

Life Sketch of Louis B. Reynolds
By Benjamin Baker

Louis Bernard Reynolds occupies an important place in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Born to Josephine and Albert Reynolds in Greenwood County, South Carolina, on February 23, 1917, his father Albert tragically died in a hunting accident just several years after he was born. Providentially, though, Louis and his widowed mother moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1923, where they were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist faith through an evangelistic series by Thomas Rowe. From there Reynolds attended Oakwood Junior College (now Oakwood University), majoring in theology and graduating in 1936, and marrying Ann Bernice Johnson a couple of years later in 1938. The couple had two daughters, Dawn and Joan. Reynolds was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1941.

A trailblazer and pioneer, Reynolds made history in 1945 by becoming the first black editor of the oldest black religious periodical in America, *Message*. This appointment was made on the inauguration of regional conferences, signaling the assumption of black Adventists to positions of leadership in a church that had hitherto largely denied them the right. Reynolds was *Message* editor for the next 15 years, working from the magazine's offices at the Southern Publishing Association in Nashville, Tennessee. While in Nashville, for a number of years Reynolds was also chaplain of Riverside Sanitarium, the first Adventist-run hospital for African Americans, and earned a B.A. from Fisk University.

After *Message*, Reynolds was the district leader for the Northeastern Conference for three years. He next went to the General Conference in 1962 as the associate director of the Sabbath School Department, and while in Washington, D.C., he earned an M.A. from Howard University in 1968, and was awarded an honorary doctorate from Union Baptist Seminary (Birmingham, Alabama) in 1970. In his final two years at the General Conference, Reynolds was a general field secretary.

Reynolds was the inaugural scriptwriter of *Breath of Life Ministries*, the first black religious television program, joining an early production team of C.D. Brooks and Walter Arties, with music by the *Breath of Life Quartet*, and features from Wintley Phipps, Ullanda Innocent-Palmer, Eleanor Wright, and T. Marshall Kelly.

A prolific author, Reynolds published numerous books: *Dawn of a Brighter Day* (1946), *Little Journeys Into Storyland* with C. L. Paddock (1947), *Look to the Hills* (1960), *Great Texts From Romans* (1972), *Bible Answers* with Robert Pierson (1973), and *We Have Tomorrow* (1984). This final volume is among the most important and complete works on the history of black Adventism, and cemented Reynolds as an important Adventist historian.

Louis B. Reynolds died on September 12, 1983, in London, Ontario, Canada, after an extraordinary and faithful life of service to the church and world.