Wednesday, September 15, 2004

Asked an acquaintance if she was some type of minister or leader in a church, and if that was a Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church. I wondered why she was so quiet about it and understood that it was because she didn’t want to proselytize. She believed that people should be free to come to their beliefs in their own way and time. Also, since there are many stereotypes and misconceptions about Seventh-day Adventists (SDAs), she didn’t want to be labeled or judged based on those. It seemed as if she had seen my curiosity and was waiting for me to ask.

Tuesday, September 21

I’ve been feeling drawn toward the solitary lately, so I read Slattery’s book on prayer and monasticism. “Prayer...may be ...an interior disposition toward the sacred in the ordinary events of the day.” It is “about presence, about learning to be present, even to be present to presence” (17). He also quoted Thomas Merton (Contemplative Prayer) on the paradox of monastic life—in seeming abandonment of the world, the person is then “able to listen more intently to the deepest and most neglected voices that proceed from its inner depths” (25). “Prayer is an attempt to reach that deep silence” (29). It seems like there is too much going on and I need more silence outwardly before I can reach the inward quiet.
**Friday, October 8**

I read more on one of the Adventist sites, and like the Friends, they too educate for peace, justice, and reconciliation, and believe in changing the root causes of poverty. We have many testimonies in common, but we approach the Bible differently, and my understanding of Liberal Quakers is that we extend marriage to gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered people and do not believe that non-heterosexuality is a sin.

Pierre Lacout wrote that, “There is silence even in action. We are reaching this silence when we look beyond appearances, when we broaden our horizons…” (5). Then, “Contemplative silence is a special form of attention.... Attention is seeing with the eyes of the spirit.... Contemplative silence is a look turned inwards to the deep realities of the soul” (7). A friend and I have planned a visit to a local SDA church. I suppose I am paying a particular kind of attention in learning about the SDA beliefs.

**Friday, October 22**

I have realized that I do practice the concept of Sabbath by reserving Friday nights for myself and Saturday afternoons for my contemplative prayer time. Also by trying to incorporate rest into each day. It means I say “no” to a lot of invitations.

**Saturday, October 23**

I attended a SDA worship service with a friend. Everyone was friendly and welcoming, introducing themselves and either shaking hands or hugging us. I noticed that some women wore makeup and others didn’t. Only a few wore wedding bands; most didn’t. The service was
very informal. The sermon was about tests for “true” prophets. I don’t think I know what it means to be a prophet.

**Sunday, October 24**

After Friends Meeting, I feel so much more at home with and appreciative of this group of Friends. They are accepting, dedicated to equality and social justice, lacking in creeds and dogma. They understand that there is not one right way but that there is much to learn from others’ spiritual paths. They acknowledge that there is that of God in each of us, that we are all “children of the Light.” Being mystics—those who experience the overwhelming presence of God directly—they know that the written (or verbal) word is only an approximation of our experience of God. Thus, “scripture” must be interpreted by each person, as each is led by the Spirit—there is not one meaning. Friends are dedicated to integrity and to living out the example of Jesus (and others) yet do not evangelize—they help others without needing to convert them.

**Tuesday, November 2**

I was sad to hear that the SDA church ostracizes gays and lesbians who come out—they lose membership and are shunned. Even if it were more a case of “hate the sin, love the sinner,” that seems awful to me too, classifying same-sex love, attraction, and relationships as sinful, not of God. I understand and experience myself as having a “God-given nature,” even as (especially as?) a lesbian.