



# **Rey Lucero Pratt**

Born - October 11th  
1878 in Salt Lake City



Helaman Pratt and Emaline Billingsley Pratt



Rey Pratt



Orson F. Whitney



Hyrum S. Harris



The Cristero rebellion or The Cristero War



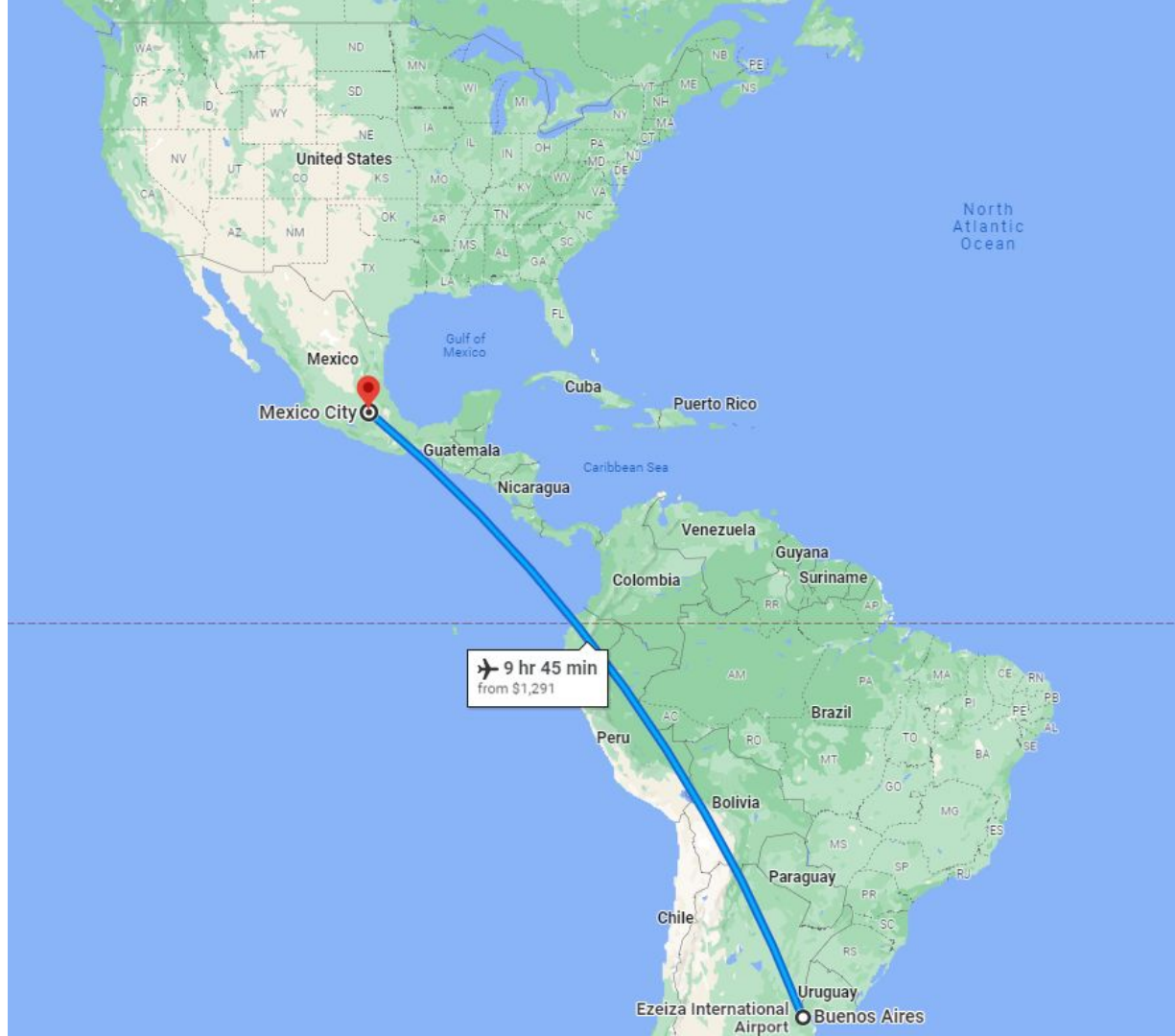
Isaías Juárez

Arwell L. Pierce

Abel Paez

Barnabe Parra







**Central Mexican District President  
Isaías Juárez**



**Abel Paez      Barnabe Parra**

**& His Counselors  
Abel Paez & Barnabe Parra**



Rey Pratt goes to the hospital for an emergency Appendectomy (ruptured Appendix) and dies from complications of the surgery on April 14th 1931.





## Antoine Ridgeway Ivins

Antoine Ridgeway Ivins was appointed to replace Rey Pratt in 1931. Ivins showed no interest in his new appointment. For nearly a year he never paid a visit to Mexico nor did he communicate with the leaders or members there.

[Should Be Noted]: At this time, the mission not only had responsibility for all of Mexico, but also for all proselytizing efforts among the Spanish-speaking populations of the Southwest United States. Ivins performed the first translation of the temple endowment into a language other than English: in cooperation with Eduardo Balderas, he translated it into Spanish.



Antoine R. Ivins

&



Elder Melvin J. Ballard

## Ivin's handling of the situation



Ivins approached the situation aggressively. He reprimanded the members for their assertiveness in sending a petition to Salt Lake City. President Antoine Ivins returned to the United States and left them alone once again. A silent arrangement between President Ivins and President Isaias Juarez continued through the end of Ivins term in 1934.





Harold Wilcken Pratt



**Bertha Wilcken Pratt    and    Helaman Pratt**





Margarito Bautista (Valencia)



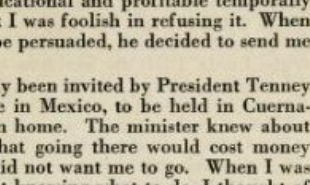
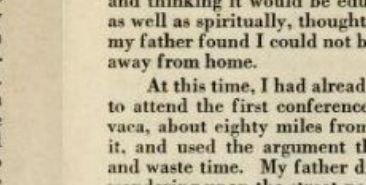
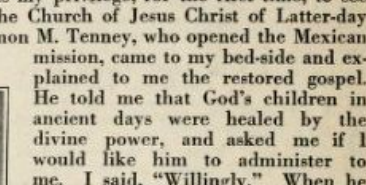


# Improvement Era

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## A Faith-Promoting Experience

By M. Bantista, a Descendant of Father Lehi

I have been asked to write a few lines concerning incidents in my life.

I was about twenty-two years old when I started investigating spiritual things. At that time, a Methodist minister was interested in my becoming a member of his church. Other pastors of different denominations had the same desire.

One day I took sick, and was seriously ill for six months. In this condition it was my privilege, for the first time, to see one of the elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Ammon M. Tenney, who opened the Mexican mission, came to my bed-side and explained to me the restored gospel.

He told me that God's children in ancient days were healed by the divine power, and asked me if I would like him to administer to me. I said, "Willingly." When he had done so, I felt as if I were in a new world.

Naturally, the spirit of investigation took hold of me, and, taking advantage of the interest of the ministers and the "Mormon" elders, I began to study and continued my search almost day and night, and I had always on hand many questions to ask. I very soon found the confusion of the sectarian world about their ideas and creeds. I did enjoy

their education, their beautiful language, their polished manners, but when they left, I was just as empty in principles as before. On the other hand, when Elder Tenney explained the doctrines of the everlasting gospel and answered my questions, though in his poorly-spoken Spanish, I shed tears of joy and my soul was full of light. So, through the mercy of my Eternal Father, I was privileged to hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and felt that there was not a more blessed boy on earth, since the Lord sent to me one of his servants who understood the principles of the gospel and knew how to plant such a knowledge in my soul.

Up to this time I did not know what the future might bring forth, as those ministers were still striving to persuade me to join their churches, especially the Methodist minister, who came to me and proposed to make me one of his fellow preachers. Besides this, he said he was willing to pay me two hundred dollars for the last four months during which time we had been engaged in discussion, and he added the promise of a good salary in the near future. I was more than surprised, and after a sharp discussion, I told him that even for a million dollars I could not preach something I did not believe.

He then went to my father and induced him to intercede for him. My father, having no knowledge whatever of the truth and thinking it would be educational and profitable temporally as well as spiritually, thought I was foolish in refusing it. When my father found I could not be persuaded, he decided to send me away from home.

At this time, I had already been invited by President Tenney to attend the first conference in Mexico, to be held in Cuernavaca, about eighty miles from home. The minister knew about it, and used the argument that going there would cost money and waste time. My father did not want me to go. When I was wandering upon the street not knowing what to do, I thought of the sacred teachings and example of my darling mother.

Allow me to say a few words about my dear mother. Though she was a Catholic, she never bowed before any image, but in time of need and sorrow, she always went into a private place and shed tears in supplication to the living Father in Heaven. How many times in my childhood days I found her in such a state, without her knowledge! My soul was full of joy to hear her prayers and petitions; for, indeed, it was the sweetest thing of my whole life. To imitate her was natural. In time, the imitation became a practice, and that practice became a habit, and that habit my Rock, and the refreshing Fountain of my poor and thirsty soul.

Coming to my subject, what could a helpless boy like me do in such a condition? What, if I had chosen to do as the minister wished me to do? So, full of hope and confidence, more than ever, in the Lord, I went to my heavenly Father in prayer. Among other things, I prayed that the Lord would soften my father's heart and that he would come to me at five o'clock in the morning in answer to my prayer and further testimony of the divinity of the truth.

While I was praying, I felt as if my body was dissolved. I felt the power of faith within my soul. With the exception of one other occasion of the same nature, I haven't enjoyed a similar privilege, which I regret very much.

When I arose from my knees, an unusual peace filled my



“Sensing his people's mood, **Isaías Juárez**, president of the mission's Mexican district, was alarmed by their preparations for the Third Convention. He could see the implications perhaps better than anyone, having struggled through nine years and many storms to lead the mission. Juárez had learned to read the pulse of the Mexican Saints accurately. He knew this would be no simple petition; quite a few Mexican Mormons were determined to settle for nothing less than a Mexican leader, however unusual even odd, such a demand was for Mormons, whose authorities are always appointed from above, never "selected" by the congregation. Juárez also sensed accurately the mood of the authorities in Salt Lake City, he knew there would be no Mexican mission president forthcoming. The church, he reasoned, would not succumb to pressure politics, and he foresaw an unfortunate and inevitable clash.”

PAGE 138 "Mormons in Mexico: Leadership, Nationalism, and the Case of the Third Convention" by F. Lamond Tullis and Elizabeth Hernandez c. 1987





Juárez was no passive fence-sitter. Having taken a position against the Third Convention (Switching sides after having been an advocate in the first two conventions for a Mexican National as Mission President), he then tried to soothe and persuade the Mexican Saints. Finally he issued a circular letter explaining that the meeting was unauthorized and out of order and that those who participated in it would be considered rebellious and therefore run the risk of excommunication. He contacted Harold Pratt posthaste and tried to sensitize him to the impending trouble and its roots. He met repeatedly with Abel Paez, trying to dissuade him. PAGE 138

"Mormons in Mexico: Leadership, Nationalism, and the Case of the Third Convention"



“Margarito Bautista's arguments began to make a lot of sense to him. If the Mexican Saints did not stand up for themselves now, when would they? Tired of what he perceived as paternalism, unnerved by what he considered second-class treatment in the kingdom of God, and convinced that the Conventionists' desires were just, Abel Páez finally supported and agreed to preside over the Third Convention. With Bautista's help, he set out to organize the proceedings.” Page 139



Margarito Bautista (Valencia)

# The Third Convention

The Third Convention convened on 26 April 1936. An observer was sent to take notes for Presidents Juárez and Pratt who did not attend. The Conventionists quickly decided that the Salt Lake City leaders had misunderstood their previous requests. Even though Harold Pratt had come from the Mormon colonies and was a Mexican citizen, he was not one by blood and race and certainly not one culturally. The Saints' new petition was intended to convey their desire for a president who was Mexican by blood and spirit (*de raza y sangre*). Reasoning that the church's General Authorities might not be aware of qualified Mexican members, the Third Convention decided to nominate a candidate. They considered several men, including Narciso Sandoval and Margarito Bautista. In the end, however, the convention settled on Abel Páez. They did not intend to demand Páez's appointment but rather to clearly inform the Salt Lake City authorities that qualified Mexicans were available. After making their main decision, the Conventionists strengthened their petition in two ways. 1st wanting their leaders to recognize their intense seriousness, they agreed to gather signatures for the petition. 2nd, the Conventionists authorized a commission composed of Abel Páez, Narciso Sandoval, and Enrique González to travel to Salt Lake City and personally present the petition and supporting documents to the Mormon church's General Authorities. Its business concluded, the Third Convention then adjourned.” - page 139 & 140





When the Observer reported back to Harold Pratt and Isaias Juarez that Paez had gone through with the convention and relayed the outcome, Isaias Juárez wept hearing that his counselor of many years had betrayed him. “Harold Pratt realized that the Mexican brethren would soon implement their decisions. Seeking to prevent that, Pratt immediately contacted Abel Páez. They set a meeting for 30 April, the Thursday following the convention.” Page 140



## Agreed Action of that Meeting

“On the appointed day Abel Páez met with Pratt, Juárez, and Bernabé Parra, the second counselor in the district presidency. After a long discussion, the men agreed on four points: 1st, Páez would terminate the Third Convention's activities, including the gathering of signatures for the petition. Moreover, Páez would thereafter take no unilateral action on any matter without the district presidency's consent, a hallowed leadership practice within the Mormon faith. 2nd, to show their unity and harmony, the four leaders- Páez, Juárez, Parra, and Pratt, would together visit all the local branches. Third, each would send a separate report of the Third Convention to the First Presidency of the Church. Fourth, all would prepare to visit Salt Lake City soon to discuss the Mexicans' feelings and desires with the General Authorities. The upcoming October general conference was set as a tentative date for the trip.” Page 140

# But Pratt and Juárez broke their agreement



“Páez was to be disappointed. As the district presidency visited the various branches, Pratt and Juárez seemed to equivocate on their position. Pratt said that he alone would take the petition to Salt Lake City at conference time. Then, instead of assuring church members that Third Convention desires would be enacted through regular church channels, Juárez and Pratt made it increasingly clear that both the convention's procedures and its goals were out of order. They suggested that Páez and his colleagues were wolves among the Lord's sheep and warned all members against listening to them. Mainline Mexican Mormons, approximately two-thirds of the membership, had made their anti-Third-Convention opinions known to Juárez and Parra, and no doubt Pratt had received communications on the issue from Salt Lake City. In any case, Conventionists were incensed. They wondered how Páez could believe that Pratt would do anything but present the Third Convention's case negatively.” pg 141



## Aftermath (almost $\frac{1}{3}$ of the Mexican Saints disaffected)

Salt Lake Leadership moved forward with Pratt as the Mission President. Páez and more than eight hundred Mexican Saints, (Almost  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the number of Mexican Saints in total) aligned themselves with the Third Convention (by now an institution with its own organized structure) and adamantly demanded a Mexican mission president. President Pratt and more than two thousand Saints who opted to remain with the mainline Mormon church (despite the objections of even some of them to the missionary system and leadership arrangements) continued with the blessings of the church's General Authorities.

# J. Reuben Clark writes the Mexican Saints and lays down the law

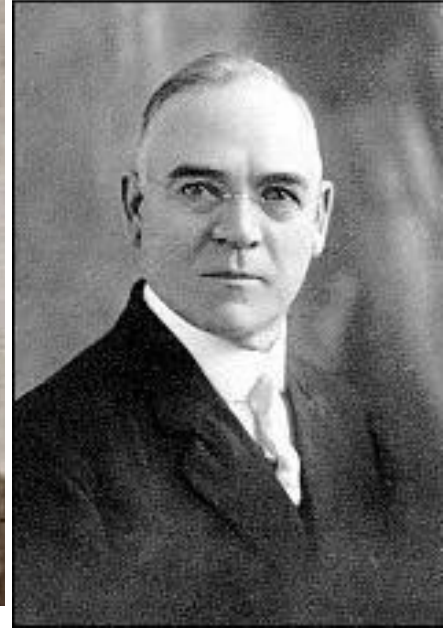
In November of 1936 the First Presidency formally responded. J. Reuben Clark, Jr., a member of the First Presidency and former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico prepared a carefully written letter to be read in all the congregations. Within, Clark declared that the people who signed the convention's petition were entirely out of order; that the mission president was not the representative of the members to the president of the church but of the president to the people, and that this representative should therefore be acquainted with all the church procedures in order to prevent disorder and disruption; that none of the church's missions were presided over by any other than men from the bosom of the church; that if the president of the church ever felt so inspired he would appoint one of their number to preside over them; that Mexicans had an unusual number of their own people in responsible positions anyway; that the Mexicans were not exclusively (among Mormons) of the blood of Israel, and that both Mexicans and North American Mormons were from the same family (that of Joseph); that all of the Book of Mormon's promises applied as well to one people as to another, and so on for fourteen typescript pages. - Page 142





## **So what does the Church do - Send Antoine Ridgeway Ivins back in to straighten it out**

The First Presidency themselves learned quite soon that the letter had solved nothing. No doubt somewhat exasperated by this time, the authorities decided to send Antoine R. Ivins to Mexico one more time to attempt a reconciliation. Although Ivins was considered the church's frontline expert on Mexico, his previous trips there had been largely unsuccessful because, as he perceived, the Mexican Mormons did not respect his authority (And for good reason, Because he was an absent Leader). So Apostle George F. Richards, one of the senior members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, was appointed to accompany Ivins. When they arrive they set up a meeting with the Third Conventionists.

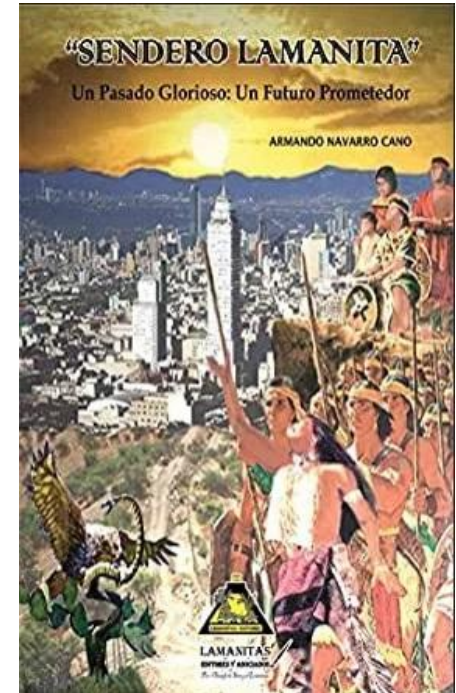


# Outcome

- Apostle George F Richards & Antoine R. Ivins never address the people and are put back on a train fearing they will be arrested by Mexican Officials.
- LDS Leaders misunderstood the 3rd Convention as imposing Paez be called rather than showing there were several worthy Mexican Nationals who potentially could be called and hence had a tone of distrust and misunderstanding and magnified the situation.
- The Church begin Disciplinary measures. On 6, 7, and 8 May 1937, courts were convened in San Pedro Mártir and the sentences handed down. Andres C. Gonzalez Jr. wrote that eight Conventionist leaders were excommunicated for rebellion (having worked against the mission authorities), insubordination (having completely disobeyed the orders of mission authorities), and apostasy (having failed to recognize the Mormon church's authority).
- A Serious divide ensued between those loyal to the mainline Church and the third Conventionists. Distrust and bad mouthing persisted and eventually deep separation between the two groups followed

# What happened to 1,200 Third Conventionists

- They organized Sunday Schools, conducted sacrament meetings, established "Mutual Improvement Associations" (MIA, the church's youth organization), and functioned very much like a normal Mormon congregation. Like the mainline church, they blessed infants, baptized children, and ordained men to the priesthood.
- Conventionist men and women were sent out as missionaries to "preach the word" to all who would listen.
- Constructed at least six new meetinghouses and, in accordance with Mormon custom, dedicated them to the Lord.
- Produced some religious literature, for example; a magazine entitled El Sendero Lamanita (The Lamanite Path), which contained articles such as "How the Gospel Came to Mexico" and "The Blessed Gentiles about which the Scriptures Speak," and reports of various convention conferences and activities



# Efforts To Bring Them Back To The Fold

Over the ensuing years the Church made significant efforts to re-unify the 3rd Conventionists Saints with the Mainline Church especially under George Albert Smith (President of the Church) and David O McKay's (President of the 12) leadership and the new Mission President Arwell Pierce. Smith was the first church president to visit Mexico while in office. He went there to complete the reconciliation of and return the "Third Conventionists" to the church.



# Arwell Pierce

- Pierce met every travail with kindness and understanding.
- He began by attending Third Convention meetings and conferences
- built friendships with Third Convention members and leaders
- tried to assist the Convention in its own programs, inviting its members to the mission home to pass on information from Salt Lake City, giving advice when asked, and distributing recently translated Church literature
- Always ready to listen and to understand, he extended personal hospitality and acceptance unconditionally.
- He often told them “the brethren are willing to give you everything you want, but not the way you want it.”
- Pierce characteristically asked them to sit near the front whereas in years past, when Conventionists had visited a mainline branch, the seats would empty of mainline members as quickly as the Conventionists sat down





# The Conventionists Come Back

Eventually 1200 Third Conventionists returned under George Albert Smith's Leadership in 1946. Several members of the Third Convention were temporarily excommunicated by the LDS Church during the period in which it was active, although most of these were changed to the lesser punishment of disfellowshipment by President George Albert Smith in 1946, signaling a compromise. Rapprochement continued with President Smith's visit to Mexico that year, resulting in most Third Conventionists returning to the fellowship of the LDS Church.



# But Not Everyone Returned

- Though scholars had believed the Third Convention movement had died out by the 1970s and '80s, anthropologist Thomas W. Murphy located an active Third Conventionist community in Ozumba, Mexico in 1996. The group was situated in Colonia Industrial, founded in 1947 as the community of Margarito Bautista, a prominent Third Conventionist. As of 2011, there are 800 people living in Colonia Industrial, and all are members of a church officially named “El Reino de Dios en su Plenitud” (The Kingdom of God in its Fullness), though adherents preferred to call themselves "Mormons." The group practiced plural marriage and communal principles of the law of consecration, and seemed to be moderately affluent. They were affiliated with the Apostolic United Brethren Mormon fundamentalist church, and saw Owen Allred as a prophet.
- Another Third Conventionist group about 300 strong, also rediscovered by Murphy in 1997, exists in San Gabriel Ometochtla, Puebla. It is called La Iglesia de los Santos de la Plenitud de los Tiempos (The Church of Jesus Christ of the Saints of the Fullness of Times).





Group photo of  
Abel Páez,  
Bernabé Parra,  
Arwell Pierce,  
and Isáias  
Juárez,  
post-reunification







Arwell L. Pierce  
baptizing with Abel  
Páez behind



Abel Páez, Bernabé Parra,  
Arwell L. Pierce, and Isáías  
Juárez in front of aloe plant



Abel Páez as a  
young missionary



A Blessing given by Patriarch Richard S. Horne on the head  
of Margarito Bautista, son of Jose de la Luz Bautista and  
Petra Valencia; born Atlantia, Mexico, June 10, 1881.

Brother Margarito Bautista:

Thy heart has been touched by the spirit of revelation from  
the Lord, that it has enabled thee to accept the Gospel of the  
Lord Jesus Christ, to associate thyself with His chosen people.  
Thy joys in the further associations thou wilt have with the  
Latter-day Saints will be greatly multiplied because of that  
which thou shalt learn from them. The Gospel will be made plainer;  
and as thou shalt understand it better, it will be dear to thy  
heart; and the blessings connected with the establishment of  
Zion upon the earth will be so increased in thy heart, that thou  
wilt rejoice day after day in laboring for the building up of  
the kingdom of God upon this earth. Especially will the sacred,  
holy work of the endowment for the dead be dear to thee, and  
will afford thee the greatest happiness and delight of thy life.  
Thy genealogy will be given to thee as thou shalt need it, as  
fast as the work is done. For those whose names thou hast  
secured, other names will be given, some in a miraculous way, to  
convince thee that this work is of the Lord, and that thou  
hast His sanction in doing it. Thou wilt have power among thy  
fellows, especially of thine own nation, to do a great amount  
of good in bringing souls unto Christ. Thou shalt never be weary  
in this mission of life, its duties will be pointed out to thee,  
and thou shalt not be hindered. When thou shalt open thy mouth  
to preach righteousness unto the people, the Holy Spirit will  
give thee utterance, and thy testimonies will be strong and  
powerful and convincing. Many will believe. Thou shalt have the  
joy and the pleasure of knowing that thy labors are crowned with  
such wonderful success, and thou shalt never weary therein. Thou  
wilt be prepared in the land of Zion. For long, the way will be  
opened that thou canst either return to thy native land, or dis-  
pose of thy possessions there in such a way that thou canst secure  
a home in these mountains.

As thou hast within thy veins the blood of Ephraim and Ma-  
nasse, I seal upon thee the blessings belonging to this great  
lineage, seal thee up unto everlasting life, confer upon thee  
power to work miracles in healing in thine administrations, power  
to go forth in the morning of the first resurrection with the  
just and the glorified of God's children, through thy faithfulness  
here, in the worthy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Richard S. Horne, Patriarch.*

Wilford Ward, Salt Lake, Jan. 17, 1915.

Margarito Bautista's  
patriarchal blessing,  
1915 January 17



Arwell L. Pierce and Mary D. Pierce, 1950 March 07