

## TWO KINDS OF DISAPPOINTMENT

We shall make a distinction between focussed disappointment and unfocussed, i.e. generalised, disappointment. This is the difference between a disappointment when a definite time is expected for the fulfilment and an extended disappointment when no specific date is known from which to start. In this latter case even if one does not claim a particular time, or stretch of time, some time or length of time is held in mind. It is then one begins to think of disappointment. This time or stretch of time means that in the one case disappointment is precipitated by the failure of the event to take place at a given point. In the other case time disappointment is extended and continues, generation after generation, decade after decade and century after century.

The Adventist claims as a matter of principle that one cannot and so does not give a specific date for the Advent, nor assert a length of time within which the Advent will take place.

The Adventist now has often spoken of what I shall call an extended expectation. This implies that after a time of waiting for the Advent which has not materialised we must speak of 'delay'. Not only have some Adventists thus spoken, but they have then searched for the cause of the delay and found it in the failure to be ready for the Advent on the part of the Adventists. To speak of delay assumes that one knows the time of the expected event. It also assumes, perhaps without realising it, that one knows how long the interim period will be within which the period of waiting will be over. The Adventist denies that this can be known and at the same time then speaks inconsistently of 'delay'.

So let's consider this. We can set out the problem in a series of steps.

1. To speak of delay requires knowledge of the expected time of arrival. That means one knows the length of time from the present expression of hope to the event of the Advent, the interim period between confession of hope and the realisation of that hope. \*

\*See the article 'Delay'.

2. Adventists deny as a matter of doctrine that they can know the time of the Advent.

3 But any assertion of delay must start with an assumed belief that the expected event should have happened before now or that it cannot be understood as 'soon'. What happens here is that one has in one's mind, or in the background of one's mind, that enough time has passed and it should already have happened even years ago. That means one assumes a particular time when the coming was to have taken place, or assumes that the limit of the extent of time to take place before the 'soon' coming has now passed.

4. There is thus a basic inconsistency between saying that we do not know the time of the event or the length of time we may have to wait and that there has been a delay. To speak of a delay requires that we assume some point in time, some length of time to reckon with. To speak of delay one has to make an assumption which on principle the

Adventist has firmly rejected and so is not allowed to make, namely that we are able to say that sufficient time has passed so that we can assert that there has been a delay and that we must live with disappointment. Making that unwarranted assumption means that the disappointment on the part of the Adventist continues. We are still on earth, not in heaven! We continue to assert, perhaps now with even greater emphasis that the Advent will be 'soon', while we know full well that we have been living for a very long time in disappointment that it has not happened as we had hoped 'soon'.

4. So we distinguish focussed disappointment from unfocussed disappointment. The 'Great Disappointment of 1844 is an example of the former, where one had to admit that one was wrong. One set a time and the event did not happen. The continuing disappointment among present day Adventists that the Advent has not yet taken place is an example of the latter, the continuing unfocussed and so generalised disappointment. But in this case one does not come to the understanding that one might be wrong. This kind of disappointment finds a way of maintaining the hope and still asserting the event is 'soon', even at the same time asserting an extended delay. But at what cost. As time stretches on and on one generation after another the idea of 'soon' becomes empty and leads to confusion and doubt.

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