their power as military commanders will soon be gone, and that their influence will be gone too. Inasmuch as they know that there are men in

³⁶Samuel Rogers, Journal (Typescript), Special Collections, Brigham Young University Library.

³⁷Levi Hancock, Letter recorded in "J.H.M.B.," May 12, 1847.

this battalion who stand as high and much higher in the Priesthood, therefore it seems as though they wished to restore the confidence in some measure which they well know that has departed during the last 12 months. Brothers A. Lytle and J. Pace are appointed to lead back the Company to the Church, being the only two who have had respect unto the Priesthood of the Son of God, and acted as fathers to the brethren who were placed under them for twelve months.³⁸

According to Tyler, Lytle and Pace were elected by acclamation.³⁹ It is not known who nominated them, but there is quite a possibility that the accepted Church pattern was followed, and the nominations were made by the highest Church leader present, Levi W. Hancock. At least, four days after their release, Standage said:

This morning the Cap's [Captains] of 50s and 10s were nominated by Levi Hancock, Captain Pace and Lytel [sic] elected by the brethren and organization effected according to the pattern left for us for travelling purposes, also military, by our Prophet Joseph.⁴⁰

The long-awaited day of discharge arrived with the dawning of July 16, 1847. Azariah Smith gave the following word picture of this event:

At 3 o'clock P.M. the five companies of the battalion were formed according to the letter of their company, with A in front and E in the rear, leaving a few feet of space in between. The noterrious [notorious] Lieutenant A. J. Smith then marched down between the lines, then in a low tone of voice said, "You are discharged." That is all there was of ceremony of mustering out of the service this veteran corps of living martyrs to the cause of their country and their religion. None of the men regretted the Lieutenant's brevity; in fact, it rather pleased them.⁴¹

Standage adds that after their discharge by Smith:

Captain Davis marched company E after being mustered out into the Pueblo, under arms and gave the men as much wine &c as they could wish. He then delivered us into the hands of Lieutenant Pace, First Lieutenant, to march us back to the quarters, there to be discharged. Some remarks by

³⁸"Journal History," June 27, 1847.

³⁹Tyler, p. 293.

⁴⁰"Journal History," July 20, 1847.

⁴¹"J. H. M. B.," July 16, 1847.

Captain Davis, Lieutenant Pace, Lytel [sic], Levi Hancock, and Father Pettegrew [sic] when 3 cheers were given, and many left with animals they had purchased for a camping ground three miles up the San Pedro River.⁴²

By the time of their discharge the battalion had been divided into several factions. Twelve men had been chosen by General Kearney as an escort for him on his trip east, and left Los Angeles on May 13. Eighty-one men and officers had re-enlisted, three had died, one officer had resigned, and one man had been discharged and drummed out of camp. This left approximately 250 men who were planning to join the main body of the Church. Speaking of this group, William Coray said:

Meanwhile those who believed in the counsel of Brother Levi W. Hancock made preparations and started with him to meet the Church by way of Walker's Pass. Nearly 40 or 50 in company with Captain Hunt also marched for the Bay of San Francisco, expecting to hear from the Church in that place. . . .⁴³

The main body, then, chose to follow Hancock and Pettegrew. The fact that eighty-one re-enlisted and forty or fifty followed Hunt is indicative of the lack of unity within the group, but the religious leaders commanded the loyalty of a significant majority of the battalion members when their term of enlistment ended.

⁴²"Journal History," July 16, 1847.

⁴³"J. H. M. B.," July 16, 1847.