

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE PRACTICES OF THE MYSTICS
SADHU SUNDAR SINGH AND THE DESERT FATHERS AND THE
IMPLICATIONS OF APPROPRIATING CHRISTIAN MYSTIC PRACTICES IN
THE CHURCH TODAY**

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*The opinions expressed in this dissertation do not necessarily reflect the views
of the South African Theological Seminary.*

DECLARATION

I hereby acknowledge that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

Clayton Parks

09/01/2015

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SUMMARY

This research seeks to answer the question: How do the spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers compare with each other and what are the implications of appropriating Christian mystic practices in the Church today? This study utilizes the method of phenomenology to solve the research problem by identifying and analyzing relevant literary data in order to explore God's interactions with man through Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers.

First, a literature review explores the current status of scholarly research into the personalities and histories of the legendary Christian figures of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. A literature review reveals that within several areas of current scholarship, gaps appear and no substantial inquiry regarding the similarities and differences of spiritual practices between Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers is found. Therefore, the need for research into this specific area finds validation.

Second, a survey of the lives and theology of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers is provided in order to introduce readers to the personalities and histories of the legendary Christian figures.

Third, a detailed analysis is conducted of the textual examples of documented prayer and meditation, visions and miracles, and self-deprivation undertaken by Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers.

Fourth, a comparative analysis of the spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers is provided, followed by a critical assessment of Christian mystic practices appropriated in the Church today.

Finally, a summary is provided of the research findings, including the theological and practical value of studying the spiritual practices of these Christian legends, as well as the pros and cons of appropriating Christian mystic practices in the Church today. Recommendations are then made regarding the benefits of utilizing said practices for deepening one's personal spiritual life and the dangers of appropriating unbiblical mystic practices in the Church today.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In 1906, a man by the name of Sundar Singh, dressed in the garb of a Hindu holy man, set out on a journey as a new Christian. His journey was filled with unexplainable happenings, which continued until his mysterious death in 1929. Singh gained the fascination of the world through his preaching, writings, legendary meditation, and acts of sacrificial benevolence, visions and miracles. Many well-known Christians who lived during and after the life of Sadhu Sundar Singh were influenced by his life and writings, including C.S. Lewis and his contemporaries (Lindskoog, 1996).

Many authors and researchers have undertaken providing accurate biographical accounts of Sadhu Sundar Singh's life, including Appasamy (1956), Davey (1963), and Thompson (2007). The most widely accepted biography of Sadhu Sundar Singh is by C.F. Andrews (1934), a personal friend during his lifetime. Others have provided collections of excerpts of Sundar Singh's teachings and writings, such as the works by Thyagaraju (1980) and Moore (2005). To date, very little research has been carried out on the specific subject of Sundar Singh's ascetic spiritual practices. Appasamy and Streeter (1921) have provided a topical study of Sundar Singh's mystical theology but little depth was carried out in the study of Sundar Singh's ascetic spiritual practices of prayer and meditation, visions and miracles, and his voluntary self-deprivation beyond the topical mention of these practices. Although Sundar Singh's practices were definitively counter-cultural to the spiritual practices that predominated the Christian culture in his lifetime, his peculiar ascetic practices could be compared to monastic Christians that lived twelve-hundred years before Sundar Singh's life; the Desert Fathers¹.

¹ In this thesis the term "Desert Fathers" will be capitalized to denote a particular group, instead of referring to the fathers of physical children who lived in a desert. It can be argued that "Desert Fathers" should be capitalized, since most books and scholarly papers written about them refer to them in capital letters.

Around 270 AD, St. Anthony is credited with launching a movement of desert dwelling Christians, which today is better known as that of the monastic Desert Fathers (Waddell, 1998). Through the ascetic practices of Anthony and other Fathers, many others joined the growing monastic movement. In the desert, the monastic Christians withdrew from society, practicing hesychasm (stillness), charity and forgiveness, and scripture recitation. From the third century to the sixth century, the monastic Desert Fathers in the Egyptian desert of Thebes continued to present an alternative lifestyle to that of their Greco-Roman city counterparts.

Many scholars such as Ward (1975) and Waddell (1998) have provided in-depth research into the ascetic lifestyles and writings of the Desert Fathers' movement. Others including as Merton (2012), Nouwen (1991), and McGuckin (1998) have provided excellent studies and commentaries on the teachings and ascetic spiritual practices of the Desert Fathers and demonstrated how their teachings and practices can be applicable to Christians in the 20th and 21st centuries. To the knowledge of the researcher, no one to date has surveyed the ascetic practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh nor compared his practices to those of the Desert Fathers, especially in the specific areas of prayer and meditation, visions and miracles, and self-deprivation.

This dissertation comprises the studies of the spiritual practices of the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh and seeks to illuminate where those practices coincide and where they differ. Through a survey of the essential texts of both the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh, a comparison of the areas of prayer and meditation, visions and miracles, and self-deprivation will be conducted. After identifying literary examples within the essential texts in each spiritual practice area, the examples will then be analyzed for similarities and differences in the areas of how, when, where, and why particular spiritual individuals chose to practice their corresponding ascetical practices. Through identification and

Although there was no "organization" called "Desert Fathers", the hermits that lived during this period had an enormous impact on Christianity and hence were given this honorable title.

analysis of the spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, a greater depth of knowledge can be gained in understanding the often-deemed mysterious ways of Sundar Singh. Furthermore, the research will offer insight as to how the spiritual aspirant and reader can improve their own practices in-light of the two seemingly distinct traditions of the Desert Fathers and Singh.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Unfortunately, no research has been undertaken to survey and analyze the ascetic practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. To complicate the matter, both the lives of Singh and the Desert Fathers are generally unknown to the modern-day Christian, especially in the areas where Singh and the Desert Fathers share similarities and differences in the ways they practiced ascetic spirituality. Without the knowledge of the lives and practices of Singh and the Desert Fathers, members of the historical “great cloud of witnesses” (Heb. 12:1)- - the modern-day Christian-- forfeit the opportunity to learn and to engage in similar spiritual practices, giving up the possibility of deepening their own faith and spiritual practices.

The dissertation is directed by the main research question and then is followed by the related sub-questions (Smith 2008:127). The main research problem is articulated as follows:

- How do the spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers compare with each other and what are the implications of appropriating Christian mystic practices in the Church today?

The sub-questions that will guide research to assist in understanding the main problem are as follows:

- In what ways do the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh differ from those practiced by the Desert Fathers?
- Are there similarities and differences in the methods of prayer and

meditation utilized by Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers?

- Through seeing visions and performing miracles, do the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh have parallel experiences in these areas?
- In what ways are the acts of self-deprivation undertaken by Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers similar to each other?
- What are the pros and cons of appropriating Christian mystic practices in the church today?

1.3 Objectives

The current research is designed to achieve three fundamental goals. Firstly, the objective of the research is to introduce readers to the personalities and histories of the legendary Christian figures of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. Secondly, this study aims to survey, and analyze textual examples of documented prayer and meditation, visions and miracles, and self-deprivation undertaken by Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. Finally, the study will offer an evaluation of found similarities and differences in the ascetical practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers and the implications of appropriating Christian mystic practices in the Church today. The theological and practical value of studying the spiritual practices of these Christian legends will be provided as well as recommendations for deepening one's personal spiritual practices in the modern context. If the above goals are to be achieved, the following guidelines will be implemented:

The main objective:

- Compare the spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers and determine the implications of appropriating Christian mystic practices in the Church today.

Secondary objectives:

- Present accurate and unbiased historical research of the lives of Singh and the Desert Fathers.

- Thoroughly investigate literary-based data, which will assist in providing accurate accounts of the ascetical practices of Singh and the Desert Fathers.
- Accurately analyze literary-based data for similarities and differences in how these practices were carried out.
- Identify and propose practical and theological value of understanding Singh and the Desert Fathers' ascetical practices.
- Thoughtfully recommend modern resources from various traditions to utilize for the purpose fostering personal spiritual practices.
- Critically assess the pros and cons of appropriating Christian mystic practices in the church today.

1.4 Delimitations

In researching the problem, the historical credibility of the hagiography or the legends of both the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh will not be examined. Only the Desert Fathers of the third through sixth centuries will be researched with primary focus given to the fathers of the Egyptian Thebes region. The researcher will make no judgments on whether the spiritual practices of either the Desert Fathers or Sadhu Sundar Singh are “right” or “wrong” based upon the findings of the study. The traditions and the practices of the Desert Mothers will not be researched in this study. Only the highest regarded and accessible English translated literary sources of the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh will be utilized. Prayer and contemplation by the author will accompany the reading of the writings of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers in order to offer respect toward the intended purpose(s) of the writings. It should also be stated that there is acknowledged limitations in unbiased scholarly resources on Sundar Singh as the number of authored resources are limited.²

² Heiler (2012:12) states regarding the many scholars that have been critical of Singh: “If the Sadhu's opponents, who have often declaimed against him with polemical bitterness, have fastened on other points as well, that is because, blinded by their own theories, they have completely lost sight of the most elementary rules of historical criticism, and indeed they have even gone further than this. The Jesuits attack the Sadhu fearing lest the fact of his sanctity should weaken the claim of the Roman Church to be the only home of saints; Modernist Protestants, on the other hand, attack him because they fear that the Sadhu's “miracles” may confirm the belief in the miracles of the Bible which they reject.”

1.5 Design

The research design that is best suited to solve the research problem is through the use of the phenomenological method. The method of phenomenology aims to set aside preconceived ideas about a thing and instead focus on the 'things themselves' (Westphal, 1997:143). Phenomenology focuses on characteristics of God that can be seen and experienced in the lives of human beings. C.J. Bleeker distinguishes three types of phenomenology of religion (Eliade, 1987):

- 'The descriptive phenomenology that restricts itself to the systematisation of religious phenomena.'
- 'The typological phenomenology that formulates the different types of religion.'
- 'The specific sense of phenomenology that investigates the essential structures and meanings of religious phenomena.'

The study utilizes the method of phenomenology in the specific sense to solve the research problem by identifying and analyzing relevant literary data in order to explore God's interactions with man through Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. An attempt will be made to identify the recurrent structures of religious phenomena (religious and mystic practices) as advocated by Singh and the Desert Fathers and to understand the meaning of these phenomena, such as the individual's experience of God.

The method of Narrative Analysis is also a method utilized in this study. Kim Etherington (2007:29) defines Narrative Analysis as a means to systematically gather and represent the stories of individuals as told by them, which often challenges traditional and modernist notions of truth, reality, knowledge and personhood. Etherington (2007) defines the importance of using the Narrative Analysis when inquiring into one's story because:

- Stories are reconstructions of the person's experiences.
- Stories are remembered and told at a particular point in their lives, to a particular audience and for a particular purpose.

- Stories that are told do not represent 'life as lived' but rather the person's re-presentations of those life experiences as told to the particular audience.

This method is incorporated into the study in the process of obtaining narrative knowledge from the content and meaning of the stories involving Singh and the Desert Fathers in the specific areas of mystic practices.

In this thesis, the characteristics of God and how He interacts with Christian mystics will be explored. Within the chosen design, chapters 1 and 2 will introduce the format of the thesis, the research problem, and the methodology in attempting to solve the research problem. Chapters 1 and 2 will also provide a review of relevant literature. Chapters 3 and 4 will utilize scholarly resources in providing an introduction and historical background to the lives of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. Chapters 5-7 will identify and analyze several examples of ascetic practices found in the lives of Singh and the fathers in the areas of prayer and meditation, visions and miracles, and self-deprivation. Literary analysis of data found within the primary and non-primary texts will be employed specifically to identify examples and analyze in how, when, where, and why Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers carried out spiritual practices in the three ascetic practice areas.

The findings from the literary research portion will be analyzed for similarities and differences in the practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, and then conclusions will be offered. Chapter 8 will provide a summary of the comparative analysis of the spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers as well as a critical assessment of Christian mystic practices appropriated in the Church today including its benefits and dangers. The final chapter (9) will include the theological and practical value of studying the spiritual practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers and make recommendations regarding the pros and cons of appropriating Christian mystic practices in the Church today. A concluding section will put forth the validity and significance of the conclusions as well as the author's recommendations regarding furthering one's spiritual practices.

1.6 Definitions

Frequently used terminology throughout the research will be personally defined as follows:

- “Hagiography”- worshipful and idealizing biography of venerated individuals, often saints.
- “Meditation”- the practice of concentrated focus to enhance personal and spiritual recognition of God.
- “Miracle”- an event that appears inexplicable by nature and, in result, is held to be a divine act of God.
- “Prayer”- the act of making a reverent petition, request, or entreaty to God.
- “Self-deprivation”- the act of denying one’s self the material benefits considered to be basic necessities by the broader society.
- “Vision”- something seen in a dream, trance, or ecstasy that conveys a supernatural revelation.
- “Practice”- to do or perform often, or habitually
- “Ascetical”-self-denial as a measure of personal and spiritual discipline
- “Spiritual”-of, or relation to, sacred matters

1.7 Hypothesis

Within the research field, a hypothesis is a tentative and intelligent guess by the researcher that is put forth for the purpose of directing one’s thinking toward the solution of research problem (Leedy, 1993:75). The researcher believes that this study, in its analysis of the literary sources of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, will yield numerous, parallel examples of spiritual practices in the areas of prayer and meditation, vision and miracles, and self-deprivation. In the area of prayer and meditation, the researcher believes that the greatest similarities in ascetic practices of the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh will be found in this researched area. The researcher believes that the greatest level of marked differences in the practices of the Desert Fathers and Sundar Singh will come in the area of visions and miracles.

1.8 Presuppositions

It will be assumed by the researcher that readers will be familiar with secular and religious terminology consisting namely of “spiritual practice,” “fasting,” “monasticism” and basic world geography. The author’s personal bias, having an Eastern Orthodox faith tradition background, should be acknowledged as this particular faith tradition generally accepts, incorporates, and promotes ascetic spiritual practices and mysticism.

1.9 Methodology

In attempting to provide an overview of the life of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the history of the Desert Fathers in chapters 3 and 4, resources such as biographical and autobiographical accounts, journals, dictionaries, and encyclopedias will be employed. In the overview of Sundar Singh’s life, special attention will be given to Singh’s rearing, conversion, travels, and death. In comprising the history of the Desert Fathers, special attention will be given to the history of the monastic movement, background to the corresponding literary resources, overview of ascetic spiritual practices of the Desert Fathers, and short biographies of notable Desert Father personalities.

In chapters 5 through 7, qualitative literary analysis will be utilized to survey instances of the practices of prayer and meditation, visions and miracles, and self-deprivation that are found in the primary texts that record the lives and theology of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. The primary texts that will be utilized for the analysis of Singh’s ascetical practices are the following: *At the Master’s Feet*; *With and Without Christ*; *Wisdom of the Sadhu*; *Reality and Religion: Meditations on God, Man and Nature*; *Meditations on Various Aspects of the Spiritual Life*; *Visions of the Spiritual World*. The seven primary texts that will be utilized for the analysis of the Desert Fathers’ ascetical practices are the following: *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Apophtegmata Patrum); *The Lives of the Desert Fathers* (Historia Monachorum in Aegypto); *The Lausiatic History* by Palladius of Galatia; *The Life of St. Anthony* by St. Athanasius; *Philokalia* (Vol. I); and *The Conferences* (Collationes Patrum in Scetica Eremo), and *The Institutes*

(Institutes of the Coenobia) by John Cassian.

In the surveyed textual data of the ascetic practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, a chapter will be aligned with specific ascetic practices: prayer and meditation; visions and miracles; and self-deprivation. Each researched ascetic practice area will have four corresponding sections (two each for Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers) that will be surveyed for recorded textual data contained in the primary texts as well as textual instances observed outside of the primary texts. A sample (not exhaustive) quantity of recorded textual data will then be grouped into specific areas highlighting how, when, where, and why these spiritual practices were carried out by Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers.

Upon completion of compiling and reviewing the data from the textual resources, the recorded data in the three ascetic practice areas will then be analyzed for found similarities and differences in how, when, where, and why Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers carried out these practices throughout the recorded accounts of their lives.

1.10 Summary of chapters 2-8

The following summary of chapters 2-8 highlights the emphasis and details of each chapter. The research design that is best suitable to solve the research problem is a version of the method of phenomenology that explores God's interactions with man through the persons of Singh and the Desert Fathers. Within the chosen design, chapter 1 puts forth an introduction to the format of the dissertation. Chapter 2 will provide a review of past and current scholarship surrounding the lives and theology of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. In chapters 3 and 4, scholarly resources will be reviewed in order provide an introduction and historical background to the lives of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. Chapter 5-7 will identify and analyze several examples of ascetic practices within the utilized textual examples from the lives and theology of Singh and the Desert Fathers: chapter 5 will analyze examples of prayer and meditation, chapter 6 will analyze examples of visions and miracles, and chapter 7 will analyze examples of self-deprivation. Within each of these chapters the

textual findings from the literary research portion will be analyzed for similarities and differences in the practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. Conclusions of said analysis will then be offered in the first portion of chapter 8, followed by a critical assessment of Christian mystic practices appropriated in the Church today. Chapter 9 will present the validity and significance of found conclusions, followed by the summary of research findings. Next, the theological and practical value of studying the spiritual practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers will be put forth and recommendations regarding Christian mystic practices appropriated in the Church today will then be provided. The author's recommendations regarding the furthering of one's spiritual practices will then be provided as well as the validity of the research's conclusions and the contribution of the research to practical theology.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a review of scholarship that is recent, credible and relevant regarding the lives and ascetic theology of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers (Mouton 2001:87). As stated in Chapter 1, the scope of this research involves a detailed examination of the lives of Singh and the Desert Fathers' monastic movement in order to contextualize the research in the examination of Singh and the Desert Fathers' ascetic spiritual practices. Section 2.1 of this chapter provides an introduction of the purpose of the literature review. Section 2.2 of this chapter will provide an analysis of the scholarship regarding the Desert Fathers monasticism movement. In the third section of this chapter (2.3), an analysis of the scholarship comprising the life and theology of Sadhu Sundar Singh will be addressed. Observations from sections 2.2 and 2.3 will be synthesized in section 2.4. The relevance of the literature review to the topic of the research will then be discussed in section 2.5, followed by an introduction to hagiography in 2.6, then culminating in a succinct recap of the entire chapter in 2.7.

The literature that is reviewed in this section provides the framework in which to avoid the duplication of past research findings, then to interact with more recent findings, and then finally identify gaps within the research regarding the lives and spiritual practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers (Smith 2008:223).

The lives and theology of the Desert Fathers movement and Sundar Singh is the subject of several studies that are worth mentioning. Historical analysis of the Desert Fathers movement have been conducted (cf. *Pall.*, *HL.*; Palladius & Clarke, 2010; *Vit. Ant. 2*; Athanasius 2010; *Hist. Mon. Aeg.*; Ward & Russell 2006; et al) that provide well-documented treatment of the monastic movement's roots, and how the movement changed throughout history. Others have offered

authoritative scholarship (Kauffman 2009; Ware, Palmer, & Sherrard 2011; Ward 2003; Nouwen 2006; Merton 2012; Carrigan 2010; et al) in the gathering of the wisdom sayings of the Desert Fathers, and their applicability to the modern-day reader. Regarding the life and theology of Sadhu Sundar Singh, the scholarship conducted by Charles Moore (2005) remains authoritative as a resource, outside of the scholarship authored by Singh himself.

The literature accessed for this review includes books, book reviews, journals, unpublished papers and articles, as well as various online sources such as online bookstores, Google scholar, and various other databases. The result is a plethora of literature regarding the lives and theology of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. The intent of this review is to identify and expound upon areas of deficiency regarding the lives and theology of Singh and the Desert Fathers. In the identification of such gaps in research, the purpose and the value of this research are validated and the value of further examination is substantiated.

2.2 Review of scholarship on the Egyptian monasticism movement

As a movement shrouded in few direct historical resources, the Desert Fathers' movement is usually defined as beginning with the historical person of St. Anthony the Great. Much of everything that is known about the father of the desert monastic movement, St. Anthony, is due to the biographical account authored by St. Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 296-373). Athanasius' *Life of St. Anthony* (*Vit. Ant.* 2; Athanasius, 2010) written in Greek around 360, records Anthony's birth and his upbringing to wealthy landowner parents. *Life of St. Anthony* also recounts Anthony's renouncing of wealth and journey to the Egyptian desert to live as a hermit. It contains both narrative and presents doctrinal content in the form of discourses that are attributed to Anthony. In these accounts, Anthony is witnessed teaching his pupils, healing sicknesses, exorcising demons, and engaging in debates with philosophers. The narrative accounts put forth the monk's importance to separate him (or herself) from the world, both geographically and spiritually, while repeatedly emphasizing not the monk's actions of self-denial but rather the work of God in the monastic.

Similarly, Palladius (c. 365-431), a disciple of Evagrius of Pontus, provides an authoritative first-hand account of the Desert Father monastic movement in his *The Lausiatic History* (*Pall., HL.*; Palladius & Clarke, 2010), which provides seventy-one biographical sections of the wisdom and narratives of the early desert ascetics. These texts clearly describe the infrastructure of early monasticism as well as the intricacies of the monks' daily lives such as the desert monasticism movement's emphasis on the practices of liturgies, hospitality, and labor. The texts document not only the lives of monastic individuals but also the reasons why the monks succeeded and failed in their endeavors to live in ways of self-denial with the goal of achieving greater intimacy with God.

The researchers Ward and Russell (2006) provide an authoritative translation of the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, offering an introduction to the travelogue of fourth century pilgrims who traveled from Palestine to Egypt writing on the lives of twenty-six Desert Fathers, offering accounts of miraculous stories of the fathers practicing clairvoyance, their control over animals, exorcisms, and healing of the sick. The themes of serving God and becoming more Christ-like are common throughout the content of these particular Desert Fathers narratives. Some of the passages are short directions in spiritual wisdom usually emphasizing humility, while others appear to be direct observations of monks or other stories that were passed down to the monks. The book also provides a useful introduction by Ward that introduces the early history of Egyptian monasticism, which helps the modern reader to better appreciate the ancient Christian mystics. Another authoritative offering by Ward (2003) provides an adequate translation of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, which offers two thousand sayings from 131 of the early Desert Fathers. These sayings are arranged in Greek alphabetical order by the names of particular Desert Fathers, which challenge readers in obtaining a nature of life dedicated to Christ alone and voluntarily having the willingness to disregard every worldly comfort in their pursuit of Christ. Carrigan (2010) also provides informative research into the historical lives of Anthony and Paul of Thebes, while providing selected biographies and sayings of the Desert Fathers (and mothers).

Others have provided authoritative scholarship in the collections of sayings of desert monasticism such as in the *Philokalia* (Ware, Palmer, & Sherrard 2011).

Part of a four-volume set, the *Philokalia* (vol. 1) compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, is the culmination of wisdom filled teachings of Christians who followed the example of St. Anthony as they withdrew into the deserts of Egypt and Palestine as the church began to be closely aligned with the Empire during the 4th century. The *Philokalia* is highly regarded today as the authoritative spiritual manual for Christians of the Eastern tradition. Other researchers (Kauffman, 2009; Nouwen, 2006; Merton, 2012) have provided resources to how ancient monasticism of the Desert Fathers can be applicable to modern-day Christians. Nouwen (2006) contends that the Desert Fathers focused their lives on the spiritual path of three steps, which include solitude, silence, and prayer. He also provides recommendations to the modern readers on how to implement such spiritual practices into their lives. Merton (2012) emphasizes benevolence as a pillar of the Desert Fathers' lives, while Waddell (1998) highlights the applicability of the Desert Fathers' faith, humility, and compassion as models for the modern-day Christian. Kauffman (2009) offers a historical account of the Desert Fathers movement, and how the movement morphed throughout history into such modern-day movements like New-Monasticism.

2.3 Review of scholarship on the life and theology of Sadhu Sundar Singh

The life, teachings, and spirituality of Sadhu Sundar Singh have often been marked with mystery, as a relatively small amount of resources exist on the topic of his life and theology. Within the literary accounts of Singh's life, contemporaries and admirers of Singh (Andrews 1934; Appasamy 1956; Parker 2010; Thompson 2007; et al.) have offered non-scholarly and widely disbursed accounts into the introduction of Singh's life, theology, and miracles. Others (Cartwright 2008; Davey 1963; Kelso 1931; Little Brothers of Sadhu 2010; et al.) have offered biographical accounts utilizing previous supplied biographical accounts, as well as autobiographical accounts written by Singh, in order to offer readers more dynamic and complete accounts. Others such as Heiler (2012) offer critical research into the legend and historical accounts of Sundar Singh's life, and he critiques Parker and Thompson's biographies of Singh. Moore (2005) remains arguably the most authoritative and contemporary resource on the life of Singh,

as he weaves together a biographical account of Singh's life, as well as selected excerpts from Singh's writings, including a sampling of his teachings, parables, and poems. This work was one of the foremost resources to be mass published and helped to introduce Western readers to the life and teachings of Singh.

2.4 Synthesis of the scholarship review

Numerous publications were accessed during the review of literature of the lives and theology of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. Those included in this chapter comprise only a sampling of the greater body of literature. Much of the literature accessed is utilized in the following chapters. After reviewing the relevant scholarship regarding the lives of Singh and the Desert Fathers' monastic movement, several immediate observations are produced.

In the review of the literature resources, regarding the origins and history of Desert monasticism, a number of authoritative resources exist including the first-hand accounts of contemporaries (*Vit. Ant. 2*, Athanasius 2010; *Pall., HL.*, Palladius 2010), as well as contemporary scholarly voices (Ward 2003; Russell 2006; Carrigan, 2010; et al.). Scholarly examples of biographies of specific Fathers, such as Anthony the Great, were reviewed. Authoritative translations of monastic writings and sayings, and insights into the lives of the fathers, which were centered on the actions of liturgies, hospitality, and labor, have also been surmised from the review. Scholarship (Ware, Palmer, & Sherrard 2011; Kauffman 2009; Nouwen 2006; Merton 2012; et al.) were reviewed which highlighted the relevance and applicability of the Desert Fathers' teachings and theology to modern-day readers. These sources put forth slight differences in emphasis, whether it is in the fathers' actions of benevolence, faith, or compassion.

After reviewing a majority of the literature that exists on the life of Sadhu Sundar Singh, it was found that authors (Andrews 1934; Appasamy 1956; Parker 2010; Thompson 2007; et al.) that were contemporaries of Singh relay non-scholarly accounts of Singh's life, theology, and miracles. Others (Cartwright 2008; Davey 1963; Kelso 1931; Little Brothers of Sadhu 2010; et al.) offer variants of his life

by utilizing not only those previous accounts, but also engaging autobiographical resources in providing more dynamic accounts. Although some such as Heiler (2012) have offered critical studies into the historicity of Singh's life, the contemporary scholar Moore (2005) remains the authoritative resource on the life of Singh due to his amassing of the most recent resources, which provides an introduction of Singh's life directed toward the Western audience. Although Singh's ascetic spiritual practices are mentioned within the aforementioned texts, there is a definitive need for further research into the ascetic practices in which he engaged. There is also a need for further research to provide a thorough synthesized account of Singh's life.

2.5 Relevance of the scholarship review to the topic of the research

After reviewing a plethora of literature within both the analysis of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers' monastic movement, it becomes clear the need for the topic of the research. Not only is there a need for a major scholarly synthesis of Sundar Singh's life, but also a gap exists in research in the area of study into his ascetic theology. Although a sizable amount of research has been put forth into the lives of the Desert Fathers and their respective theology, no research has been found by the researcher that compares, either at a scholarly or non-scholarly level, the theology of the Desert Fathers and the wandering mystic Singh. The purpose of this research study, to expound on the lives and theology of Singh and the Desert Fathers, is not only warranted, but the need and value of further examination is substantiated.

2.6 Hagiography

The passed-down records of the lives of the Desert Fathers, and to some extent the life of Sadhu Sundar Singh, have been fashioned in the literary genre of hagiography. In its most simplistic definition, hagiography could be defined as the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines it: "biography of saints or venerated persons" and/or an "idealizing or idolizing biography". The word hagiography, is combination of two Greek words: '*hagios*' (holy) and '*graphe*' (writing), and in modern times can be understood as having two meanings: the literature format

that celebrates the actions and sayings and holy men and women particularly in the sacred memory especially among the Christian community members; and also a research discipline devoted to the study of the literature field of hagiography (Efthymiadis, 2011:2). Salih (2006:14) has contended that hagiography can at times also encompass more than simply the recounted life or martyrdom of an esteemed individual but rather includes the saint's human, historical life, their afterlife in heaven from which miracles are performed, and often their death. The historical validity of hagiography has often been a point of debate. Concerning the relationship, or rather the distinction of history and hagiography, Hippolyte Delehaye (2010) writes:

The point to be emphasized from the first is the distinction between hagiography and history. The work of the hagiographer may be historical, but it is not necessarily so. It may assume any literary form suitable to the glorification of the saint from an official record adapted to the use of the faithful, to a poetical composition of the most exuberant character wholly detached from reality (2).

Often hagiography is not considered to be historically accurate by many due to the contents of the thousands of manuscripts of putting forth legendary tales that often seem to extend past reality. These manuscripts will often contain the repetition of stereotypes, significant variations in wording and content, puzzling authorship ascriptions, and confusing chronological arrangements (Efthymiadis S, 2011:2). Although, others such as Thomas Heffernan (1992:15) understand these paradoxes and distinctions in the numerous written accounts as being the result of differing communities and authors providing various interpretations of events and biographies of the manuscripts' legendary characters. Scholars such as Salih (2006) have contended that the hagiographical stories are usually paired with a shrine devoted to the Saint in which the Salih states:

Hagiography is only one manifestation of saint cult, and not necessarily the most important one. For devotees, a saint's identity might well be primarily based on a shrine, on the miracles performed

there which showed the saint in the action, and on the artworks which represented them...Cultic activity and hagiography frequently reinforced one another, with shrines prominently displaying hagiographic narratives, but they could also operate independently. Visitors to shrines were primarily interested in the efficacy of saints, in their post-mortem power rather than the details of their earthly life (2006:5).

The origin of the literary genre of hagiography is difficult to attribute to just one source. Hefferson (1992:15) contends that the origins of early Christian hagiography are dually sourced from the Greco-Roman biography tradition, as well as the Hellenized-Jewish character sketches. Barnes (2010:186) contends that the roots of Christian hagiography have been created as a counterpoint to pagan pornography. Similarly, Toulson (1996:9) comments on the particular hagiography of the early Celtic Christian hagiography in the Bronze Age as having the legends' narratives rooted in the folklore of the Druids and the bards.

As with the case of Polycarp, the earliest accounts of Christian hagiography are often associated with martyrdom. One of the earliest Christian hagiographical accounts is the miraculous narrative of the martyrdom of the Christian bishop, Polycarp (69-115) as recorded in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*. Researcher Barnes (2010:19) argues that the phenomenon of Christian hagiography and the cult of the saints are both rooted in the glorified account of Polycarp's martyrdom, written in 157. The narratives of Christian martyrs, such as Polycarp, are celebrated as heroes, in particular Christian traditions through the utilization of a Liturgical calendar (Halkin, 2003:1). After mass persecution of Christians decreased, hagiography shifted toward a new locus of glorifying the lives of monks, bishops, and other holy men and women with the goal of instilling "explicit moral and theological improvement in their readers" (Barnes, 2010:154).

It can be argued that within the narrative accounts and writings of the Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, the attributes of hagiography are present. Extensive research into the levels of embellished hagiography and historical validity found in the narratives of Singh and the Desert Fathers will not be handled

in this research endeavor. Rather, the direction and stance of the following research will focus upon the assumed primary intent of the authors' recording of the original narratives, which is to illuminate the understanding of Christian believers toward deeper understanding and adoration of Christ. In commenting on the purpose of studying the lives of the Desert Fathers, which can also be applied to Sadhu Sundar Singh, Mario Farrugia (2005:2) writes of hagiographical stories, that when present-day readers examine a glorified person's story, these stories become as "meaningful as they had been in the first millennium of Christianity.

2.7 Conclusion

As noted in section 2.1, the purpose of this chapter was to provide a review of scholarship that is recent, credible, and relevant regarding the lives and ascetic theology of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. Specifically, the aim of the review involved finding possible areas of deficiency regarding the lives and ascetic theology of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. If areas of deficiency were found, the value of this research to the current body of literature would be deemed validated.

In the literary review, numerous works (e.g., books, booklets, theses, dissertations, papers, journal articles, printed and online sources) related to the topic were analyzed. The publications were engaged in order to bring the research current with this particular research project. The analytical review began with a cursory examination of primary sources that focused primarily on the historical origins of the Desert Fathers movement, as well as some of its key individuals and writings. Insights into the lives of the Desert Fathers were also noted, which were marked as being centered on the actions of liturgies, hospitality, and labor. Reviewed scholarly sources also provided the relevance and applicability of the Desert Fathers' teachings and theology to modern-day readers in the areas of benevolence, faith, and compassion.

Section 2.3 provided an analysis of the available literary resources comprised of the life and theology of Sadhu Sundar Singh. It was found that authors that were

contemporaries of Singh have provided non-scholarly accounts of Singh's life, theology, and miracles. Others have utilized those previous accounts, in tandem with autobiographical resources, to provide more dynamic accounts. The author Charles Moore (2005) remains the authoritative and most contemporary resource on the life and character of Singh. The analysis found a gap in the research of a scholarly account of Singh's life and theology in the area of the ascetic spiritual practices that he employed.

Observations from sections 2.2 and 2.3 were then synthesized in section 2.4. The relevance of the literature review to the topic of the research was then discussed in section 2.5, which concluded that there is a need for a major scholarly synthesis of Sundar Singh's life, as well as a need for a study into his ascetic theology. Within the literature analysis it was found that no research exists, to the knowledge of the researcher, which compares at a scholarly or non-scholarly level the theology of the Desert Fathers and the Indian mystic Sundar Singh. This finding substantiates the value and need for further examination into these areas. An introduction to Hagiography was also provided in section 2.6.

CHAPTER 3

LIFE AND PIETY OF SADHU SUNDAR SINGH

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to introduce and put forth a synthesized version of the life of Sundar Singh. In providing a synthesized account of Singh's life, it then becomes the appropriate context in which to analyze his spiritual practices. By creating this context, the foundation is then placed to begin to answer the guiding research problem of investigating whether Singh and the Desert Fathers share similarities in their respective ascetic practices. This chapter containing the synthesized account of Singh's life also provides the groundwork to begin to investigate whether the researcher's hypothesis has credibility that by the analysis of the literary sources of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, numerous parallel examples of spiritual practices can be identified. After an introduction, in section 3.2, the early years of Singh's life is put forth describing his birth up to the time of his mystical conversion. In section 3.3, the process of Singh's conversion is then described. Section 3.4 introduces Singh's acetic lifestyle, including his forty-day fast as well as his unique method of dress. Singh's educational training and formation is then put forth in section 3.5, followed by an accounting of a number of his travels in section 3.6. Singh's mysterious death is then described in 3.7, followed by a section (3.8) devoted to concluding information regarding Singh's life, and the relevance of this chapter to the overall research agenda.

3.2 Early years

Similar to the many Christian mystics of the desert who came before him, Sadhu Sundar Singh's life was filled with many ups and downs: successes and failures, miracles and persecutions, and mystery. There is relatively little firsthand material of the life of Sadhu Sundar Singh, as he wrote little himself outside of a few

published works, and he rarely kept a journal or diary of his travels. Teaching and preaching through at least twenty countries and four continents, Singh's life influenced tens of thousands of people. It has been argued that "in the first half of the last century, no spiritual teacher from the East was better known" than Sadhu Sundar Singh (Moore, 2005:9).

Sundar Singh was born on September 3rd, 1889 in the village of Rampur located in the northern Indian state of Patiala. His family owned land, and his family's culture and religion was of the Sikh religion, a blend of Islam and Hinduism. Sikhs traditionally advocate the worship of a lone divine God without a caste system or idolatry (Moore, 2005:10). Not only did Sundar gain spiritual insights from his Sikh faith, he also acquired a sizable measure of other religious influences through the upbringing of his very religiously devout mother who was a dominating influence on Sundar's life (Thompson, 2007:3).

Through his mother, Sundar was introduced to the deep spiritual traditions of other religions such as the Hindu sacred scripture, the *Bhagavad Gita*. When recalling his mother's influence through the witnessing of one of her daily rituals, he wrote:

Every day she awoke before dawn, prepared herself with the cold water of the ritual bath, and read either from the *Bhagavad Gita* or from one of the other sacred writings. Her pure life and her complete devotion influenced me more strongly than it did the other family members (Moore, 2005:10).

Sundar Singh's mother also made sure that her son received educational formation in the religious traditions that his Indian cultural heritage had to offer. When he was seven, Sundar Singh began to receive Sanskrit lessons from a Brahmin expert, who also taught young Sundar the religious requirements of the Hindu *dharma*. He was also taught *gurumukhi* (the Punjabi script rooted in Sikh's sacred *Granth*) and appropriate Sikh worship through the instruction of a *granthi*, a *Granth* scribe.

Sundar's mother also brought him to sit at the feet of sadhus to learn about Hindu theology. Through these conversations, he posed many questions to his teachers regarding illusion (*maya*), certainty of knowledge (*jnana*), and how to obtain peace. Sundar often left these spiritual conversations feeling unsatisfied by their answers (Moore, 2005:12). Through conversations with his various religious teachers, Sundar gained proficiency in memorizing the entire Sikh *Guru Granth Sahib*, the Qur'an, and the *Hadis* of Islam as well as the ability to recite the Hindu *Upanishads*, *Darsanas*, *Bhagavad Gita*, and the *Shastaras* (Heiler, 2012:14). Sundar was known to practice Yoga, and was left feeling unsatisfied by the meditation discipline (Davey, 1963:25). He was often puzzled by the level of hypocrisy found in the spirituals teachings and those around him, including his own father, Sher Singh. In one recounted conversation Sundar had with a Sadhu-ji, young Sundar expressed his unquenched desire for knowledge of spiritual things, namely truth and peace:

If you, Sadhu-ji, have found the understanding I seek, if you have found certainty and peace, please tell me how I can find it. If not, then tell me so, I will continue my search. I cannot rest until I have found peace (Moore, 2005:13).

It was likely Singh's unquenched desire for the knowledge of spiritual things and the experiences with other religious faiths that were passed down from his mother that enabled Singh's heart to be susceptible to the Christian faith.

At the age of fourteen, additional confusion came upon Sundar's search for spiritual truth and peace when a newly established American Presbyterian mission in his area brought a new foreign truth that differed greatly from the beliefs and traditions of his ancestors. Still in the grieving process of his mother's recent death, Sundar's father enrolled him in the new mission's primary school to provide him the best secular education available and a venue for him to learn English. While attending the missionary school, Sundar's hatred increased toward Christianity and the mission school staff, resulting in Sundar's violent mockery and persecution directed toward his instructors. His anger escalated to the point of him tearing up one of the missionaries' Bible into pieces and burning it in his family compound as his friends and family watched.

Because of this, shame was brought upon Sundar's village and his family, as never in the history of the village had someone disgraced the sacred books of any faith. At this point in his young life, Sundar found himself at a point of great despair due to his actions that shamed his father and the process of still mourning his mother's recent passing. Overwhelmed and filled with grief, Sundar returned to his room to spend a night in meditation and prayer. That night in his room, through his immense desire to obtain the way to peace, Sundar planned to spend the night in prayer hoping that God would be revealed to him. This revelation of the divine, he sought after ardently, may it come in the form of Krishna, Rama, Buddha, or some other divine avatar. If God failed to reveal himself to Sundar that night, the next morning he would lay his head upon the railroad tracks near his home in order to commit suicide, for to Sundar, a life without God was not worth living.

3.3 Conversion

During that early morning, while in prayer at around 4:30 AM, Sundar saw a "faint cloud of light," which continued to grow brighter to the point of filling the room with light (Thompson, 2007:14). Out of this bright light, Jesus Christ appeared and asked Sundar "Why do you persecute me? I died for you" (Thompson, 2007:15). Filled with a mixture of remorse and a new sense of wonderful peace, the experience culminated to Sundar's desire to become a disciple of Christ. Sundar shared his mystical experience with those in his family and declared himself a Christian. Sundar's family treated Sundar's mystical experience with ridicule and mockery. To them, it was ludicrous for a Sikh, having such a proud and rich religious heritage, to convert to the Christian religion of the outcasts. Sundar's new vigor for the Christian faith did not decrease, and Sundar's family began to plead with him not to disgrace them. For the following eight months after Sundar's mystical experience the family continued to ridicule and persecute him (Moore, 2005:16). Sundar was even brought by his family to the Sikh ruler of the Nabha state, the Maharaja, and there asked to denounce his new Christian faith and to hold to his Sikh faith and tradition, to which Sundar boldly declared his discipleship to Jesus Christ (Davey, 1963:41-42). Some have argued that Singh's conversion naturally built upon his previous experiences with seeking the Divine

in Sikhism, Hinduism, and Islam but also in that the revelation of Christ came in a moment of Singh's life that was filled with great despair (Heiler, 2012:48).

To sever his ties with his Sikh religion with finality, Sundar chose to boldly cut off his long hair, a religious staple of the Sikh faith and tradition. Due to this action, Sundar's family cut off all familial ties with him and excluded him from the family compound. Dejected, Sundar decided to make his way to the nearby village of Rupar, where he had known of a leprosy home founded by Christians. On his journey to Rupar, Sundar became violently ill due in result to the consumption of poisoned food, provided to him by his sister-in-law before departing for his journey. At the point of near death, Sundar was suddenly and miraculously healed of his deemed fatal sickness and through this experience he felt "God's healing upon him" (Moore, 2005:17).

After arriving in Rupar, the Christian leadership there arranged for Sundar to attend the Presbyterian Christian Boy's Boarding School in Ludhiana (Appasamy, 1956:11). In Ludhiana, Sundar became displeased by the spiritual immaturity of the students at the school, and due to forceful attempts by outsiders to abduct Sundar, he was later sent to the hill village of Sabathu. On September 3rd, 1905 Sundar was baptized on his sixteenth birthday by Rev. J. Redman and Canon Chandu Lal at St. Thomas Church in Simla, nine months after first experiencing the mystical presence of Christ (Davey, 1963:44; Thompson, 2007:40-41). Thirty-three days after his baptism, on October 6, 1905, Sundar began his new journey to share the message of Christ with his countrymen clad in the traditional saffron robe, which was worn by so many other religious holy men in India; Sundar's days as a sadhu had begun.

3.4 Ascetic Lifestyle

Traditionally, Indian sadhus wear yellow robes, live an ascetic lifestyle, and often forsake the pleasures of life and rather choose to live lives of devotion and prayer. A sadhu is also known as a *sannyasi*, "someone who has renounced the world and left the social order to pursue single-mindedly the final goal of the human life, namely *moksha* or liberation. (Amaladoss, 2006:84). Sadhus are often

considered by others to possess the highest form of religious devotion and often welcomed in every village they visit (Moore, 2005:18). Some sadhus choose to live their lives wandering the earth as spiritual teachers or as hermits away from the rest of society, while others strive to live a life of penance through mortification.

After his conversion, Sundar also chose a life as a wandering sadhu and he subjected himself to wandering the Indian subcontinent for years at a time. Charles Moore (2005:18) identifies that Sundar lived a life of a wanderer because he felt himself “not worthy to follow in the steps” of his Lord, Jesus Christ. Sundar wrote of his aspirations to live like Christ when he commented:

...[B]ut like him (Christ) I want no home, no possessions. Like him I will belong to the road, sharing the suffering of my people, eating with those who will give me shelter, and telling all people of the love of God. (Moore, 2005:18)

On his first long journey over the rough roads of Sabathu preaching the Gospel, clad in his saffron robe and barefooted, Sundar often found himself treated as an outcast and was often denied food and shelter, a normal means of hospitality offered to sadhus. It was during these travels that Sundar traveled back to his home village where his father treated Sundar as an untouchable (Thompson, 2007:48). From time to time in his travels to various villages, Sundar was given hospitality in homes of wealth, but the road of suffering attracted him.

As Sundar began to travel through the Punjab regions, through to Kashmir, and back through Muslim dominated Afghanistan and into the Valuchistan, Sundar's robe and lack of shoes offered little protection from difficult weather, and it was at this time that Christians in northern India began to refer to the sixteen year old Sundar as the “apostle with the bleeding feet.” It was during this time that Sundar met a wealthy American Quaker man by the name of S.E. Stokes who was inspired to follow Sundar's example in taking an ascetic lifestyle of pilgrimage and preaching the Gospel (Thompson, 2007:55). Through his travels as a sadhu, Sundar was arrested, stoned, and experienced a visit from a mystical shepherd.

He was forced to sleep in caves and in a hut with a deadly cobra, all experiences that foretold of Sundar's future of success, persecution, and mystical experiences. Sundar Singh described one of the persecutions he experienced while in Nepal:

They took off all my clothes and fastened my hands and feet in a block of wood, and bringing a lot of leeches left them near to me; from outside they threw filth upon me and used bad language to me. For two or three hours I felt my sufferings very much indeed, but afterwards my Lord by His holy presence turned my prison into a paradise (Appasamy, 1956:21-22).

In 1908, at the age of nineteen, Sundar crossed the frontier into the Himalayan land of Tibet, a Buddhist enclave closed to outsiders and at that time, relatively untouched by previous Christian missionary endeavors. In Tibet, Sundar's message was not received, and he was often affronted with hostility by those with whom he came in contact. One day as Sundar washed his body in cold water, the villagers discovered the bathing sadhu and stoned him, as they believed holy men were never to wash themselves. Sundar did not face persecution at the hands of the Tibetans only once, but would in the coming years continue to risk his life and visit the Tibetan people year after year (Davey, 1963:61).

3.5 Training and formation

In 1909, Sundar enrolled at St. John's Divinity School in Lahore. Sundar primarily enrolled at the seminary due to his admiration of his bishop, Anglican Bishop Lefroy of Lahore (Thompson, 2007:64). At St. John's Divinity School, Sundar found himself out of place and experienced continuous torment from his fellow students. He also felt out of place regarding the learning model of the school as Sundar later commented:

There were discussions about sects, about Jesus Christ and many other interesting things, but I found the reality, the spirit of all these things, only at the Master's feet. When I spent hours at his feet in

prayer, then I found enlightenment, and God taught me so many things that I cannot express them even in my own language (Appasamy, 1956:16).

The tenure of Sundar's attendance at St. John's Divinity ended when he was granted a license to preach by the Metropolitan of India but later in discussion with Bishop Lefroy was informed that after his ordination, he would have to gain permission by various geographical presiding bishops before he would be permitted to preach in their respective jurisdictional areas within India. Sundar was also told that he would not be able to travel and preach in Tibet during certain periods of the year (Davey, 1963:69). After pondering the restrictions that would be placed upon him after his ordination, Sundar returned his license to preach within the diocese and informed his bishop that he would not be seeking ordination in the future.

In 1912, Sundar began to visit Tibet regularly, and on these trips, he ventured through the Kailash mountain range. In this sacred mountain range of the Hindus, Sundar met numerous ascetics who were practicing lives of such extreme austerities for which he felt compelled to share God's grace with them. It was also here that Sundar met a three hundred year old Christian hermit, better known as the legendary "Maharishi" (Davey, 1963:76). Sundar spent many days with the hermit entranced by the hermit's life story and his ascetic lifestyle. It was also in these discussions with the Maharishi that Sundar was told of the Sannyasi Mission, a secret society of Jesus followers founded by the Apostle St. Thomas in the first century, numbering between 20,000 and 40,000 members (Thompson, 2007:82).

From Tibet, Sundar returned to India in the year of 1913, where he attempted to carry out an endeavor he had determined to do for many years: partake in a forty day fast just as his Lord had. This fasting experience would dramatically affect Sundar's spiritual life and would be the onset of his ministry, just as it was for his Lord and Savior. Recalling this forty day fast and its effect on his spiritual life, Singh wrote:

Soon I was so dehydrated and enervated that I could not even move into the shade. But my spiritual awareness grew correspondingly sharper. Through this I discovered that the soul does not fake and die with the body, but goes on living, and I sensed the presence of God and the fullness of the Spirit, a reality that cannot be expressed in words. I also had a vision of the Master, through this time with spiritual---not physical---eyes (Moore, 2005:22).

Many of Sundar Singh's closest friends believed that he had died in his attempt to fast for forty days, and his passing made international news. Sundar did not in fact die, but rather, while peasants were clearing bamboo in the area where Sundar was fasting, they discovered him in a very weak state and brought him back to their village where they nursed him back to health (Davey, 1963:88).

3.6 Travels

After returning back to health, in 1919, while involved in many speaking engagements in India, he was involved in two miraculous healings (Thompson, 2007:146-147). Sundar then traveled within Asia, specifically China, Malaysia, and Japan. Around this time Sundar's father became a Christian and had given him a substantial amount of money. In 1920, Sundar desired to venture to Britain to find out the religious pulse of the West. In England, Sundar's preaching was selling out the largest churches and meeting halls. At this time the Queen of England invited Sundar to meet for tea, but Sundar had to turn down the offer, as he had already arranged to speak to a meeting of over two thousand (Moore, 2005:23). It was also in England that Sundar's tutor, B. H. Streeter, recommended that Sundar write down his mystical beliefs and teachings (Thompson, 2007:169).

After spending three months in England, Sundar then ventured to the United States where again he spoke to the largest of crowds. In both England and the United States, Sundar was tremendously disturbed by the worship of material wealth that he found (Moore, 2005:24). In 1922, Sundar traveled throughout Europe, speaking to thousands of religious and secular audiences alike, in Geneva, Jerusalem, Palestine, London, and Paris as well as in Germany,

Holland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. It was in Europe that Sundar experienced criticism for his lack of knowledge in the area of science as well as attacks on the mystical character of his teachings (Moore, 2005:25).

3.7 Death

After returning to India, the many years of speaking and traveling took a toll on Sundar's health. Sundar then began to have severe heart attacks, spells of unconsciousness, and his vision rapidly deteriorated (Appasamy, 1956:28). It was at this time that he began to no longer accept invitations to speak in other parts of the world and limited his speaking to Indian venues when his health allowed. For three years, Sundar rested continually, and he began to write and published six short books (Davey, 1963:149). These six books were later translated into every dialect of the Indian subcontinent, every major Western language, as well as Japanese, Chinese, and a number of other Asian languages (Moore, 2005:27).

In his last years, Sundar had a burning desire to travel once more to Tibet, and although his health delayed his endeavors, in 1927, he began his journey through the Niti Pass into Tibet. In route to Tibet, Sundar suffered a stomach hemorrhage and was carried back to the railway by Tibetans. Two years later, on April 16 of 1929, the Sadhu set forth on his final journey to Tibet, and it was on this trip that he was never heard from again. Searches for the details and whereabouts of his death were futile, but his legend lives on through his writings and teachings that have touched so many.

3.8 Conclusion

In the present day, Sundar Singh is best remembered through his six published works. Sundar Singh scholar, Charles Moore (2005:28), believes that Singh's writings and teachings defy "categorization and theological analysis. The impact of his message, however, is always direct and immediate." Similar to his writing, Sundar Singh preached to thousands of people, that with both welcome and awe received Sundar Singh's life as a witness for Christ, but others received him with outspoken criticism and persecution. He preached to audiences on four

continents, was involved in two miraculous healings, and experienced numerous unexplainable incidents and visions. Friedrich Heiler describes the remarkable and mysterious life of Sundar Singh as “India’s ideal of the disciple of Christ---a barefooted itinerant preacher with burning love in his heart” (Moore, 2005:9).

Chapter 3 is vital to the relevance of the overall research agenda of this dissertation for the following reasons. First, chapter 3 comprises one of several components (cf. chapters 3-4), each of which present an accurate and unbiased historical research of the lives and piety of Singh and the Desert Fathers. Second, chapter 3 engages one of the three primary objectives of this research, namely, to introduce readers to the personality and history of the legendary Christian Sadhu Sundar Singh. Third, each of the three objectives derived from the main research problem in chapter 1 are engaged in a section of its own; therefore, each chapter finds relevance within itself as being a contribution to and part of the whole. Finally, in the providing of a synthesized account of Singh’s life, the appropriate context in which to analyze his spiritual practices is then set. By creating this context, the foundation is then placed to begin to answer the guiding research question of investigating whether Singh and the Desert Fathers share similarities in their respective ascetic practices. By doing this, the groundwork is laid to begin to surmise whether the researcher’s hypothesis is credible. Thus, by analyzing the literary sources of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, numerous, parallel examples of spiritual practices will be identified.

CHAPTER 4

LIFE AND PIETY OF THE DESERT FATHERS

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to introduce and put forth a synthesized version of the history and development of the monastic movement as well as introduce appropriate monastic literary sources, ascetic spiritual practices, and notable monastic figures. In providing a synthesized account of the history and development of the monastic movement, an appropriate context in which to analyze their spiritual practices is then created. Similarly, to introduce notable monastic personalities and monastic ascetic spiritual practices, an appropriate foundation is then built to begin to answer the guiding research problem of investigating whether the Desert Fathers share similarities in their respective ascetic practices to those of Sundar Singh. This chapter, containing a synthesized account the history and development of the Egyptian monastic movement also provides the groundwork to begin to investigate whether the researcher's hypothesis has credibility that by the analysis of the literary sources of Desert Fathers, numerous, parallel examples of spiritual practices can be identified in relation to those of Sundar Singh. After the introductory section (4.1), in section 4.2, the early history of the monastic movement is presented followed by the proceeding development of the movement in section 4.3. In section 4.4, ascetic spiritual practices of the monastic movement are presented including isolation, hesychasm, benevolence, and scripture usage. Section 4.6 introduces notable figures within the monastic movement including Anthony the Great, Arsenius the Great, John Cassian, and Pachomius. Section 4.7 is devoted to concluding the information regarding the monastic movement and the relevance of this chapter to the overall research agenda.

4.2 Early history

The origin of the monastic movement in the Egyptian desert is somewhat debated. Some researchers have contended that the beginning catalyst of the Egyptian monastic movement may have arose in the 200's (AD) when Christians fled cities to the desert in order to avoid rampant persecution from pagan emperors (Kauffman, 2009:3). Many contend that Egyptian monasticism found its more firm origin during the 4th century as a result of the controversial conversion of the emperor Constantine. The hermits also simply fled cities like Alexandria to the desert to find a formidable venue for deeper solitude and privacy in part of the rising popularity of performing practices of penance. Historians Phillipe Aries and Georges Duby (1992:288) have described the monks' act of fleeing their cities in order to take up life in the desert as relocating to the "blank space on the map of Mediterranean society," a social equivalent of relocating to the "Antarctic continent."

It is probable that Egyptian monasticism finds its origin in a combination of the various leadership, theological, and structural changes during the 3rd through 6th centuries. The Edict of Milan, a decree put forth by Emperor Constantine in 313, helped in granting tolerance to all religions within the Roman Empire, including Christianity. This was a responsive action of Constantine in result of his conversion and acceptance of the Christian faith. The Edict helped in ending a majority of persecutions of Christian believers, which they had faced since the first century.

The new found tolerance of Christianity within the Roman Empire, the lessening of persecutions, and new popularity of Christianity in urban areas led many Christian believers to look toward the desolate places like the desert as venues to live out an authentic faith. Orthodox historian and monk, Timothy Ware (1997), comments on the emergence of monasticism in response to Constantine's conversion:

The monastic life first emerged as a definite institution in Egypt and Syria during the fourth century, and from there it spread rapidly

across Christendom. It is no coincidence that monasticism should have developed immediately after Constantine's conversion, at the very time when the persecution ceased and Christianity became fashionable. The monks with their austerities were martyrs in an age when martyrdom of blood no longer existed; they formed the counterbalance to an established Christendom...The monks by their withdrawal from society into the desert fulfilled a prophetic and eschatological ministry in the life of the Church. They reminded Christians that the kingdom of God is not of this world (37).

Christianity had changed under Constantine's new adoption of the Christian faith. Christians, who as a persecuted minority experienced centuries of offering up their lives for truth in martyrdom at the hands of bloodthirsty emperors, now lowered themselves to the point of killing each other to garner prized positions within the newly popular and legal institution of the church (Shelley, 1995:118). Now wealthy Roman citizens who had money, power, and imperial connections now became influential Christian leaders. St Gregory of Nazianzus, a 4th century Christian bishop, comments on the newly established norm of power-mongering within urban Christianity, when he writes: "The chief seat is gained by evil doing, not by virtue; and the seats belong, not to the more worthy, but to the more powerful" (Shelley, 1995:118).

The desolate Egyptian desert was a perfect locale for the fleeing Christian masses to establish themselves in their new forms of monastic faith. Egypt has held a role of importance within the history of the Christian faith beginning when Christ himself along with the Holy Family fled to Egypt as recorded in the second chapter of the Gospel of Matthew (Ward, 2003:vii). The city of Alexandria, alongside Antioch and Rome, had been one of the three major Christian cities in the ancient world because of the presence of its influential patriarch. Historian, Ivan J. Kauffman (2009:3) comments on the emergence of monasticism in the Egyptian Nile Valley as one of the world's most unique geographic locations marked with a fertile river valley that stretched for hundreds of miles that was also bordered by "barren and dangerous desert" on both sides. These *hermits*, a word that comes from the Greek word for "desert," dwelled in this rigorous desert, and

found themselves a short journey away from the fertile river valley of the Nile.

Having fled to the desolate place of the Egyptian desert, Christians formed new ways of living out their faith and developed unique spiritual practices. Having experienced a changing Christian atmosphere in the cities, where violence and power prevailed in the Christian leadership, newly established desert-dwelling Christians practiced penance through self-denial. To this end, the desert Christians practiced renunciation of marriage and sexual abstinence as acts of virtue and a means of removing one's own sins (Shelley, 1995:117-8). Silence, physical withdrawal, prayer, and the recitation of the Psalms became the stalwart practices of the monastic movement.

The hermit population in Egypt, who had devoted themselves to prayer, silence, and manual labor had not entirely removed themselves from the world as many began to venture out of the deserted places of Egypt into more populated areas. From the lowly Egyptian farmers to the emperor Constantine, the desert hermits' devotion began to garner respect from many (Kauffman, 2009:8). As author Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove (2008:46) comments, these new hermits were not trying to establish a new institution or movement. Instead, the Desert Fathers sought the abandoned places as a natural response to the transition of Christianity in their time, from Christianity as the persecuted minority within the Empire to becoming the new state-sponsored religion of the powerful.

The simple faith of these devoted desert hermits, with the practices of self-denial, silence, and prayer, inspired so many others that this small seed of a few hermits grew into what would become the foundational roots for monasticism in the Byzantine East and the West. As one visitor to the Egyptian desert from Palestine in the fourth century remarked of the growing presence of thousands of hermits throughout the Thebaid desert:

One can see them in the desert waiting for Christ as loyal sons watching for their father...there is only the expectation of the coming of Christ in the singing of hymns...There is no town or village in Egypt and the Thebaid which is not surrounded by hermitages as if

by walls (Ward, 2003:viii).

4.3 Development of the monastic movement

From a small seed of hermits, monasticism grew in the Egyptian desert to the point where in 388, the monastic village in Nitria housed 5,000 monks (Kauffman J, 2009:7). The backgrounds of the initial monks who settled in the desert varied from the uneducated to the Roman-educated clerics. Benedicta Ward (2003) comments on the spectrum of those who initially settled in the Thebes desert:

These people were ordinary Christians who chose to live out their evangelical commitment in terms of the monastic way of life, and in doing so they transformed both Christianity and monasticism in both its details and its ideology. Most of the first Christian monks in Egypt were neither clerics nor scholars; they were laymen, uneducated peasants, like Apollo who was a shepherd, or itinerant traders like Macarius, though there were also some, like the Roman nobleman Arsenius and the scholar Evagrius, who were learned in the classics and sophisticated in behaviour (Ward, 2003:x).

Initially these individual monks did not set out to reshape the Christian church as an institution. Rather the movement was spearheaded as a lay-movement and often forbade its members to be ordained (Kauffman, 2009:8). Nevertheless those who were ordained were held in great esteem and supported by the monks.

One of the pillars of the growing monastic movement in Egypt was St. Anthony the Great (251-356). Anthony labored in the desert from the age eighteen until his death at the age of one hundred and five, and became best known as the father of eremitic monasticism one of the first to hold the spiritual role of *starets* (Ware, 1997:39-40). Other Christian monks whose names were known to history were: St. Paul the Hermit, who lived in the desert 20 years before Anthony; St. Thais, an Alexandrian courtesan, who shut herself and lived in her cell isolated for three years; St. Moses the Black, a former Ethiopian warrior, who joined a monastery at Petra (modern-day Wadi-el-Natrun, Egypt) and died defending his

monastery from raiders (Kauffman, 2009:6-7).

As monasticism grew in the Egyptian desert it began to take on different forms. By the year 350, three primary forms of monasticism existed in Egypt. The first form of monasticism was the eremitic monasticism, which includes monks living solitary in places such as huts, caves, tombs, in trees, or on top of pillars. The best-known model for the eremitic monastic life was the hermit St. Anthony the Great. Other varieties within the eremitic form of monasticism also existed such as format adopted by John of Lycopolis, who spoke with guests through a window in his two-roomed cell or the elderly hermit Elias who lived under a rock outcropping until his death. Many monks lived in self-built cells, ranging from one to two rooms, which were constructed of bricks and mortar and could be built in a day. In the cells with two rooms, an outer room and an inner-room were used for sleeping (*Hist. Mon. Aeg.*; Ward & Russell, 2006:21). It appears that throughout the peak ages of the Desert Fathers, the monk's cells may have experienced a form of evolution in form as archaeological excavations have revealed that initially the monks' cells would have been small but in later times the cells included courtyards, vestibules, oratories, multiple bedrooms, offices, kitchens and latrines (Goehring, 1999:23).

The second form of monasticism found in Egypt was the coenobitic form. The term *coenobitic* comes from the Greek term, *koinos bios*, or "common life" (Shelley, 1995:119). The coenobitic form was pioneered by St. Pachomius of Egypt (286-346) and consisted of monks dwelling close together in a *monastery* and sharing a common Rule, or a commonly held set of practices. The coenobitic communities would consist of permanent buildings used for the housing groups of monks and might also hold a common refectory and a church space for worship (*Hist. Mon. Aeg.*; Ward & Russell, 2006:21). The coenobitic model would later become the inspiration for St. Benedict in the West as well as a form adopted in Eastern Monasticism by St. Basil the Great (Ware, 1997:37-8).

The third form of monasticism in Egypt was a combination of the coenobitic and eremitic form considered to be a "middle-way." This "middle-way" consisted of "a loosely-knit group of small settlements, each settlement containing perhaps

between two and six members living together under the guidance of an elder” (Ware, 1997: 37-38). Eventually by the fifth and sixth centuries, coenobitic-based and middle-way monasticism became a popular iteration of monasticism that gathered many followers. Shelley (1995:120) notes that the change from a harsh and ascetic eremitic style to a more group-based model began to influence and shape every structure of the institutional church, with practically every leader of the church in the fifth and sixth centuries becoming either a monk or becoming closely linked to a monastery.

The monastic communities began to function similarly to that of a small village. The monks often supported themselves by the trades of weaving flax or making baskets, which they would then sell. It has been noted that manual labor was also a common practice for the desert monks, as it allowed them to be self-sufficient as well as a means of ‘saving’ them to focus on reciting prayer, while their hands were busy doing repetitive work (Monastery, 2014). Within the monastic communities there were bakeries, and doctors to treat the ill. Strangers were welcomed into the monastic village and the visitors were invited to work in trade for their stay. There were monks who had been ordained priests that served the monks who gathered for worship on Saturdays and Sundays. For the desert monks, diversity was one of their greatest assets. Noting this diversity, Mario Farrugia (2005:7) suggests that God provided many differing paths to the monks and this diversity offered a variety of excellent tools to help believers mature in their faith.

Monasticism branched out from Egypt to other parts of the known world. The first to introduce monasticism to the West was Athanasius, who in banishment in Trier in 335, wrote the biographical *Life of St. Anthony*, which circulated throughout the West (Shelley, 1995:120). Others such as the Bishop Ambrose of Milan and Augustine in Hippo also supported monasticism in their clerical communities. John Cassian, who had visited Egypt, founded the monastery of St. Victor near Marseille (France) in 415, and penned two important works on monasticism: *Institutes* and *Conferences* (Shelley, 1995:120). In the fifth and sixth centuries, monastic leadership began to transition out of Egypt to Palestine in which leaders such as St. Euthymius the Great (d. 473) and St. Sabas (d. 532) began to foster

a growing monastic movement in the Holy Land (Ware, 1997:38). As monasticism disseminated from Egypt, the movement also gave birth to monastic literature.

4.4 Literary resources

The Sayings of the Desert Fathers (Apophthegmata Patrum)

The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, a fifth century collection of monastic wisdom, was first published in English in 1975 and translated by Benedicta Ward, an Anglican nun and current professor at Harris Manchester College. *The Sayings*, recounts various collected oral traditional sayings of the Egyptian Desert Fathers and Mothers from the 5th Century. Originally these sayings were passed down orally in Coptic, Syriac, Greek, and Latin; this particular systematized text, translated by Benedicta Ward, was sourced from the *Greek Alphabetical Series*, which was transcribed in the twelfth-century by Cotelerius (Ward, 1975:xxix). It contains a basic history of Egyptian monasticism, the history of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, and sayings of over 130 monks organized by the monk's names in alphabetized order.

The Lives of the Desert Fathers (Historia Monachorum in Aegypto)

Published in 1981, and translated from the Greek version by Norman Russell, retired priest in the Anglican Church, *The Lives of the Desert Fathers* is the recounting of seven pilgrims, who in 394/395 AD traveled the Egyptian desert recording the conversations and experiences they had with the ascetic Desert Fathers. The pilgrims' interactions with twenty-six Desert Fathers are recorded in Russell's work, including accounts of the monks' spiritual gifts such clairvoyance, healings, and exorcisms. Other accounts of the monk's fasting, self-denial, and general accounts of the monks' prayer lives are also recorded.

The Lausiatic History by Palladius of Galatia

Written in the late fourth century by Palladius (c. 365-431), a disciple of Evagrius of Pontus, *The Lausiatic History* contains seventy-one biographical sections of

wisdom and narratives of the early desert ascetics. The first edition published was in Latin by Gentian Hervetus, followed by a shorter Greek text by Johannes Meursius, and then Fronton du Duc and J. Cotelerius later published longer and more complete versions. Accounts of recognized saints within the *Lausiac History* include Anthony the Great, Paul the Simple, Macrius of Alexandria, Macarius of Egypt, and Pachomius. The text clearly states that the infrastructure of early monasticism as well as the intricacies of the monk's daily lives such as the Egyptian monastic movement's liturgies, hospitality, and labor.

The Life of St. Anthony by St. Athanasius

This account of the life of the monk Anthony the Great, written by Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296-373), provides much of everything that is known about the father of the eremitic monastic movement. Written in Greek around 360 and disseminated throughout the East and West, Athanasius records Anthony's birth and upbringing to wealthy landowner parents as well as his renouncing of wealth and journey to the Egyptian desert to live as a hermit.

Philokalia

The *Philokalia* compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, is the culmination of wisdom-filled teachings of Christians between the 4th and 15th centuries who followed the example of the Desert Fathers as they withdrew into the deserts of Egypt. A pillar for Greek Orthodox monasticism, the *Philokalia* includes teachings on such asceticism topics such as watchfulness, stillness, and the controlling of passions. The *Philokalia* is edited by: Kallistos Ware, a bishop in the Eastern Orthodox Church and author of numerous books; G.E.H. Palmer (d. 1984), was an author, book translator, and Conservative Party politician in the United Kingdom; and Philip Sherrard, a British author, translator, and philosopher. The *Philokalia* is split into four volumes in the incomplete English translation of the text.

The Conferences and The Institutes by John Cassian

John Cassian (born c. 360) was an ascetic, monk, theologian, and abbot in the village of Dobruja, Scythia. His *Institutes* (Institutes of the Coenobia) and *Conferences* (Collationes Patrum in Scetica Eremo) were written in response to the request of Bishop Castor of Aptia, in which Cassian provides systematized accounts of the wisdom of the Desert Fathers. *Institutes* is divided into twelve different Books: Books 1-4 explains the monastic clothing, prayer, and rules within the monastic life; Books 5-12 explain rules on morality centered around eight vices, and advices how to overcome those vices. *Conferences* is based on the teachings and ascetic lives of the Fathers at Scetis, and explains the Desert Fathers' spiritual theology and ascetic lives, as well as the problems that take form in those specific areas. Cassian's writings became the pillar for monastic rule of Benedict of Nursia in the West.

4.5 Ascetic spiritual practices

Within both the eremitic and coenobitic monastic schools of Egypt, ascetic spiritual practices became customary. The practice of isolation, or solitude, albeit practiced by Desert Fathers in the coenobitic school of monasticism to some extent, is a mainstay of eremitic monasticism. Three of the ascetic practices that became commonplace within both the monasteries and among the practice of the hermits were: hesychasm, or stillness; benevolence toward others; and the use of Scripture in prayer and meditation.

4.5.1 Isolation

Isolation, or solitude, was the practice amongst Egyptian Desert Fathers of secluding oneself away from others in order to better focus on one's interconnectedness with God. Within early Christian history, Jesus modeled the isolation practice (Mt. 4:2) when he entered into the desert for forty days (Nouwen, 1991:25). When in isolation the monk has the venue to perform other ascetic practices to fortify one's relationship with the Divine. The practice of isolation can also be performed where a monk lives in isolation with one or two

other monks. Commenting on this aforementioned isolation practice of the hermit, John Climacus (1982) writes:

A solitary is not the same as a monk living with another monk. A solitary has to be very much on guard, and his mind has to be alert. The second kind of monk often helps his brother, but an angel helps the solitary (262).

The purpose and process of one's practice in isolation is one shrouded in mystery. Henri Nouwen (1991:25-6) remarking the Desert Fathers' practice and on his own experiences with the practice of isolation, he remarks that one enters a "furnace of transformation" where in solitude one begins to "struggle against the compulsions of the false self" and encounters a "loving God who offers himself as the substance of the new self." Nouwen (1991:27) proceeds to contend that within the practice of solitude, a person experiences a type of conversion where the, "old self dies and the new self is born, the place where the emergence of the new man and the new woman occurs." Farrugia (2005:12) remarking on the Desert Fathers' common practice of controlling one's old self or their passions, that "[t]he worst thing that could happen to an ascetic, they (the Desert Fathers) thought, was placing one's interiority at the service of one's existence or its passions."

4.5.2 Hesychasm

The mystical practice of hesychasm derives from the Greek word of *hesychia*, which means stillness or silence (Chumley, 2011:21). The monastic practice of hesychasm has been defined in a number of ways all shrouded in personal and experiential mystery. A bishop in the modern-day Orthodox Church has described the practice simply as the "silent life of contemplative prayer" (Brianchaninov, 2012:236). Others have also described the practice as "heightened consciousness in which one is immersed in the grace of God" and that the practice is described as "intangible and indescribable" (Chumley, 2011:21).

Similar to the varying in ways to describe the experience of the practice of hesychasm, the methodologies of practice vary as well. Some such as John Climacus (1982:262) contend that the practice of hesychasm is to be practiced with no words and that one is “enlightened by deeds rather than by words.” Climacus (1982) goes on to write of the practice:

The start of stillness is the rejection of all noisiness as something that will trouble the depths of the soul. The final point is when one has no longer a fear of noisy disturbance, when one is immune to it. He who when he goes out does not go out in his intellect is gentle and wholly a house of love, rarely moved to speech and never to anger (262).

Others such as Middleton (2011) describe the hesychatic method of practicing noetic prayer, which can be described as “prayer that is characterized by the descent of the mind, saying the words of the Jesus Prayer, into the heart” (199). The Jesus Prayer, a form of prayer called *monologistos*, consists of one or a few words and was likely practiced by the desert monks (Coniaris, 1998:14). The Jesus Prayer is the repeating of the phrase or some variations of the words, *Lord, Jesus Christ, son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner*. Some methods of employing the Jesus Prayer can be practiced by the repeating of the phrase (or variations) for various segments of time such as half an hour or fifteen minutes at a time, and stretching the practice for up to hours and over days (Chumley, 2011:23). The practice has been described as “dislocating people from the ordinary life so that they can commune with God” (Chumley, 2011:23).

4.5.3 Benevolence

The Desert Fathers of Egypt were proficient in the spiritual practice of benevolence, or goodwill towards others. An unknown monk (1986) of the modern-day Eastern Orthodox Church remarks on an often misunderstanding of the Desert Fathers and their benevolence towards others:

The Fathers of the Desert considered *apatheia* the supreme ideal. This word has been the cause of serious misunderstanding. It has often been translated by 'apathy', 'impassibility', 'absence of passion' with the Stoic meaning of 'insensibility'. But the *apatheia* of the Fathers means something quite different from a kind of anesthesia of the feelings. Their *apatheia* is the fruit of love or charity. It is, in reality, the state of a soul in which love towards God and men is so ruling and burning as to leave no room for human (self-centered) passions (15).

The records of the lives of the Desert Fathers offer numerous examples of the monks modeling benevolence towards others. One such example of practicing benevolence of the self-sacrificial giving of their belongings as modeled by the monk Sarapion, was when he sold his lone book of the Gospels in order to provide money to feed the hungry, commenting that he had "sold the book which told me to sell all that I had and give it to the poor" (Merton, 2012:37). Similarly, other Desert Fathers sacrificed to provide for others, due to their devotion of practicing benevolence:

There was a certain elder who, if anyone maligned him, would go in person to offer him presents, if he lived nearby. And if he lived at a distance he would send presents by the hand of another (Merton, 2012:61).

Besides the Desert Fathers providing benevolence toward others by sacrificing their belongings on behalf of others, the Desert Fathers also practiced hospitality as modeled by the humble disciple who commented that his Prayer Rule was to receive others with hospitality (Merton, 2012:51). A final example of the Desert Fathers exemplifying the practice of benevolence is through emotional benevolence, in which the Fathers aligned themselves with others:

One of the brethren had sinned, and the priest told him to leave the community. So then Abbot Bessarion got up and walked out with him, saying: I too am a sinner! (Merton, 2012:40).

There are scores of other examples recorded in the lives of the Desert Fathers in which they exemplify offering benevolent actions of charity toward others especially when the recipient did not necessarily warrant the gift of charity.

4.5.4 Scripture usage

Within the recorded lives of the Desert Fathers the practice of reading and meditating on the Scriptures was commonplace in their daily spiritual practices for those who had access to them. One of the first accounts St. Anthony's lives show the lasting effects of Scripture on the monk's life. Athanasius recounts that when Anthony had heard the Gospel reading at church commanding the rich man that if he desired to be perfect, he must go and sell all that he owned and give it to the poor. Anthony in response... "went out immediately from the church, and gave the possessions of his forefathers to the villagers—they were three hundred acres" (*Vit. Ant. 2*; Athanasius, 2010: 7-8).

One of the unknown authors in the *Philokalia* tells that the "meditation on the scriptures" was partnered with bodily fasting as well as with "toil and manual labour" (Palmer, 2011:75). Later recorded in the *Philokalia*, monks "should spend most of our time in prayer, in singing psalms and reading the Holy Scriptures, yet without neglecting the speculations of wise men whose faith has been revealed in their writings" (Palmer, 2011:275). The goal of the monk's practice of the usage of Scripture, as described by John Cassian, is to focus the monk's mind on things not of this world, as he writes:

...[F]requent reading and continual meditation on the Scriptures is employed that from thence an opportunity for spiritual recollection may be given to us, therefore the frequent singing of Psalms is used, that thence constant feelings of compunction may be provided, and earnest vigils and fasts and prayers, that the mind may be brought low and not mind earthly things, but contemplate things celestial, for if these things are dropped and carelessness creeps on us, the mind being hardened with the foulness of sin is sure to incline in a carnal direction and fall away (*Cass. Incarn.*

Dom.; Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:28).

Others such as John Wortley (2006:10) contend that the Desert Fathers' reading of scripture was actually treated "suspiciously" in some cases and that the best-read monk in the desert, Evagrius commented that reading scripture in excess or "out of due season is short-lasting and does more harm than good."

4.6 Notable figures

4.6.1 Anthony the Great

St. Anthony (Antony) the Great was born in the village of Koma, Middle Egypt, around the year 250. His parents were Christian farmers who died when Anthony was eighteen years of age. At the age of twenty, having become responsible for his family's household, he heard Christ's words to the rich young ruler—"go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me (Mt. 19:21)"—and he responded to these words by giving away all of his wealth, with the exception of a small amount he set aside for his sister's care (Waddell, 1998: XIV). Some have contended that his response to the challenge of Scripture was not at all unique to the commonly held beliefs of Christians in his context:

Anthony believed, as did most Christians of his era, that "the soul's intensity is strong when the pleasures of the body are weakened" A well-rested body, satiated with pleasure, and basking in the good things of life, becomes spiritually lazy. That is, no pain, no gain. Christians like Anthony took literally the sayings of Jesus about the incompatibility of mammon and God, about earthly treasures being a stumbling block to heavenly joy, and so on. Not many took up the discipline as radically as did Anthony, but even those who didn't recognized the need to discipline the body and its desires, sticking to some physical and spiritual regimen (Galli, 1999: "Anthony").

Anthony then went forth to live in the Egyptian desert. Commenting on Anthony's motivation to pursue holiness in the Egyptian desert, Henri Nouwen (1991:14) comments that Anthony (and other monks) found their fleeing to the desert as a new kind of martyrdom in their witnessing "against the destructive powers of evil" as "witnesses for the saving power of Jesus Christ."

In the desert village next to his own, Anthony encountered the hermit Paul, whom Anthony "emulated... in goodness" (Wilson-Hartgrove, 2008:44). Anthony then made rounds throughout the desert seeking out hermits to teach him the disciplines of a godly life. At this time, Anthony began to remember the life he had left behind and to struggle with asceticism. So in response Anthony decided to pursue holiness in complete solitude living in an eremitic monastic format of a hermit, which contrasted with the large coenobitic establishments of the Pachomian monastic model (Hussey, 1990:335).

For nearly twenty years, Anthony spent disciplining himself and pursuing the ascetic life in solitude. Legends recount that in these years of solitude, Anthony experienced temptations and waged battles against bodily forms of devils, beasts, and women (Shelley, 1995:127). Anthony said of the gain of his asceticism: 'the soul's intensity is strongest when the pleasures of the body are weakest.' (Kauffman, 2009:5). At the age of fifty-five, Anthony withdrew from his life of strict enclosure and began to accept visitors who traveled long distances to receive sagely advice from Anthony, the earliest *startsy* (Ware, 1997:39-40). As the reputation of Anthony's holiness, wisdom, and power to overcome the devil spread throughout the desert and the cities, thousands attempted to imitate him, bringing forth revival to the desert and to the Christian faith (Shelley, 1995:118).

Anthony lived until the age of 105 and carried his faith even to his death in 356. Writing of his death, Waddell comments on Anthony's last desires to his disciples:

He (Anthony) begged his two disciples to save his body from a thing most abhorrent to him, the Egyptian rites of the dead. 'Shelter in the ground, hide in the earth the body of your father: and let you do your

old man's bidding in this also, that none but your love only shall know the place of my grave (Waddell, 1998:3).

Anthony's life and faith in the Egyptian desert was recounted by the Patriarch of Alexandria, Athanasius, who wrote a biography of Anthony's life in Greek entitled, *The Life of St. Anthony*, which was written between 356 and 362 and circulated extensively in both the East and the West (Ward, 2003:197-198). Athanasius wrote of Anthony as having the 'settled character' of a saved person and that Anthony's 'soul was imperturbed [sic], and so his outward appearance was calm (Pelikan, 1991:232)." Others such as Englebert (1994:22-3) have summarized the righteous life of Anthony in that the great ascetic "was always perfectly modest and courteous" and that he "inspired innumerable souls by his example and maxims."

4.6.2 Arsenius the Great

Arsenius was born around the year 360 in Rome. He was born into an upstanding family, where he obtained a formidable education. It was likely that Pope Damasus ordained him a deacon and later recommended him for service to the Emperor in 383 (Britannica, 2014). He held senatorial rank and was rumored to be the tutor of the sons of Emperor Theodosius (379-395), Arcadius and Honorius, although this has not been confirmed (Climacus, 1982:270). At minimum Arsenius held a position of an official in the palace of the emperor. In 394, Arsenius left the comforts of Rome to search out solitude in the Egypt, although others have contended that he withdrew into the desert of Scetis after the capture of Rome by Alaric (Englebert, 1994:278).

When arriving in the Egyptian desert of Scetis, Arsenius became a disciple of the John the Dwarf and eventually became a hermit. Remarking on Arsenius' vigorous spiritual practice of solitude and avoidance of others, the Orthodox Church provides this hagiographical account:

Having taken on the struggle of silence he seldom left his seclusion. He came to church only on Sundays and Feast days, observing

complete silence and conversing with no one. When Abba Moses asked him why he hid himself from people, St Arsenius replied, “God knows that I love you, but I cannot remain with God and with men at the same time. The Heavenly Powers all have one will and praise God together. On earth, however, there are many human wills, and each man has his own thoughts. I cannot leave God in order to live with people (OCA, 2013).

John Climacus (1982:23) also noted that Arsenius taught the difficult ascetic practice that “one hour’s sleep a night is enough for a monk if he is a fighter.” Arsenius was also noted as being given the gift of tears (Englebert, 1994:278).

For a time he was at Canopus, near Alexandria, where he gave consultation to the Archbishop Theophilus (Climacus, 1982:270). Arsenius remained in Scetis until he was forced to flee to Troe, near the ancient city of Memphis, due to violent incursions of the Libyan Mazici marauders who devastated Scetis in 434 (Britannica, 2014). After the second devastation of Scetis, Arsenius died around the year 450.

In the alphabetical collection of the *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers (Apophthegmata Patrum)* forty-four maxims are attributed to him and possibly two other maxims to the “Monk of Rome” (Climacus, 1982:70). He also wrote two works, the *Didaskalia kai parainesis* (“Instruction and Exhortation”) and *Eis ton peirastēn nomikon* (“On the Temptation of the Law”). His legendary spiritual discipline combined with his former magnificent background of Roman nobility, was a perpetual encouragement for the more simple Coptic monks. At least three disciples of Arsenius are known, Alexander, Zoilus, and Daniel (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:198).

4.6.3 John Cassian

John Cassian, an ascetic, monk, theologian, and abbot, was born around 360 A.D. in the village of Dobruja, Scythia. Likely from a noble Roman birth, Cassian was ordained a monk in Bethlehem (Britannica). In 390, along with his pupil

Germanus, Cassian traveled to Egypt to study the ways of the Egyptian monks and solitaires first hand. The findings from his study became the basis of two major works, the *Institutes* and the *Conferences*, which have been deemed the “two most influential of all books in forming western monasticism” as even Benedict of Nursia recommended Cassian’s writings as the best reading for monks (Ward, 2003:198).

On their pilgrimage, Cassian and Germanus found themselves so engulfed in ways of the Egyptian ascetics that they chose to stay for seven years. Of Cassian’s pilgrimage, he and his companion likely experienced there in the desert an “oasis of stillness and quiet, situated on the very confines of the confusion and restlessness of the ancient world” (CCEL, 2014). The ascetic ways that Cassian witnessed in the Egyptian desert influenced his writings dramatically. In his *Institutes*, Cassian provides first-hand accounts of the hermit’s life and the external rules that governed their life, as well as the internal labor the hermit must endeavor through toward overcoming one’s vices. *Conferences* offers a summarization of the conversations that Cassian personally had with the monastic elders. The Egyptian monasticism that impacted him and formed the theology in his writings helped not only in influencing all of Western monasticism but also his personal founding of the St.-Victor Monastery at Marseille. Cassian’s theology was already being deemed derogatorily as “Semi-Pelagian” by followers of Augustine in the fifth century as they found Cassian’s theology to be inconsistent. Pelikan (1991) remarks of Augustine followers’ critique of Cassian’s theology:

To the defenders of Augustine against these men it seemed incongruous at one and the same time to assert that grace was necessary because of original sin and yet to reject the corollary doctrine of predestination (319).

Although Cassian was heavily critiqued for his theological writings by the followers of Augustine, other theologians such as John Climacus praised his works (Climacus, 1982:114).

After leaving Egypt, in 399 Cassian and Germanus traveled to Constantinople where Cassian was ordained a deacon by the then Patriarch of Constantinople, John Chrysostom. In 405, having gone to Rome to defend the illegal deposing of Chrysostom, Cassian was there ordained a priest. Cassian then went on to found a convent in Marseille and became the abbot of St.-Victor monastery in 415. He remained in Marseille as the monastery's abbot until his death in 435. Some have deemed Cassian one of the classic writers of Christian asceticism as his writings have had an immense influence on monastic life in the West (Englebert, 1994:283).

4.6.4 Pachomius

One of the major reformers of Egyptian monasticism in the 4th century was a monk by the name of Pachomius. Pachomius was born in the 3rd century (possibly 292) in the Egyptian Thebaid to heathen parents who provided for him an excellent secular education. Pachomius' upbringing led him toward modeling a sensible, prudent, and good character in his youth (Schaff, 2011). In his early 20's, Pachomius was conscripted into Constantine's army (Ward, 2003:16). It was likely that he served at a city prison guarding the inmates present there. It was during this time at the city prison where Pachomius came in contact with Christians who would frequently feed and take care of the soldiers (OCA, 2013).

After learning that the Christians in the city provided benevolence to the soldiers in result of their love for God, Pachomius vowed to become a Christian, and after returning home he later received baptism. Shortly after receiving baptism, Pachomius began to live a strict ascetic life where he became under the spiritual guidance of the desert-dweller Palamon (OCA, 2013). After ten years of living a life of asceticism, around the year 320, Pachomius heard a voice from God telling him to start a monastery in the former Egyptian village of Tebennisi, an endeavor Palamon blessed before his ensuing death (Shelley, 1995:119).

The monastery that Pachomius founded became more than a conglomeration of monks, but rather he was to found the first Christian monastic institution (Kauffman, 2009:7). Differing from the monastic rule of desert solitary isolation

founded by St. Anthony, Pachomius founded large coenobitic establishments (Hussey, 1990:335).

Instead of monks living solitarily or in groups of hermits and each possessing a particular law to themselves, such as in the monastic rule of Anthony, Pachomius established a common monastic life focusing on shared particulars in the areas of food, dress, labor, and modes of worship (Shelley, 1995:119). This change by Pachomius was a vast upgrade from the hermit's difficult life of isolation and Pachomius' rule allowed for monastic life to become more attainable for women (Shelley, 1995:119). Pachomius founded a monastery that incorporated a single large building to house all of the monks with a common refectory and a church (Ward, 2003:21). Pachomius also prescribed the monk's clothing attire in that monks should adorn unshorn sheepskin cloaks modeled after "Elijah's mantle" of the wandering prophets mentioned in the Letter to the Hebrews (Ward, 2003:128-9).

This monastic model founded by Pachomius grew quickly in the Egyptian desert with an additional seven monasteries being established and more than 7,000 monks coming under the administration of Pachomius (OCA, 2013). Soon after Pachomius, the number of monasteries grew to over fifty in the Nitrian mountains modeled after his communal rule as well as the semi-anchoritic type (Schaff, 2011).

Albeit, severe and strict with himself, Pachomius used great kindness in demanding monks to observe the exactness of the monastic rule, which led monks toward decreasing their pride and increasing their level of humility (OCA, 2013). In later days, the coenobitic monks gave attention to theological studies and other Christian leaders began to propagate the coenobitic model of monasticism in other parts of the known world. Philip Schaff (2011) comments on the propagating of the Pachomius' coenobitic monastic model:

Ephraim propagated it in Mesopotamia; Eustathius of Sebaste in Armenia and Paphlagonia; Basil the Great in Pontus and Cappadocia. The latter provided this monasteries and nunneries

with clergy, and gave them an improved rule, which, before his death, was accepted by some either thousand monks, and translated by Rufinus into Latin.

St. Pachomius fell ill in result from the pestilence that was prominent in his region, and his closest disciple St. Theodore attended to him until his death (OCA, 2013). Pachomius died around the year 348 at the age of fifty-three, and was buried near one of the monasteries that he had established (OCA, 2013).

4.7 Conclusion

Numerous scholars have put forth excellent research into the lives and history of Egyptian monasticism. Others such as Benedicta Ward have provided poignant accounts of the oral history of the Desert Fathers' sayings and others, such as Thomas Merton, have offered relevant interpretations of those sayings for the modern reader. The spiritual ascetic practices of the Desert Fathers have continued to fascinate readers. When researching and examining the lives of the Desert Fathers, one is left with questions of the appropriate level of effect(s) on the modern-day Christian:

The ultimate question this topic—early desert monasticism—raises is, what should we make of it all? Was this movement ultimately a force for good or for ill? Did men like Anthony promote the gospel or hinder it? Are these Desert Fathers (and a few others) godly models to emulate or misguided enthusiasts to pity?

These questions are not rhetorical; the events may be far away, but the issues early monks addressed are very much alive. How are we to obey Jesus' command to sell our possessions and follow him (Mark 10:21)? What does Paul mean when he says Christians are to pray unceasingly (1 Thess. 5:17)? (Galli, 1999: "Anthony").

The practices of the Desert Fathers have endured through the ages as on-lookers of their lives, then and now, recognize the simplistic goal of the Desert Fathers'

practices, which is to pursue deeper intimacy with God.

Within the overall research agenda of this dissertation, chapter 4 is invaluable for the following reasons. First, chapter 4 comprises one of several components (cf. chapters 3-4), each of which present an accurate and unbiased historical research of the life and piety of the Desert Fathers and Sundar Singh. Second, chapter 4 engages one of the three primary objectives of this research, namely, to introduce readers to the personalities and history of the legendary monastic Christians of Egypt, the Desert Fathers, as well as provide an introduction to ascetic spiritual practices of past and present monastics. Third, each of the three objectives derived from the main research problem in chapter 1 are engaged in a section of its own; therefore, each chapter finds relevance within itself as being a contribution and part of the whole. Finally, in the providing of a synthesized historical account of the Egyptian monastic movement and an introduction to ascetic spirituality the appropriate context in which to analyze the Desert Fathers' spiritual practices becomes grounded. By creating this context, the foundation is then placed to begin to answer the guiding research question of investigating whether the Desert Fathers share similarities in their respective ascetic practices to Singh's own ascetic practices. By doing this, the researcher can then begin to investigate whether there is credibility to the researcher's hypothesis that by analyzing the literary sources of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, numerous, parallel examples of spiritual practices will likely be identified.

CHAPTER 5

SURVEY OF THE ASCETIC SPIRITUAL PRACTICES OF PRAYER AND MEDITATION

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to become the first installation in the analysis process of the spiritual practices of Singh and the Desert Fathers, specifically the ascetic practices of prayer and meditation. This chapter becomes vital in understanding the main question guiding the present study of whether the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh share similarities in their spiritual practices. The goal of this chapter provide elucidation to two subsidiary questions guiding the research, specifically: in what ways do the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh differ from those practiced by the Desert Fathers and, whether there are similarities and differences in the methods of prayer and meditation utilized by Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. In addressing the aforementioned sub-questions, the guiding research problem can then begin to be partially answered. The hypothesis statement, that the greatest amount of similarities in the ascetic practices of Singh and the Desert Fathers will be found in this chapter's analysis, will also become clearer in its validity.

Within the passages, the nature of what is specifically encompassed in the Desert Fathers and Sundar Singh's practices of prayer and meditation will be examined in order to identify any themes, habits, and differences. The physical positions that are used in the practices of prayer and meditation by Singh and the fathers will also be examined. The attitudes and reasons for the Desert Fathers and Singh's actions of praying and meditating will also be scrutinized within the textual examples. After the introductory section (5.1), section 5.2 will scrutinize the texts authored by Singh himself to identify examples of prayer and meditation found within those texts. In section 5.3, other texts not offered by Singh will also be surveyed to identify examples of Singh's ascetic practices of prayer and meditation. In section 5.4, the essential texts regarding the Desert Fathers will be

surveyed for examples of the ascetic practices of prayer and meditation. Section 5.5 will put forth a thorough analysis of textual instances of prayer and meditation from within surveyed texts regarding Singh and the Desert Fathers. Section 5.6 will provide an evaluation and findings of the textual data for similarities and differences in the ascetic prayer and meditation practices of Singh and the Desert Fathers, followed by a conclusion (5.7) of the findings the relevance of the chapter to the overall research agenda.

5.2 Singh authored texts

5.2.1 Prayer

1. Miracles are in accordance with those higher laws. In prayer we come to know gradually these higher laws. The highest miracle is the filling of our souls with peace and joy (Singh, 1924:11).

Looking at this passage penned by Singh, the Sadhu refers to prayer as the means to coming “to know gradually” the higher laws. These higher laws are in accordance, or in harmony, with miracles. Singh’s description of prayer appears to find marked similarities to how Chumley (2011:23) states that the experience of practicing noetic prayer by monks, and that through the repeating of a word or phrase, one can experience the dislocation “from the ordinary life so that they can commune with God.” Out of such prayer, Singh contends which is in accordance with the higher laws, the “highest miracle” is the filling of one’s soul with “peace and joy,” which appears the concluding purpose or the reason for prayer.

2. A man praying intently in a cave can help men considerably by his prayer. Influences issue from him and spread all around effectively, though silently, just as wireless messages are communicated by invisible means, and just as the words we speak are conveyed by mysterious vibrations to others (Singh, 1924:12).

In this passage there are clear examples by Singh of what or how prayer is brought forth, as well where and why prayer is undertaken. The act of prayer is associated with a number of descriptive terms “intently” and “silently” that can be assumed to be particular descriptions of Singh’s interpretation of the method of prayer. Regarding the terminology of “silently,” Singh provides metaphors for this prayer intent of silence in that he compares it to communication of “invisible means” and as “mysterious vibrations to others.” Heiler (2012:97) contends that to Singh this type of the invisible means of prayer was a direct experience of the “Reality of Reality” of the higher world.

Singh also provides more in-depth description of prayer in this aforementioned passage in that he identifies the person praying as a sole man versus multiple persons praying, although it cannot be determined on whether the sole man is one participant in the greater whole of numerous praying participants. The passage also states that the sole reason for a person’s act of praying is that it “helps men considerably.” Again, whether the praying person is to be considered in the plural form *men*, cannot be determined, but it can be assumed that Singh contends that a man’s prayer helps others considerably. It should also be noted that Singh identifies a setting of a man’s prayer in the passage, which he identifies as a man praying intently and silently in a “cave.” This silence and intentional prayer that Singh described appears to have some similarities to the hesychastic practices of monastics, which finds its roots in the practicing of stillness and silence (Chumley, 2011:21).

3. God became man in Christ, and speaks to us through Him, and we must follow Him in all obedience without asking: How? Or Why? But we can never hear His sweet voice until we have closed our ears to the distracting voice of the world, nor can we meet have fellowship with Him till we desire it with our whole hearts. If we ourselves are not silent, we cannot hear what others are saying, nor can we understand them fully, unless we give them our full attention. So, to hear the voice of our Heavenly Father, we must wait in silence before Him with our whole mind and heart intent on Him (Singh, 1926:2-3).

With the assumption that Singh is referring to prayer in this passage when he references hearing “the voice of our Heavenly Father,” many attributes of prayer can be identified. Singh is assumed to be equating the act of praying as one being enabled to hear the “sweet voice” of Christ in which God speaks to man (“us”). In order to hear this sweet voice, Singh refers to three other pre-actions that must be undertaken by the prayer/listener: “following Him (Christ) in obedience without asking how? Or Why”; closing “our ears to the distracting voice of the world”; and that “we desire it with our whole hearts.” Again, Singh expounds on hearing the “voice of our Heavenly Father” in prayer by stating that the one who prays must “wait in silence” with their “whole mind and heart intent on Him (Father/Christ).” Chumley (2011:21) described ascetic prayer in similar ways in that in prayer “heightened consciousness in which one is immersed in the grace of God” and that the experiences gleaned from the practice are “intangible and indescribable.” Clearly, Singh puts forth that by undertaking the act of prayer, prayer has a type of close association or relationship with the hearing the voice of God through Christ and that in the silence, the voice of God can then be heard

5.2.2 Meditation

4. The brain is a very subtle and sensitive instrument, furnished with many fine senses which, in meditation, receive messages from the unseen world and stimulate ideas far above normal human thought (Singh, 1924:14).

In this short passage regarding the spiritual practice of meditation, Singh writes that in meditation, one receives “messages from the unseen world” and that meditation “stimulates ideas far above normal human thought.” Singh, in this passage, does not specifically discuss the process or actions that makes up the practice of meditation. Similarly, Chumley (2011:21), when describing monastic prayer, uses phrasing such as “heightened consciousness in which one is immersed in the grace of God” to describe prayer and meditation and that the results of the practice are “intangible and indescribable”.

5. In meditation the real condition of the soul is revealed. While engaged thus, we are, in a sense, giving an opportunity to God to speak to us and to bless us with His richest blessings (Singh, 1924:16).

Singh contends in this passage that one of the outcomes of meditation is that to the person meditating, the “real condition of their soul is revealed.” Singh goes on to elaborate that in the process of the person meditating, that spiritual practice gives an “opportunity to God to speak” to the individual and, secondly, bless the individual “with His richest blessings.” We see similarities in Singh’s emphasis that by practicing meditation the true condition of a person’s soul is revealed to the way that Climacus (1981:262) describes the relationship between stillness and the soul, when he writes: “The start of stillness is the rejection of all noisiness as something that will trouble the depths of the soul”

5.3 Other literary sources on Singh

5.3.1 Prayer

6. Clad only in his saffron robe with a blanket over his shoulder he went quietly on his way, spending the early hours of each day in solitary meditation and prayer, walking mile after mile across the plains, stopping to preach wherever he thought he saw an opportunity (Parker, 2010:67).

In this passage, first describing Singh’s dress in a saffron robe and his carrying of a blanket, Singh’s acts of prayer and meditation are closely linked with quietness, as the passage describes Singh practicing his prayer and meditation “quietly on his way.” Singh practiced this prayer and meditation, according to this narrative passage, during the early hours of the day, as well as alone in a solitary format. This solitary meditation and prayer preceded the actions of traveling by foot and preaching when given the opportunity.

7. One day he was feeling so burdened in mind and spirit about the whole matter that he wandered off alone, sat down under a tree and started to pray. Little knowing that his persecutor had seen him and stolen up behind him, Sundar prayed aloud with tears, beseeching the Lord to show him if he himself was to blame and forgive him for anything he had done amiss. He prayed especially for the one who, unbeknown to him, was crouching behind the tree listening as he prayed to God to bless him and pleaded that real love might be established between them (Parker, 2010:65).

In this passage, Singh's prayer is preceded by having an emotional burden in his "mind and spirit" about a matter that had previously occurred with a fellow student; a particular conflict had driven Singh to practice prayer. The setting of his prayer is secluded under a tree, and although the fellow student had "stolen up behind him" as Singh practiced his prayer, Singh believed that he was alone. His prayer is marked by it being audible, in which Singh's fellow student hears this prayer, and that tears were said to have accompanied Singh's prayer. The content of his prayer is twofold in that Singh beseeches the Lord to "show him (Singh) if he himself was to blame" for the matter, and asking of forgiveness "for anything he had done amiss." In his prayer, Singh also prayed that God bless his fellow student and that a "real love might be established between" himself and his fellow student. Heiler (2012:100-1) interprets such times of prayer of petition by Singh as a middle ground between of neither earthly nor spiritual blessings, but rather true "intercourse with God," which does not exclude childlike petitions.

8. "Don't be afraid," said the sadhu reassuringly, "you are not going to interpret ---the One you are serving will do that," and then he suggested that they should pray. The two of them knelt together, and the sadhu prayed (Parker, 2010:123).

In this passage, before Singh and his young interpreter are to publicly speak to a crowd, his interpreter is fraught with fear about interpreting for the event. Singh offers the reasoning for his interpreter to not fear, that the "One" the interpreter serves, will do the interpreting. Singh then suggests to the interpreter that they

should pray. The method of the prayer consists of both Singh and his interpreter kneeling on the ground together, which varies in style from other instances where Singh prays alone and solitarily. It then reads that Singh then prayed, and it is inconclusive whether this is done aloud or silent, or whether his interpreter also prayed in some format. It is inconclusive from this passage alone who exactly was invoked by Singh prayers. The invoking of the “One” is likely a reference to the Christian God, the God the interpreter serves, and that the purpose of the prayer was to beseech divine assistance in the interpreting of Singh’s preaching.

9. Quietly he [Vincent] moved across the verandah, and shone his torch on the bed. To his surprise, it was empty. Then he shone it around the room, and there, in a corner, was the sadhu. He was sitting cross-legged, his hands clasped together, eyes closed, and his face aglow with joy. He was in prayer.”“He [Vincent] knew, too, of the sadhu’s habit of rising early for private prayer, but there had been something different about the secret prayer in the silence of the night (Parker, 2010:126-127).

The setting of Singh’s prayer in this instance is during the silence of the night. Within his verandah, Singh is seen by his friend Vincent to be seated in the corner of the room. Physically, Singh is positioned in a cross-legged manner with his hands clasped together, his eyes closed, and his face is aglow. The author interprets that Vincent perceives during this session of prayer, Singh’s face is aglow with “joy.” The passage goes on to elaborate on Vincent’s knowledge of Singh’s habit of prayer. The author identifies that Singh’s habit of prayer incorporated “rising early,” and that Singh’s prayer is identified as being “private.” The passage then reads that Vincent perceived something different about Singh’s prayer that night and refers to it as a type of a “secret prayer.”

5.3.2 Meditation

10. His days started with hours of prayer and meditation, continuing the custom started as a child under the influence of his mother

(Parker, 2010:50).

By examining the above passage it is apparent that Singh's days began with prayer and meditation. The exact amount of these morning prayers and meditation cannot be determined, but Singh is referred to as praying and meditating for an unspecified amount of "hours." It is noted that Singh's morning-prayer and meditation was a "custom" that he had practiced since he was a child before his Christian conversion while under the influence of his mother. The consistent practice of prayer and meditation finds similarities to that of the monastic Prayer Rules described in the *The Lausiatic History* (Pall., HL; Palladius & Clarke, 2010), which were Rules focused on the daily practice prayer, hospitality, and labor.

11. There in the stillness of the forest, the silence broken only by the songs of birds or rustlings of little creatures moving in the undergrowth, Sundar poured over his Bible, leaning against a tree meditating on what he had read, opening his young heart to its influences (Parker, 2010:39).

Within the passage, Singh is depicted as meditating on a particular subject. The subject of meditation is identified as what he had read as he "poured over his Bible." Singh's physical position during this meditation practice is leaning against a tree, whether he is standing or sitting is unknown. The setting of his meditation is one of tranquility described as being within the "stillness of the forest," marked by the "silence broken only by the songs of the birds" or the "rustlings of little creatures moving in the undergrowth." The author of the passage notes the results of Singh's meditation on the Biblical Scriptures as his opening of "his young heart to its influences."

12. He was not happy in the school. The rhythm of life was different from that to which he had been accustomed. The routine in the compound of the Singhs followed much the same free-and-easy pattern each day, but it was coloured by coming and goings, by quarrels, or cheerful rowdy games among the boys. And it was

always possible for him to slip away to a secluded spot to meditate or prayer or read his New Testament (Parker, 2010:36).

The above passage describes Singh's practice of meditation and prayer. Specifically, contrasted here is the school's rhythm of life to that of the Singh family's compound. The author notes that within his family's compound in comparison to at his school, Singh had the ability to slip away from others in order to pray. A "secluded spot" is noted as the setting of the times of slipping away for Singh to meditate or to pray. It is worth noting that Singh's meditation in these times of slipping away is differentiated from praying (by the "or"), as well as from the reading of the New Testament.

13. The sadhu responded to the question quite readily (regarding secret prayer). There was no mystery to be jealously guarded in what he did. "It takes fifteen or twenty minutes for me to concentrate," he admitted frankly. "Then I begin to prayer. But I do not use words." He paused a moment, then continue more quietly, with instinctive reverence as he revealed an intimacy not all would be able to understand. "I feel my beloved Jesus so close to me that I place my hands in his...When morning comes and I have to leave my prayer, it is an effort to break away from my beloved" (Parker, 2010:127).

Recording the conversation between Singh and his disciple, the author indicates Singh's reply to the question about his method of practicing secret prayer. Singh states that the process of his prayer involves first having a period of concentration that lasts fifteen or twenty minutes, which is said to have preceded the beginning of actual prayer. It is noted that Singh remarks that within in his time of prayer, that he does "not use words." He regards this intimate prayer time neither as a time of speaking or dialogue but rather, in this practice of prayer Singh feels Jesus so close to him that he places his hands in Jesus' hands. The passage does not provide a definitive beginning time for this period of intimate prayer. It can be assumed that Singh's prayer began the previous night before because he says that when the morning comes he has to make an effort to break away and leave

his prayer time with Jesus.

5.4 Desert Fathers essential texts

5.4.1 Prayer

1. There are some, too, to whom it has seemed good that in the day offices of prayer, viz., Terce, Sext, and Nones, the number of Psalms and prayers should be made to correspond exactly to the number of the hours at which the services are offered up to the Lord. Some have thought fit that six Psalms should be assigned to each service of the day (*Cass. Incarn. Dom.*; Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:424).

From the above passage, the Desert Fathers are noted as using an office of daily prayers that guided them toward the utilization of commonly held times of prayer. These prayers services commonly included Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers and Compline. During these hours of prayer, the passage says that the corresponding Psalms and prayers were to be utilized. It is undetermined from the passage whether a book of common prayer was utilized or if a common or local held tradition was used instead. The passage elaborates that some monks assigned six Psalms to correspond with each service. Although not mentioned in the above passage, Merton (2012:51) identifies that for a number of the Desert Fathers, the receiving of others with hospitality was also incorporated into a desert monk's daily prayer rule.

2. These aforesaid prayers, then, they begin and finish in such a way that when the Psalm is ended they do not hurry at once to kneel down, as some of us do in this country, who, before the Psalm is fairly ended, make haste to prostrate themselves for prayer, in their hurry to finish the service as quickly as possible. For though we have chosen to exceed the limit which was anciently fixed by our predecessors, supplying the number of the remaining Psalms, we are anxious to get to the end of the service, thinking of the refreshment

of the wearied body rather than looking for profit and benefit from the prayer. Among them, therefore, it is not so, but before they bend their knees they pray for a few moments, and while they are standing up spend the greater part of the time in prayer. And so after this, for the briefest space of time, they prostrate themselves to the ground, as if but adoring the Divine Mercy, and as soon as possible rise up, and again standing erect with 'outspread hands — just as they had been standing to pray before — remain with thoughts intent upon their prayers. For when you lie prostrate for any length of time upon the ground you are more open to an attack, they say, not only of wandering thoughts but also slumber. And would that we too did not know the truth of this by experience and daily practice — we who when prostrating ourselves on the ground too often wish for this attitude to be prolonged for some time, not for the sake of our prayer so much as for the sake of resting. But when he who is to “collect” the prayer rises from the ground they all start up at once, so that no one would venture to bend the knee before he bows down, nor to delay when he has risen from the ground, lest it should be thought that he has offered his own prayer independently instead of following the leader to the close (*Cass. Incarn. Dom.*; Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:428).

This passage describes the practices of prayer services of different groups of monks. According to the passage's description, after the Psalms had ended, “they do not hurry at once to kneel down.” It can be assumed from this passage that during the prayers and Psalm readings, the monks would start from a standing position, not from a sitting or prostrating position. There appears to be similarities in this passage to the prescription found in the *Philokalia* that monks “should spend most of our time in prayer, in singing psalms and reading the Holy Scriptures...” (Palmer, 2011:275). The passage states that other monks outside of the group were known to quickly “prostrate themselves for prayer, in their hurry to finish the service as quickly as possible.” The passage goes on to describe and critique the monk's process of prayer that the author says provides “refreshment of the wearied body rather than looking for profit and benefit.” This process

includes, before bending their knees, the monks would spend a few moments in prayer. After prostrating briefly on the ground and adoring the Divine Mercy, the monk quickly “as soon as possible” rose up to the standing position with outstretched hands, and then would “remain with thoughts intent upon their prayers.”

The author then proceeds to critique the aforementioned practice ever so slightly by saying that instead of remaining prostrate for as briefly as possible, his tradition’s practice of prayer wishes “for this attitude to be prolonged for some time” for in the prostrate position, one becomes “more open to an attack” of both “wandering thoughts” and “slumber.” The processing of thoughts were vital to the Desert Fathers as “wandering” thoughts have a direct correlation to the monk’s enflaming of undesired passions (Brakke, 2009:30). The author alludes that this prayer is done with numerous other praying monks as the passage reads that when the monks rise from the ground “they all start up at once.” It continues that the monks follow this common formulaic prayer with others present so that the monk’s prayer is not offered “independently instead of following the leader to the close.”

3. A brother asked Abba Poemen, "How should I live in the cell?" He said to him, "Living in your cell clearly means manual work, eating only once a day, silence, meditation; but really making progress in the cell, means to experience contempt for yourself wherever you go, not to neglect the hours of prayer and to pray secretly. If you happen to have time without manual work, take up prayer and do it without disquiet. The perfection of these things is to live in good company and be free from bad" (Ward, 2003:190).

This passage opens with a disciple asking the wise elder, Abba Poemen, how a monk should live in his cell. Abba Poemen proceeds to dictate the rule of life a monk should strive for while living in his cell which includes manual work, eating only once a day, silence, and meditation. This prescription of work and meditation is reiterated to the modern-day monastic in the *Philokalia*, which describes that “meditation on the scriptures” was partnered with bodily fasting as well as with

“toil and manual labour” (Palmer, 2011:75).

Abba Poemen then proceeds to describe to the asking monk that if they desire to make progress in the cell, they are to experience contempt for themselves wherever they go and to pray. It is worth noting that the passage correlates prayer with the other practices of manual work, fasting, silence, and meditation. The rule Abba Poemen describes is “not to neglect the hours of prayer,” and to “pray secretly.” Abba Poemen also tells the asking monk that if a time comes about during the day that is without manual work, the monk is to “take up prayer and do it without disquiet.” Taking up prayer without disquiet likely references praying without worry or anxiety. Abba Poemen goes on to summarize the purpose and perfection of these practices as living “in good company” and being “free from bad.” Like Poemen, Athanasius also prescribed corresponding instruction of denying oneself as the epitome of the Christian life that included the practices of prayer and vigils, the study of Scripture and the renunciation of sex, food, and wealth, even for married individuals (Brakke, 1995:144).

4. It was said of Abba Tithoes that when he stood up to pray, if he did not quickly lower his hands, his spirit was rapt to heaven. So if it happened that some brothers were praying with him, he hastened to lower his hands so that his spirit should not be rapt and he should not pray for too long (Ward, 2003:236).

The passage tells of the prayer style practiced by the Abba Tithoes. The passage indicates that when Abba Tithoes prayed in a standing position (“he stood up to pray”), and while in that standing position, “he did not quickly lower his hands.” The author/observer of Abba Tithoes states that while Abba Tithoes prayed “his spirit was rapt to heaven.” The author then goes on to describe how Abba Tithoes augmented his prayer when others prayed with him. This seems to be consistent with the meditation style that Wortley (2006:6) describes, when he writes:

It seems to have been the custom that, when a monk has visitors, he would ‘recite’ in silence, it might have been to this custom that the father was referring who said: ‘taking no thought’ [Mt 6:25 etc.],

keeping silence, and secret meditation bring forth purity.' He may even have been advocating silent recitation, but he could have meant the *melete* [meditation], which was performed aloud, but out of sight and beyond the hearing of any man. The difficulty when one lived in community (rather than in a single dwelling was that everybody knew what you were doing.

It reads that Abba Tithoes “hastened to lower his hands so that his spirit should not be rapt and he should not pray for too long.” It can be concluded that when the Abba Tithoes prayed with his hands outstretched, a corresponding action occurred in that he would be taken to the heavenly realms. It was also possible that Abba Tithoes prayed in this position for a long period of time. The passage is ambiguous to why Abba Tithoes chose to augment his prayer style of outstretching his arms for a period of time when he was joined in prayer with others.

5. The brethren came to Abba Anthony and laid before him a passage from Leviticus. The old man went out into the desert, secretly followed by Abba Ammonas, who knew that this was his custom. Abba Anthony went a long way off and stood there praying, crying in a loud voice, 'God, send Moses, to make me understand this saying.' Then there came a voice speaking with him. Abba Ammonas said that although he heard the voice speaking with him, he could not understand what it said (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:7).

This passage begins when an unnumbered group of monks had come to Abba Anthony to seek the meaning of a passage from the book of Leviticus. Being secretly followed by Abba Ammonas, Abba Anthony's is described as practicing his custom of his going out to the desert alone. While “a long way off” in the desert, Abba Anthony proceed to pray in the standing position and then “crying in a loud voice,” said “God, send Moses, to make me understand this saying.” After praying and asking God for Moses' assistance in interpreting the passage, a voice is said to have responded to Abba Anthony. Whether the voice was that of God,

Moses, or another is inconclusive, due to the fact that Abba Ammonas heard the voice but could not understand what the voice said. In this passage, prayer corresponds with imploring God for assistance in providing spiritual insight into a scriptural passage.

6. Abba Zeno said, “If a man wants God to hear his prayer quickly, then before he prays for anything else, even his own soul, when he stands and stretches out his hands towards God, he must pray with all his heart for his enemies. Through this action God will hear everything that he asks” (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:67).

The passage describes Abba Zeno’s response to the question of how a man goes about getting God to hear a man’s prayer quickly. Abba Zeno describes the process that an individual must first perform before praying for anything, including his own soul. The praying individual must pray in the standing position and stretch out his hands. Next, the praying individual must pray with “all his heart for his enemies.” After praying in this formula of standing with outstretched arms and praying for one’s enemies, Abba Zeno tells that by doing these actions “God will hear everything that he asks (prays for).”

7. Abba Macarius was asked, “How should one pray?” The old man said, “There is no need at all to make long discourses; it is enough to stretch out one’s hands and say, ‘Lord, as you will, and as you know, have mercy.’ And if the conflict grows fiercer say, ‘Lord, help!’ He knows very well what we need and he shows us his mercy” (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:131).

When asked how one should pray, Abba Marcarius responds to the asking party by prescribing a method of prayer. Abba Macarius replies that in prayer there is no need “to make long discourses.” He described that in prayer it is enough “to stretch out one’s hands” and to say the concise phrase, “Lord, as you will, and as you know, have mercy.” Abba Marcarius then goes on to describe that within this process of stretching out one’s hands and saying the phrase, if “the conflict grows fiercer,” the praying individual is to say, “Lord, help!” It is inconclusive from

the passage what exactly the “conflict” Abba Marcarius is describing. Marcarius proceeds to describe that in this praying process, “He (assumed to be the Lord) knows very well what we need and he shows us his mercy.”

8. AND that you may see the character of true prayer I will give you not my own opinion but that of the blessed Anthony: whom we have known sometimes to have been so persistent in prayer that often as he was praying in a transport of mind, when the sunrise began to appear, we have heard him in the fervour of his spirit declaiming: Why do you hinder me, O sun, who art arising for this very purpose...to withdraw me from the brightness of this true light? And his also is this heavenly and more than human utterance on the end of prayer: That is not, said he, a perfect prayer, wherein a monk understands himself and the words which he prays. And if we too, as far as our slender ability allows, may venture to add anything to this splendid utterance, we will bring forward the marks of prayer which are heard from the Lord, as far as we have tried them (*Cass. Incarn. Dom.*; Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:308).

Similar to the previous passage, this passage also describes the prayer methods of St. Anthony the Great. The author describes Anthony’s prayer in that he was “so persistent in prayer that often as he was praying in a transport of mind, when the sunrise began to appear...” It can be concluded that Anthony prayed during the night, at least in this retelling of his prayer methods. The passage goes on to describe Anthony’s asking in “fervour of his spirit” to the sun: “Why do you hinder me, O sun, who art arising for this very purpose...to withdraw me from the brightness of this true light?” The passage also mentioned that during these prayer sessions, Anthony was transported of mind. The passage goes on to describe “a perfect prayer” when a monk “understands himself and the words which he prays.”

The author (Cassian) then states, if one’s ability allows, a monk can venture to add anything to “this splendid utterance.” It is inconclusive from the context of the passage to what the “splendid utterance” definitively contains. It might be the

prescribed monk's understanding of himself and what he prays or whether it is Anthony's exclamation to the sun. Either way, the author claims that adding anything to the splendid utterance will bring forth "the marks of prayer which are heard from the Lord, as far as we have tried them."

9. Before all things however we ought most carefully to observe the Evangelical precept, which tells us to enter into our chamber and shut the door and pray to our Father, which may be fulfilled by us as follows: We pray within our chamber, when removing our hearts inwardly from the din of all thoughts and anxieties, we disclose our prayers in secret and in closest intercourse to the Lord. We pray with closed doors when with closed lips and complete silence we pray to the searcher not of words but of hearts. We pray in secret when from the heart and fervent mind we disclose our petitions to God alone, so that no hostile powers are even able to discover the character of our petition. Wherefore we should pray in complete silence, not only to avoid distracting the brethren standing nearby our whispers or louder utterances, and disturbing the thoughts of those who are praying, but also that the purpose of our petition may be concealed from our enemies who are especially on the watch against us while we are praying (*Cass. Incarn. Dom.*; Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:315).

This passage begins with a prescription that before praying, the praying monk must first observe the Evangelic precept, which tells the monk to "enter into our chamber" and to "shut the door" and then to "pray to our Father." The author then states that these precepts are symbolic in nature. The entering into one's chamber is the "removing our hearts inwardly from the din of all thoughts and anxieties." It continues that the monk should "disclose his prayers in secret and in closest intercourse to the Lord." It is worth noting that prayer in this passage is aligned with practicing prayer in secrecy. The "shutting of the door" in prayer is when one "with closed lips and complete silence we pray to the searcher not of words but of hearts."

Again, the passage states that a monk's prayer is to be practiced in secret, and that by praying in secret "from the heart and fervent mind we disclose our petitions to God alone..." By praying alone and in secret, "no hostile powers are even able to discover the character of our petition." The monk's prayer in silence also does not distract or disturb the thoughts of the other monks present that are also praying. The author also contends that the prayers offered in silence conceal the purpose of our prayer "from our enemies who are especially on the watch against us while we are praying."

5.4.2 Meditation

10. And therefore they supplement their prayer by the addition of labour, lest slumber might steal upon them as idlers. For as they scarcely enjoy any time of leisure, so there is no limit put to their spiritual meditations. For practicing equally the virtues of the body and of the soul, they balance what is due to the outer by what is profitable to the inner man steadying the slippery motions of the heart and the shifting fluctuations of the thoughts by the weight of labour, like some strong and immovable anchor, by which the changeableness and wanderings of the heart, fastened within the barriers of the cell, may be shut up in some perfectly secure harbour, and so, intent only on spiritual meditation and watchfulness over the thoughts, may not only forbid the watchful mind to give a hasty consent to any evil suggestions, but may also keep it safe from any unnecessary and idle thoughts: so that it is not easy to say which depends on the other — I mean, whether they practice their incessant manual labour for the sake of spiritual meditation, or whether it is for the sake of their continuous labors that they acquire such remarkable spiritual proficiency and light of knowledge (*Cass. Incarn. Dom.*; Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:434).

Regarding the practicing of meditation, the passage indicates that the monks in order to avoid any time leisure or slumber as an idler, they would "supplement their prayer by the addition of labour" in order to not limit their time in spiritual

meditation. The author states that through this process of work, prayer, and meditation, the monks “practice equally the virtues of the body and the soul.” The author elaborates on said practice by using nautical imagery to describe the balancing of the body and soul in order to provide for the monk a “secure harbour” within the confines of his cell. This secure harbour consists of the monk’s “intent only on spiritual meditation and watchfulness” over their thoughts, which provides the mind protection from “evil suggestions” and “unnecessary and idle thoughts.” The author then claims that whatever the reasoning is for practicing manual labour, such as for the sake of spiritual meditation or for the sake of “continuous labors,” the monk acquires “such remarkable spiritual proficiency and light of knowledge” through his labor.

11. Abba Ammoes said, ‘With Abba Bitimius, we went to see Abba Achilles. We heard him meditating on this saying, "Do not fear, Jacob, to go down into Egypt" (Gen. 46.3). For a long time he remained making this meditation. When we knocked, he opened the door and asked us where we came from. Being afraid to say we came from the Cells, we replied, from the mountain of Nitria. Then he said to us, "What can I do for you who come from so far away?" He asked us to come in. We noticed that he had been working the whole night and had woven a great deal and we asked him to say a word to us. He said to us, "From yesterday evening till now, I have woven twenty measures, although I do not need it; but it is for fear God should be angry and accuse me, saying, ‘why did you not work, when you could have done so?’ That is why I give myself this labour and do as much as I can." So we went away, greatly edified (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:29-30).

This passage retells of the time Abbas Ammoes and Bitimius visited Abba Achilles. Upon arriving at Achilles’ abode (likely a cell), the two abbas could hear Abba Achilles meditating aloud on the passage of Genesis 46.3. The above passage says that Achilles remained in meditation for “a long time,” but the passage is ambiguous on exactly how long Achilles’ meditated on the passage while Abba Ammoes and Abba Bitimius listened.

After initial greetings, the two abbas entered into Achilles' home and noticed that Abba Achilles had been working the whole night weaving, likely a basket, which was the customary labor for many monks. Abba Achilles said that he had been weaving from "yesterday evening till now," and had woven twenty measures. Achilles explains his reasoning for weaving so intently in that he feared that "God should be angry and accuse [him], saying, 'Why did you not work, when you could have done so?'" The recounting of Abba Achilles' meditation on the Genesis passage in his abode shows a direct correlation to his labor of weaving, as the weaving and meditation appear to overlap time-wise while the two abbas were listening to Abba Achilles meditating aloud.

12. And our profession too has its own goal and end, for which we undergo all sorts of toils not merely without weariness but actually with delight; on account of which the want of food in fasting is no trial to us, the weariness of our vigils becomes a delight; reading and constant meditation on the Scriptures does not pall upon us; and further incessant toil, and self-denial, and the privation of all things, and the horrors also of this vast desert have no terrors for us (*Cass. Incarn. Dom.*; Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:2).

In this passage, a Desert Father describes a monk's experiences in their personal "profession." He presents a number of daily experiences that a monk undertakes "not merely without weariness but actually with delight." He mentioned the "want of food in fasting," "the weariness of vigils," and the act "reading and constant meditation on the Scriptures." He also mentions other daily practices of monks such as "further incessant toil," self-denial, deprivation of all things, and the horrors of the vast desert. It is worth noting here that reading and constant meditation is focused specifically on Scripture and that the practice did not become dull to the monks.

13. For this purpose frequent reading and continual meditation on the Scriptures is employed that from thence an opportunity for spiritual recollection may be given to us, therefore the frequent singing of Psalms is used, that thence constant feelings of

compunction may be provided, and earnest vigils and fasts and prayers, that the mind may be brought low and not mind earthly things, but contemplate things celestial, for if these things are dropped and carelessness creeps on us, the mind being hardened with the foulness of sin is sure to incline in a carnal direction and fall away (*Cass. Incarn. Dom.*; Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:28).

Cassian contends in the above passage that monks practiced “frequent reading” paired with “continual meditation on the Scriptures.” The results of the reading and meditation on the Scriptures offered “an opportunity for spiritual recollection.” The monks are noted as employing the practices of “singing of Psalms,” “feelings of compunction,” and “vigils and fasts and prayers.” These practices assisted the monks in contemplating celestial things instead of earthly things. Without the contemplating of celestial things, “carelessness creeps” was said to creep into the monk and he would then become “hardened to the foulness of sin” with the likelihood of inclining toward the “carnal direction” and then later falling away.

14. And especially he counseled them to meditate continually on the apostle's word, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath” And he considered this was spoken of all commandments in common, and that not on wrath alone, but not on any other sin of ours, ought the sun to go down. For it was good and needful that neither the sun should condemn us for an evil by day nor the moon for a sin by night, or even for an evil thought. That this state may I be words, for he says, “Try your own selves and prove your own selves” daily, therefore, let each one take from himself the tale of his actions both by day and night; and if he have sinned, let him cease from it; while if he have not, let him not be boastful. But let him abide in that which is good, without being negligent, nor condemning his neighbours, nor justifying himself, “until the Lord come who searcheth out hidden things” as saith the blessed Apostle Paul. For often unawares we do things that we know not of but the Lord seeth all things (*Vit. Ant.* 2; Athanasius, 2010:54-55).

In this recorded dialogue with Anthony the Great, unknown monks are counseled on what subject they are to meditate. The monks are counseled to “meditate continually on the apostle’s (Paul) word, ‘Let not the sun go down upon your wrath’” (Eph. 4.26). Whether the monks are to meditate in general on this phrase or whether they were implored to meditate on this particular phrase in a specific context is ambiguous from the passage. The passage states that Anthony considered that this particular phrase was “spoken of all commandments in common,” and that no wrath, sin, or evil thought should be present to a monk when the sun goes down.

The author of the passage elaborates that not having a monk’s sin or evil thought present at the setting of the sun fulfills the additional phrase of the apostle for a person to ‘[t]ry your own selves and prove your own selves’ (2 Cor. 13.5). The passage expounds on this phrase that the monk is called to “take from himself the tale of his actions both by day and night,” and if one has sinned to cease from it and if he has not sinned, to not boast of it. Anthony next prescribes follow up counsel for a monk to “abide” in good by not being negligent, not condemning one’s neighbor, and not justifying himself until the time when “the Lord come who searcheth out hidden things.” It is worth noting that Anthony counsels the monk to meditate “continually” on a single verse from Scripture. From the context of the passage, it seems to indicate that this continual meditation done by the monk should be an everyday occurrence.

15. In addition to all that I have said so far, you should consider now other lessons which the way of stillness teaches, and do what I tell you. Sit in your cell, and concentrate your intellect; remember the day of death, visualize the dying of your body, reflect on this calamity, experience the pain, reject the vanity of this world, its compromises and crazes, so that you may continue in the way of stillness and not weaken (Palmer, 2011:36).

In this passage of the *Philokalia*, it is worth noting that the word “meditate” is not used by the author but the rather phrase “concentrate your intellect” is utilized, which could be considered likened to meditation. The passage begins with the

author expounding upon is what the “way of stillness” teaches. The passage indicates that a monk is to first sit in the setting of his cell and then to “concentrate your intellect.” The subject that one is to concentrate their intellect or to meditate on is the topic of the “the day of death.” The monk is to visualize the dying of their body by reflecting on the “calamity” of the day. By experiencing the pain, and rejecting the vanity of the world and its associated compromises and crazes, one is able to “continue in the way of stillness and not weaken.” It is worth noting that the word “stillness” is mentioned twice in the passage as well as other synonymous terms to meditation such as “concentrating your intellect” and to “remember.”

16. Bodily fasting alone is not enough to bring about perfect self-restraint and true purity; it must be accompanied by contrition of heart, intense prayer to God, frequent meditation on the Scriptures, toil and manual labour (Palmer, 2011:75).

In the above passage from the *Philokalia*, meditation is mentioned in the context and purpose of bringing about “perfect self-restraint and true purity.” It is prescribed that the monk’s subject of “frequent” meditation is to be on the Scriptures. The monk’s meditation is prescribed as being accompanied with fasting, “contrition of heart” and “intense prayer to God.” Toil and manual labor are also to be correlated with the frequent meditation.

17. When meditating on divine realities, be full of goodness, free from envy, devout, self-restrained, gentle, as generous as possible, kindly, peaceable, and so on. For to conform to God through such qualities, and not to judge anyone or to say that he is wicked and has sinned, is to render the soul inviolate (Palmer, 2011:342).

The topic of meditation highlighted in this passage is the meditating on “divine realities.” It unknown to what exactly these divine realities consist of from the context of this passage alone. The author of the passage does recommend that the monk meditates on divine realities and he is to be of particular attitudes and actions such as to “be full of goodness, free from envy, devout, self-restrained,

gentle, as generous as possible, kindly, peaceable, and so on.” In meditating on the divine realities and striving to embody these particular attitudes and actions, the monk conforms “to God through such qualities.” The passage also states that by a monk’s practicing non-judgment toward others and to self-confess that “he is wicked and has sinned,” the monk renders his “soul inviolate.”

18. As man comes naked out of his mother’s womb, so the soul comes naked out of the body. One soul comes out pure and luminous; another, blemished by faults; a third, black with its many sins. Thus the soul that is intelligent and enjoys the love of God reflects and meditates on the evils that follow death, and leads a devout life in order not to be entangled with them and so condemned. But unbelievers, fools that they are, commit impious and sinful acts, ignoring what is to come (Palmer, 2011:346).

The aforementioned passage begins by describing the differences between the states of a person’s soul. The author first writes that a person’s “soul comes naked out of the body” when they are born, essentially with no yet imprinted condition of the soul. The differing states of the soul the author contends are those who have a soul that is pure and luminous, those who have souls that are “blemished by faults,” and others that have souls that are “black with its many sins.”

The author then proceeds to describe the actions of the person who has a soul that intelligent and who “enjoys the love of God.” The person with the intelligent soul “reflects and meditates on the evils that follow death, and leads a devout life” in order to not be entangled with those who have blemished and black souls and be condemned in the process. The author then proceeds to describe the unbelievers, likely those with blemished and black souls, as “fools” that “commit impious and sinful acts, ignoring what is to come.” With regards to meditation, the author recommends that the person, who with an intelligent soul and love for God, is to meditate specifically on the “evils that follow death” and then to pair his meditation with living a devout life. It is ambiguous from this passage alone what specifically the author interprets as the “evils” that occur after a person’s death to

which a monk is to meditate.

5.5 Analysis of textual instances of prayer and meditation

When analyzing the instances of prayer and meditation from the writings of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers' lives, common themes and variances become apparent in the styles of meditation utilized and purposes for practicing meditation.

5.5.1 Sadhu Sundar Singh and Prayer

In the recorded instances of Sadhu Sundar Singh's prayer, Singh was known to have used different physical positions and settings during his times of prayer. In one instance, Singh associates prayer with "...praying intently in a cave (Singh, 1924:12)." Two other times, Singh prayed secluded under a tree (Parker, 2010: 39, 65), and in another instance, Singh prayed in the silence of the night seated in the corner of his verandah (Parker, 2010:126-127). He also prayed with an additional person in a home (Parker, 2010:123). Within the textual examples, Singh was identified as utilizing two different physical positions in prayer: sitting cross-legged with hands clasped (Parker, 2010:126-127), and kneeling with another individual in prayer (Parker, 2010:123). The methods of prayer vary within Singh's practice of prayer including praying aloud while others were not present. Routinely, marked terms like "quietness (Parker, 2010:67)," "private (Parker, 2010:126-127)," "secret (Parker, 2010:126-127)," "intently (Singh, 1924:12)," "silently (Singh, 1924:12)," and closing his ears (Singh, 1926:2-3) are associated with his prayer life. Singh is also noted as rising early in the day for prayer (Parker, 2010:67), similar to a monk's keeping a habit of prayer.

Different reasons or goals for Singh's practice of prayer are noted and identified in the texts. One such reason for prayer include "to know gradually" the higher laws associated with miracles, with the greatest goal to fill the soul with peace and joy (Singh, 1924:11). Singh also believed that prayer helped "men considerably" (Singh, 1924:12) and that it was also a method of hearing the "voice of the Heavenly Father" through the "sweet voice of Christ" (Singh, 1926:2-3).

Prayer is also associated with Singh's asking forgiveness of his sins and the blessing of others (Parker, 2010:65). Prayer was also utilized by Singh in times of conflict, such as the time he prayed asking God to establish a "real love" between himself and another student which sprung from Singh's intense feeling of an emotional burden on his "mind and spirit" because of the conflict between them (Parker, 2010:65). Prayer also became an act that preceded important events such as praying before traveling evangelism or praying before with an interpreter before Singh gave a speech (Parker, 2010:67, 123).

5.5.2 Sadhu Sundar Singh and Meditation

Singh's practice of meditation was closely associated with his prayer life, and similarities between his practice of meditation and his method prayer, are apparent. The setting of Singh's meditation vary from leaning against a tree to his meditating in secluded places like in the "stillness of the forest" where "silence [is] broken only by the songs of the birds..." (Parker, 2010:36, 39). The times that Singh chose to meditate were commonly associated with a rhythm of life or custom that he had practiced since his childhood under the influence of his mother (Parker, 2010:50). He meditated at the beginning of the day (along with prayer (Parker, 2010:50), as well as in the private of the nighttime, often with these times of prayer and meditation lasting for "hours" (Parker, 2010:127).

First, Singh's method of "secret prayer" and meditation consisted of a period of concentration that lasted fifteen or twenty minutes (Parker, 2010:127). Singh would not use words in his times of meditation, but instead silence was commonly employed. Singh recalled in his writings that in these times of meditation and secret prayer, he felt Jesus' presence so close to him that he would place his hands in Jesus' hands and that it would be difficult to break away from his beloved Jesus. This intimate experience would last for hours. The subject that is frequently associated with Singh's meditation is his ruminating on what he read in the New Testament scriptures (Parker, 2010:36, 39).

Within the texts authored by and about Singh, his practice of meditation varies in style and purpose. Through meditation, Singh is identified as receiving

“messages from the unseen world,” as well as that his meditation “stimulate[d] ideas far above normal human thought” (Singh, 1924:14). Singh remarked that within the meditating individual that “the real condition of their soul is revealed” (Singh, 1924:16). In meditation, Singh felt that it was an “opportunity to God to speak” to the meditating individual and that God blesses the individual “with his richest blessings” in the meditative process (Singh, 1924:16). By meditating, Singh was noted as being able to open his “young heart” to the influences of what he had read in the New Testament (Parker, 2010:39). In his secret prayer and meditation Singh was able to physically experience an intimate meeting with Christ (Parker, 2010:127). The setting for his meditation was often marked by “silence” and “stillness” (Parker, 2010:39).

5.5.3 Desert Fathers and Prayer

Within the practices of prayer by the Desert Fathers, the different monks employed various methods. Regarding physical positions used during prayer, the Desert Fathers practiced a prostration method of starting in the standing position with one’s arms outstretched and then proceeding down to a bended knee position and then moving to facing downward into a prostrate position (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:428; Ward, 2003:236; Ward & Anthony, 2006:67,131). This prostrating cycle is then repeated, ideally slowly, and while in the standing position with hands outstretched, one is to “remain with thoughts intent upon prayer” (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:428). Another common position to practice prayer for the Desert Fathers was to pray while doing manual labor, while accompanying this with fasting, silence, and meditation (Ward, 2003:190).

The Desert Fathers utilized different tools to accompany them in prayer. Some of the monks utilized a daily office (Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers, and Compline) with assigned differing Psalms to particular prayer services (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:424). Some of the monks practiced their prayers corporately with others where they prostrated in sync with one another and avoiding the offering of prayer independently apart from the group’s leader (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:428). The monks prayed in various settings ranging from corporately with others to solitary prayer in their cells or in the desert (Ward,

2003:190).

Various identified mindsets or reasons are associated with the Desert Fathers in the process of their engaging in prayer. Some of those mindsets include: having contempt for one's self (Ward, 2003:190); desiring to interpret Scripture (Ward & Anthony, 2006:7); praying with a heart for one's enemies (Ward & Anthony, 2006:67); one's mind being transported or raptured to heaven (Ward, 2003:236); desiring the perfection of all things which was "to live in good company and be free from bad" (Ward, 2003:190) and to plead for God's mercy (Ward & Anthony, 2006:131) or for God to hear prayers quickly (Ward & Anthony, 2006:67).

It is commonplace for the Desert Fathers' practice of prayer to be associated with words such as "secret," and "quiet" (Ward, 2003:190; Ward & Anthony, 2006:7). Other symbolic language is used to describe the fathers' prayer, such as one entering into one's "chamber" and then shutting the door (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:315). The monks were noted as praying both audibly and silently (Ward, 2003:190). One example of praying audibly would be the example of St. Anthony who asks God to send Moses to assist him in interpreting Scripture (Ward & Anthony, 2006:7). An example of St. Anthony praying in secret is when his prayer is described as praying "with closed lips and complete silence" to the "searcher not of words but of hearts" (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:315).

5.5.4 Desert Fathers and Meditation

The Desert Fathers' "profession" of meditation, as it was called, varied from monk to monk in its style and purpose. The purpose or goal of meditation was described in a number of ways including meditation being the "opportunity for spiritual recollection," for the meditating on "celestial things" (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:28), as well as a venue for the monk to gain "perfect self-restraint and true purity (Palmer, 2011:75)." It is also noted that through constant meditation the monk was said to have begun to conform to the attributes of God and becoming "full of goodness, free from envy, devout, self-restrained, [and] gentle" and obtaining other divine attributes (Palmer, 2011:342).

The subjects to which the Desert Fathers meditated on varied depending upon the individual monk. The fathers would often read and meditate on Biblical scripture, such as the account of Abba Achilles meditating on Genesis 46.3 for hours (Ward & Anthony, 2006:29-30) or Abba Anthony's prescription to meditate on Ephesians 4.26 (Athanasius, 2010:54-55). Closely in tandem with physical labor, the fathers would also meditate on various subjects such as the monk's own death and the calamity of Jesus' second coming (Palmer, 2011:36), or the "evils that follow death" (Palmer, 2011:346). Particular attitudes are mentioned as accompanying the monk's meditation as some fathers recommended meditating with delight (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:2), while others recommended having compunction in the meditation process (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:28). Particular actions, such as "continuous labor" by basket weaving, fasting, vigils, prayer, and other actions of self-denial, were identified as being coupled with the monk's meditation practice (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:28). The monk's cell was mentioned in the texts as the common setting for monastic meditation (Palmer, 2011:36; Ward & Anthony, 2006:29-30). The monk's confines within his cell were referred to as a "secure harbour" where a monk could meditate for many hours while performing manual labor (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:434).

5.6 Evaluation of textual data for similarities and differences

When examining the various passages of both the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh in the areas of prayer and meditation, obvious similarities and differences become apparent.

5.6.1 Similarities and differences in prayer methods

In examining the methodology of the Desert Fathers and Singh, similarities and differences can be identified in the areas of settings, styles, reasons or goals, and positions used in the monks' practice of prayer. In regards to the setting of prayer, Singh practiced his prayer in a number of various settings including: secluded in a cave; secluded under/beside a tree; and in the silence during the night in the corner of a verandah with the presence of another. The secluded setting that Singh utilized when praying is very similar to the settings that the Desert Fathers

practiced prayer, commonly in one's private cell. Conversely, in a number of the accounts, the fathers practiced prayer in the presence of others in a corporate setting.

Singh and the fathers used similar styles of prayer to one another. In one area where Singh and the fathers' styles coincide was praying verbally and aloud to God when no one was present. This verbal type of prayer was a common prayer style practiced by the monks in their respective cells but was also exemplified by Singh when he prayed under a tree during an interpersonal conflict. Another area of similarity in style of prayer used by Singh and the fathers was the practice of keeping daily and habitual rule of prayer. Finally, similar terminology is used to describe the prayer styles of Singh and the fathers' such as "secret," "silence," "quietness," and "closing one's ears," or "entering one's chamber" and "shutting the door."

Marked differences can also be identified in the style of prayer utilized by Singh and the Desert Fathers. One such difference in the styles used by the desert monks and Singh is the amount of structure that would be employed in their respective habitual prayer rules. The fathers used the daily office in their prayer habits incorporating Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers, and Compline (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:424). It is unclear from the texts whether Singh ever incorporated formulaic "tools" into his prayer life such as the Fathers' keeping of daily office. The fathers also assigned Psalms to particular services of the daily office, another method Singh does not appear to practice in his habit of prayer. It is also worth noting that the Desert Fathers utilized fasting and meditation in tandem with their prayer. In the examined passages of Singh, prayer was never directly mentioned as being correlated with the practices of fasting and meditation.

Numerous similarities can be identified regarding the reasons or goals of prayer for the fathers and Singh. In the passages on prayer it is revealed that one of the goals or reasons for practicing prayer by Singh was to "know gradually" the higher laws that were associated with miracles, which is very similar to fathers' prayer "transporting" or "rapturing" the monk to heaven (Ward, 2003:236). Singh also

believed that another reason for praying is that the practice considerably helped men, remedied interpersonal conflict, and that prayer blesses others. The helping of others through prayer that was identified in Singh's practice of prayer coincides to the reasons of prayer by the fathers. For the fathers, in their prayer they were called to have a heart for one's enemies and had the goal of living "in good company" and being "free from bad" (Ward, 2003:190).

The Desert Fathers commonly employed prayer to dwell on contempt for themselves, which is very similar to how Singh utilized prayer to ask for forgiveness of his own sins. Both the fathers and Singh utilized prayer in the process of interpreting. Singh utilized prayer in the event of speaking and evangelizing, while the fathers utilized prayer in their interpretation of Scripture. A major difference in the reason or purpose of praying by Singh and the fathers is that Singh would hear the "voice of the Heavenly Father" through the "sweet voice of Christ" in his times of prayer (Singh, 1926:2-3). In all of the passages describing the prayer methodology of the Desert Fathers, not once was their mention of a Desert Christian communicating directly with Christ or the Father.

A major area of difference in the area of prayer that was practiced by Singh and the Desert Fathers can be found in the physical positions used when they prayed. Two main positions were described as being used by Singh when he prayed: sitting cross-legged with hands clasped and kneeling down on the ground. These two styles used in prayer by Singh are uniquely different than those practiced by the Desert Fathers. The fathers routinely utilized a bodily cycle of prostrations in their prayer. These slow moving cycles of prostrations would involve first standing with arms outstretched, then proceed to bend down into a kneeling position, then move downward with face to the ground, followed by coming back to the standing position with arms outstretched. Another physical position the Desert Fathers used in prayer that was never identified as corresponding with the practice of Singh was that the fathers practiced prayer while engaging in manual labor like weaving baskets. This type of manual labor that coincided with prayer that often lasted for hours was a position and style that was never attributed to Singh.

5.6.2 Similarities and differences in meditation methods

In regards to meditation, both Singh and the Desert Fathers share similarities and differences in the settings in which they meditated, the styles of meditation they used, and the reasons for meditating. Both Singh and the fathers share a level of similarity in their respective practice of meditation in that they both incorporated meditation into their rhythm of life. Singh was said to have practiced meditation since his childhood, which is similar to how the fathers incorporated meditation as a major pillar of their contemplative rhythm of life. Singh varied from the fathers in that he practiced his meditation in outside settings such as in the stillness of the forest, which differs from the fathers who routinely practiced meditation in their cells. Although, Singh and the fathers shared similarity in that they preferred to meditate in settings that were secluded.

The topic on which Singh and the fathers meditated upon is only similar to the extent that both Singh and the fathers meditated on Scripture (Singh is identified as having meditated on the New Testament). The Desert Fathers were described as meditating on various topics such as on a monk's own death, the calamity of Jesus' second coming, or the "evils that follow death" (Palmer, 2011:346). It was not identified from the research that Singh never meditated on these particular topics. Adversely, Singh when practicing meditation was mentioned as being united with Jesus' presence, with Singh blissfully placing his hands in the hands of Jesus. The monks commonly carried attitudes in meditation far from the bliss Singh experienced. Although a monk was noted as experiencing "delight" in their meditation (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:2), it was commonplace that the monk held the prescribed attitudes of compunction and employed other actions of self-denial alongside their meditation such as fasting, vigils, and continuous labor. Both Singh and the fathers appear to have practiced silence and not use words in the meditation process. Singh remarked that he utilized a period of concentration lasting 15-20 minutes before entering into a time of experiencing the presence of Jesus (Parker, 2010:127). The act of meditating for hours is linked to both Singh and the fathers in their respective meditative practices.

Major similarities can be identified in the reasons that Singh and the fathers practiced meditation. One reason Singh meditated is that he was able to receive “messages from the unseen world” that stimulated “ideas far above normal human thoughts” (Singh, 1924:14). This type of advanced knowledge coincides with the fathers’ practice of meditating on “celestial things” (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:28). Another similarity between Singh and fathers’ practices of meditation is that for both in the meditation process one’s attitude is examined. Singh remarked of this type of experience in meditation that in meditation the “real condition of their soul is revealed” (Singh, 1924:16). Singh’s examination of the soul in meditation shares similarities to how fathers spoke of conforming one’s own attributes to the attributes of God in meditation, such as becoming “full of goodness, free from envy, devout, self-restrained, [and] gentle” (Palmer, 2011:342). The fathers identified that in meditation one attempts to gain “perfect self-restraint and true purity” (Palmer, 2011:75).

The major area of disagreement in the reason for why Singh and the fathers meditated is found in that for Singh meditation was the place that opened up “opportunity to God to speak” and that in this process God blessed the meditating person with “His richest blessings” (Singh, 1924:16). Not only did the research indicate that Singh was able to hear the voice of God in the practice of meditation but also that he experienced the actualized presence of Jesus during these meditative periods. The ability to feel the actualized presence of Jesus cannot be found in the passages regarding the Desert Fathers’ practices of meditation, which reveals a major difference between Singh and the Desert Fathers in their respective practices of meditation.

5.7 Conclusion

When examining the practices of prayer and meditation used by Singh and the Desert Fathers, it becomes apparent that they shared many similarities as well as poignant differences. Both of their practices primarily utilized seclusion and silence, as well as the incorporating habits of daily practices of prayer and meditation. Singh often differed from the Desert Fathers in that Singh experienced a different type of intimacy with Jesus in prayer and meditation, such

as hearing the voice of Jesus in prayer or experiencing touching Jesus during meditation. Attitudes held in the process of meditation differed in that Singh experienced a type of bliss when meditating whereas the monks of the desert often practiced and meditated on self-denial and held attitudes of compunction.

The goal of chapter 5 began the analysis process of the accounts describing the ascetic spiritual practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, specifically their practices of prayer and meditation. Within the overall research agenda of this dissertation, chapter 5 is invaluable especially in pursuing elucidation of the main research problem of whether Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers share similarities in their spiritual practices. Chapter 5 provided elucidation to two subsidiary questions guiding the research. To the guiding sub-question of whether there are similarities and differences in the methods of prayer and meditation utilized by Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, the research has indicated that there are found similarities and differences in their respective methods of prayer and meditation.

The analysis found that similarities in their prayer and meditation methods include their utilization of seclusion and silence as well as the use of a defined daily practice of prayer and meditation. The research indicates that definitive differences in Singh and the Desert Fathers' prayer and meditation practices can be identified in the level of intimacy experienced during these times of prayer and meditation and a marked difference in the attitudes Singh and the Desert Fathers had when entering these times of prayer and meditation. These findings become a part in answering the subsidiary guiding research question into what ways do the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh differ from those practiced by the Desert Fathers. The findings also become a piece into further answering the main research problem of whether Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers share similarities in their ascetic practices. The researcher's hypothesis, in that the greatest amount of similarities in ascetic practices of the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh will be found in the specific researched area of prayer and meditation, is also addressed partially in this chapter although the thesis statement cannot be fully answered until the remaining research has been completed.

CHAPTER 6

SURVEY OF THE ASCETIC SPIRITUAL PRACTICES OF VISIONS AND MIRACLES

6.1 Introduction

The goal of chapter 6 is to become the second installation in the analysis process of the accounts of the ascetic spiritual practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. Specifically, the ascetic practices of experiencing visions and miracles will be analyzed. This chapter becomes vital in attempting to understand the main research problem of whether Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers share similarities in their spiritual practices. The aim of this chapter is to provide elucidation to two of the sub-questions that guide the research, specifically: in what ways do the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh differ from those practiced by the Desert Fathers? And through the seeing of visions and performing miracles, do the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh have parallel experiences in these areas? In addressing the aforementioned sub-questions, the overarching research problem can begin to be partially answered. The hypothesis statement that the greatest amount of similarities in the ascetic practices of Singh and the Desert Fathers will come in the area of prayer and meditation can be better understood. The other hypothesis statement that greatest amount of differences will be found in this chapter's contents can also begin to be evaluated for validity.

By analyzing the content of what was witnessed in visions and miracles that were experienced by Singh and the Desert Fathers, similarities and poignant differences will become apparent. The responses by Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers after having experienced visions and miracles will reveal consistencies and marked differences in their responsive attitudes. The settings of the miracles and visions will also be examined. Finally, the types of actions that

Singh and the fathers used as 'instruments' during these visions and miracles will also be explored.

After the introductory section (6.1), section 6.2 will scrutinize the texts authored by Singh himself to identify examples of visions and miracles. In section 6.3, other texts not authored by Singh will also be surveyed to identify examples of visions and miracles. In section 6.4, the essential texts regarding the Desert Fathers will be surveyed for examples of their experiences with visions and miracles. Section 6.5 will put forth a thorough analysis of textual instances of experienced visions and miracles from within the surveyed texts. Section 6.6 will provide an evaluation and findings of the textual data for similarities and differences of Singh and the Desert Fathers' vision and miracle experiences. A conclusion section (6.7) of the findings and the relevance of the chapter to the overall research agenda will follow.

6.2 Singh authored texts

6.2.1 Visions

1. One day I had been thus engaged for only a few minutes [in prayer], when the spiritual world was opened to me, and I found myself surrounded by numbers of angels (Singh, 1926:58).

In this account of Sundar Singh, the passage recalls a vision that was experienced in which the "spiritual world" was opened or revealed to him. This particular vision came after Sundar Singh engaged in prayer for "only a few minutes." It is worth noting that this vision experience is partnered with the act of praying. The account describes Singh's vision experience that is said to have involved the spiritual world. It is unclear from this passage whether Singh's interpretation of this spiritual world was located on this earth or in the heavens. Within this vision of the spiritual world, Singh found himself being surrounded by an unknown number of angels. The passage is inconclusive on whether Singh was alone or in the present of others prior to or during this vision experience.

2. One day when I was praying alone, I suddenly found myself surrounded by a great concourse of spirit beings, or I might say that as soon as my spiritual eyes were opened I found myself bowed in the presence of a considerable company of saints and angels (Singh, 1926:4).

According to the vision account of Sundar Singh, it appears that prior to seeing the vision he was not in the presence of others by the statement that he was “alone.” Similar to the prior account, it is noted that Singh’s experiencing of the vision occurred during a time of prayer. The passage then says that Singh experienced the vision suddenly, inferring that the vision was unexpected. The vision records that Singh found himself surrounded by “a great concourse of spirit beings.” The account proceeds to describe these spirit beings with greater definition after Singh’s “spiritual eyes were opened.” Singh then states that these spirit beings as a “considerable” amount of “saints and angels.” It is worth noting that Singh makes a distinct difference between “saints” and “angels,” It is difficult to determine Singh’s clear definition of who and what are “saints” and “angels” from this passage alone. During this vision experience, whether literally or figuratively, Singh found himself “bowed in the presence” of the numerous saints and angels.

3. I cannot call them [visions] up at will, but, usually when I am praying or meditating, sometimes as often as eight or ten times in a month, my spiritual eyes are opened to see the heavens, and, for an hour or two, I walk in glory of the heavenly sphere with Christ Jesus, and hold converse with angels and spirits (Singh, 1926: XXI).

Sundar Singh remarks in this passage that he cannot “call” up visions at will or when he wishes. Instead of conjuring visions at will, Singh says that his experiences with visions come during his practice of praying or meditating. As in previous passages, the process of Singh’s visions is associated with not only the act of praying but also occurs during times of meditating. Singh identifies that his visions occur “eight or ten times” in the period of a month and in this vision process, his “spiritual eyes are opened.” He proceeds to explain that when his

spiritual eyes are opened, he sees the “heavens.” Singh next indicates that his heavenly experiences last for “an hour or two.” During the time period, Singh tells how he is able to walk “in glory of the heavenly sphere with Christ Jesus.” Singh also shares that during these walks with Christ, he also holds “converse with angels and spirits.” From this passage it is unclear what Singh identifies as “spirits,” but it appears that these spirits are distinct from angels.

4. On the third day, when I felt I could bear it no longer, I got up at three in the morning, and after bathing, I prayed that if there was a God at all He would reveal Himself to me, and show me the way of salvation, and end this unrest of my soul. I firmly made up my mind that, if this prayer was not answered, I would before daylight go down to the railway and place my head on the line before the incoming train. I remained till about half-past four praying and waiting and expecting to see Krishna, or Buddha, or some other *Avatar* of the Hindu religion, but they appeared not, but a light shining in the room. I opened the door to see where it came from, but all was dark outside. I returned inside, and the light increased in intensity and took the form of a globe of light above the ground, and in this light there appeared, not the form I expected, but the Living Christ whom I had counted as dead. To all eternity I shall never forget His glorious and loving face, nor the few words which He spoke, “Why do you persecute me? See, I have died on the Cross for you and for the whole world (Singh, 1929:117-8).

In this account of Singh’s first visionary experience, the passage states that during this particular situation, personal turmoil of desiring to know the Divine was the context for the vision experience. The time of the vision in which Singh experienced occurred at three in the morning. Around this time Singh had taken a bath, likely as a religious rite of purification. Singh began to pray for clarification from the Divine asking that he “reveal Himself” to Sundar. Singh also asked the Divine to show him the way of salvation and to “end this unrest” that Singh felt within his soul. The passage proceeds to detail that Singh had made up his mind that if his prayer was not answered that he would commit suicide by laying on the

train tracks and to wait for the next train.

Singh continued to pray until 4:30AM and had expected that if the Divine were to make an appearance to him that it would likely be in the form of “Krishna, Buddha, or some other *Avatar* of the Hindu religion.” But neither of these avatars appeared to Singh that night. Instead, the passage states that Singh began to see a “light shining in the room.” Singh proceeded to open the door to find the source of the light but darkness was only to be found outside. Singh returned inside and the intensity of the light grew and then the light “took the form of a globe of light above the ground.” Within the light appeared the form of the “Living Christ” whom Singh “had counted as dead.” This experience of seeing a growing light is very similar to that of Symeon the New Theologian, who was said to experience a light in his chamber that grew in radiance until it filled the entire room (McGuckin, 2006:183).

Singh proceeds to describe that he would not forget Christ’s “glorious and loving face,” or the words that Christ had spoken to him: “Why do you persecute me?” Singh reports that Christ then spoke to Singh saying: “See, I have died on the Cross for you and for the whole world.” It is worth noting that within this particular vision experience Christ himself appears in bodily form and converses with Singh. The act of Singh engaging in prayer is coordinated with this vision experience. The purpose of the vision appears to be the Divinity of Christ being revealed to Singh, a desire for which Singh had previously prayed.

5. Once on a dark night I went alone into the forest to pray, and seating myself upon a rock I laid before God my deep necessities, and besought His help. After a short time, seeing a poor man coming towards me I thought he had come to ask me for some relief because he was hungry and cold. I said to him, "I am a poor man, and except this blanket I have nothing at all. You had better go to the village nearby and ask for help there." And lo! Even whilst I was saying this he flashed forth like lightning, and, showering drops of blessing, immediately disappeared. Alas! Alas! it was now clear to me that this was my beloved Master who came not to beg from a poor creature like me, but to bless and to enrich me (2 Cor. viii.9),

and so I was left weeping and lamenting my folly and lack of insight (Singh, 1922:5).

The setting of this vision experienced by Singh occurred during the night and when he was secluded (“alone”) from others. The time of the vision occurred while he was in the forest. The passage recalls that Singh’s intentions for this occasion was to pray. While sitting on a rock, Singh “laid before God” his “deep necessities, and besought His help.” Here is another example of Singh’s experiences with visions being partnered with the act of praying. After a short time of prayer, the passage says that Singh saw a poor man coming towards him. The passage indicates that Singh believed the man was coming to seek relief from him as the man appeared to be “hungry and cold.” Singh proceeded to describe to the man that he himself identified as a “poor man” and that besides his blanket, he had nothing at all to offer to the poor man. Singh then tells the poor man that he should go to the village nearby and ask for assistance there.

The passage then reports that while Singh was saying these words to the man, the man “flashed forth like lightning, and, showering drops of blessings, [and] immediately disappeared.” Singh then identifies the personal benefits of this visionary experience in that his “beloved Master (Christ)” did not come to beg from Singh but instead wanted to “bless and enrich” Singh. From this vision experience, Singh comments that he was left “weeping and lamenting” his “folly and lack of insight.”

6.3 Other literary sources on Singh

6.3.1 Visions

1. Aware as he was of spiritual forces, both divine and demonic, he was quite unprepared for what happened up there in the woods, praying alone. Suddenly it was though his spiritual eyes were opened, and he saw the glories of the Kingdom of God. Jacob in his dream saw angels ascending from earth to God in heaven, and descending again to where he lay sleeping. Sundar saw more than

that...What he saw was beyond description, but he did the best he could years later, when talking to close friends of what he termed his ecstasies...In that world there are many things which correspond to things of beauty in this world, mountains, trees and flowers, but with all imperfections taken away...Christ on his throne is always in the centre, a figure ineffable and indescribable...And all around the throne of Christ, extending to infinite distances, are multitudes of glorious spiritual beings. Some of them are saints, some of them angels (Andrews, 1934:98-100).

The setting of this particular vision account experienced by Singh is set in the woods. Again, this passage aligns Singh's action of prayer with the experiencing of visions. During the vision experience process, the passage states that Singh's "spiritual eyes were opened." Whether this vision is to be interpreted as literal or metaphorical cannot be determined from this passage alone. Singh is said to have seen the "glories of the Kingdom of God." The author compares Singh's account to Jacob's visionary experience of witnessing angels ascending on a ladder to heaven (Gen. 28), but the author indicates that Singh "saw more than" Jacob had in his vision. The author explains that what Singh saw in the vision "was beyond description," but years later Singh described this experience to close friends. It is worth noting, that the term "ecstasies" is used to describe Singh's otherworldly experiences in this passage.

Singh's description of his vision experience was "that world," assumed to be heaven, that "there are many things which correspond to things of beauty in this world." He also lists comparable things in this heavenly place such as "mountains, trees and flowers," all of which have their "imperfections taken away." The author states that Singh also witnessed in his vision: "Christ on his throne...always in the center, a figure ineffable and indescribable." As in other visions experienced by Singh, Christ is the figure that appears and his appearance remains indescribable. The vision indicates that Singh witnessed "multitudes of glorious spiritual beings" that gathered all around the throne of Christ "extending to infinite distances." Singh proceeds to describe that these glorious spiritual beings were

both “Saints” and that some were “angels.” Again, as in other vision accounts, Singh makes the distinction between “angels” and “saints.”

6.3.2 Miracles

1. One (miracle) was of a woman who was so mentally deranged (or demon possessed) that at times she had to be chained to prevent her from doing something violent. She had heard about the sadhu, and one day, realizing from the noise in the street that he was passing by, she shouted, “My helper has come to relieve me!” She was healed immediately, although Sundar knew nothing about it until the woman’s husband told him (Andrews, 1934:146).

In this miraculous account involving Sundar Singh, the person who experiences the miracle is a woman. The passage tells that the woman was “mentally deranged,” which the author concludes is synonymous with demon possession. The woman’s possession is characterized by the fact that she had to be “chained to prevent her from doing something violent.” Having heard that Sundar Singh was passing by, the woman exclaimed, “My helper has come to relieve me!” It is unclear from the account who the “helper” is, may that be Singh, Christ, or another entity. The account says that the woman was “healed immediately” at the time when she uttered her exclamation and when Singh passed by. The author then explains that Singh “knew nothing about” the miracle “until the woman’s husband told him.” It is worth noting that Singh himself performed no rites in the miraculous healing of the deranged woman. He was not aware of his effect on the woman until being informed later about the change in the woman’s physical and mental change. Since prayer is not mentioned in the passage, it is inconclusive whether Singh’s routine practice of prayer occurred within the duration of this miraculous event.

2. The mother of a boy who had had a serious operation, and whose life hung in the balance, came to ask him to go and visit her son in [the] hospital...Sundar yielded, but explained that he would prefer to pray in his own language, Hindustani, rather than in English, and

as the boy nodded he put his hands on his head, closed his eyes, and prayer. The result was startling. Within a short time the boy's temperature went up so high that the nurses were alarmed. His parents were sent for 'in case anything should happen.' What happened was that after an hour the temperature came down to normal, and a couple of days later the boy was pronounced completely healed (Andrews, 1934:146-7).

The miracle account states that a boy had recently had a serious operation and that his life "hung in the balance." The boy's mother came to Singh to ask him to visit her son in the hospital. Sundar agreed to visit the ill boy, but when praying for the boy, Singh explained that he would pray in his preferred language of Hindustani, instead of English. Singh put his hands on the head of the boy, the boy closed his eyes, and Singh began to pray. It says that the results of Singh's prayers for the boy were "startling." The account states that shortly thereafter the boy's temperature elevated to the point of alarming the nurses. Next, the boy's parents were called "in case anything should happen," alluding to a possible worsening condition of the boy. After an hour the boy's temperature returned to a normal rate and within a couple of days the boy was pronounced completely healed.

In this account of a miraculous healing, Singh is directly involved in the boy's miraculous healing in that he prays in his native language and places his hands on the boy. The healing process of the boy proceeded toward a dangerous point when his temperature escalated. The boy's temperature returned to a safe level and eventually the boy was deemed completely healed. Conversely, to the previous miraculous account, Singh is directly involved and likely conscious of the miraculous event taken place.

3. They had heard, too, of his influence over wild animals---there was the case of the black panther that stealthily watched the sadhu as he walked past, but did not attack him though the beast had killed several other people in the neighborhood (Andrews, 1934:128).

In this account, the author reports that a miraculous event had taken place in which Sundar Singh was able to demonstrate influence over wild animals. In this recounted event, the passage states that Singh was passing by in a village and as he walked by a black panther “stealthily watched the sadhu.” The Black Panther proceeded to show no aggression toward Sundar. The miracle is found in that this same panther had “killed several other people in the neighborhood,” yet showed no aggression toward Singh. The author of the passage concludes that Singh had the ability to influence the animal. Within this miraculous account, it is unclear whether Singh had directly done anything to influence the animal outside of his simple presence. It is also unclear from this passage whether Singh was aware that the miraculous happening had taken place.

4. On one occasion, having been directed along a forest path that eventually led to a river, he saw that it was too wide and swift flowing for him to cross. Night was already falling, and with the sound wild beasts in his ears he wondered how he would fare, and whether the end of his life had come. To face death alone in that isolated spot was no easier for him than for anyone else, and his eyes were filling with tears when, looking across the river he saw man warming himself by a fire.

“Don’t worry, I’m coming to help you,” the man called out, and stepping down in the water he came across fearlessly and said to Sundar, “Sit on my shoulder---don’t be afraid.” Perched on the man’s back Sundar found himself carried through the river and up the bank, thinking to himself, “He must live near here, and so be used to crossing. I must tell him the Good News about Jesus...” On arrival at the other bank Sundar slipped off his rescuer’s back, glanced around to get his bearings, then turned around to speak to him---but the man had disappeared. Neither was there any trace of the fire (Andrews, 1934:73-4).

In this passage, the setting of the miracle is in the forest at dusk where Sundar Singh is said to have faced impending danger from pursuing animals. Fleeing from the animals, Singh found himself stranded at a vast river that is “too wide and swift flowing for him to cross.” The passage describes how Sundar Singh is said to have contemplated whether the time of his death had come and the passage says that this possibility saddened him to “face death alone in that isolated spot.” Suddenly, Sundar Singh looked across the river and saw a man by a fire warming himself.

The man off in the distance spoke to Sundar Singh telling him not to worry as the man said that he was coming to provide assistance to Singh. The mystery man traversed the river “fearlessly” and told Singh to sit on his shoulders. The man told Singh to not be afraid. As the man crossed to the other side of the river with Singh on his shoulders, Singh is noted as believing that the man must be a local that was accustomed to crossing the river. The passage records that Singh hoped to “tell him the Good News about Jesus.” Upon safe arrival across the river, Singh dismounted from the man’s shoulders and after gaining his wherewithal, looked around to speak to the man, but the man and his fire had disappeared.

The miracle Sundar Singh experienced is marked by a number of various characteristics. First, Sundar Singh believed he was facing impending death either by the ensuing animals or in his attempting to traverse the vast river by himself. In this miracle account, Singh is not the one performing the miracle but instead is the recipient and beneficiary of the miracle by the hands of the mysterious, river-crossing man. From this passage alone, the identity of the mysterious man who saved Singh cannot be determined. Whether the mysterious man was Jesus, an angel, or another entity cannot be determined. No act of prayer by Singh is mentioned in the account, albeit the passage does say that he shed tears. The experience of the miracle was also unexpected by Singh as it appears that during the process of traversing the river, Singh was unaware of the miracle taking place.

5. On another occasion, being unusually tired and footsore, he was trudging along in a very dejected frame of mind when he was joined

by a man who walked along beside him and talked in such a friendly and uplifting manner that Sundar's mood had changed completely by the time they reached the village he was making for. But at that point, turning to his new-found friend, he found himself again lone. His companion had vanished. 'I know now that it was an angel of the Lord sent to strengthen and uphold me in my hour of weakness (Andrews, 1934:74).

The setting of the miracle has Sundar Singh walking along the road, feeling tired and experiencing sore feet. The passage records that Singh had "a very dejected frame of mind." A man joined Singh on his travel and walked beside him talking in "such a friendly and uplifting manner," which resulted in Singh's mood changing completely by the time he and his companion reached their destination. The passage says that Singh, after having reached his destination, turned to his "new-found friend" and found that the friend mysteriously had vanished. The passage says that Singh identified his companion as an "angel of the Lord" and that the purpose of the angel's visit was to "strengthen and uphold" Singh in his "hour of weakness."

Similar to the Biblical account of the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24.13-35) in which Jesus visited his disciples as they walked and then proceeded to miraculously vanish, Sundar Singh also experienced a miraculous visit from a companion that suddenly vanished upon arrival at their destination. The miracle occurs when Singh identifies that this mysterious companion, who he later identifies as an "angel of the Lord," is sent to encourage him in his "hour of weakness" of feeling tired, footsore, and feeling dejected. Similar to the aforementioned miraculous experience, Singh was the recipient and beneficiary of the miraculous presence of the vanishing being. The passage does not indicate prayer or meditation occurring for the duration of the miracle. As with the previous miracle passage, Singh was unaware of a miraculous event occurring before his eyes during the uplifting walk with his angelic companion.

6. He was brought before the head lama who passed sentence on him---a sentence which amounted to death...The method chosen in Sundar's case was to cast him into the well. He was hustled there, the iron cover unlocked and removed, and he was pushed over the edge, down into a pit so foul that his very soul recoiled. The bottom of it was covered with dead men's bones and rotting flesh, and the stench was almost overwhelming. Then what little light had penetrated was shut out as the cover of the well was replaced and he was left in darkness.

It was far worse than anything he had ever experience before...there was no possibility of help from any human source, and this time the inner joy he had known in times of persecution was missing.

...Hours passed---how many he had no means of knowing. His arm had been wrenched as he was cast into the well, but the physical pain was as nothing compared with the anguish of his soul. In relating the story years later he said he was in the well for two days and nights, and on the third night he heard a sound above. The cover of the well was being removed and then a rope was let down and a voice told him to take hold of it. Summoning what strength remained in him he slipped the noose under his arms and was slowly drawn up, to sink on the ground, conscious only that he was gulping in fresh air at last. Weak as he was from hunger and thirst, it was air his body craved more than anything. As he breathed it in he felt himself strangely revived and the pain in his wrenched arm had gone. But he was alone. There was no sign of his rescuer" (Andrews, 1934:75-6)

The setting for this miracle experienced by Singh is in Tibet where Singh had been captured for proselytizing amongst the Buddhist natives. The head lama passed judgment on Sundar Singh, with the lama identifying death as a fitting

sentence for Singh's unsanctioned actions. The method of death chosen for Sundar Singh was to cast him into a well. Singh was hustled to the site of the well, the lid of the well was unlocked, and Singh was plunged into the pit. The passage records that Sundar Singh described the well as being "so foul that his (Singh) soul recoiled" due to the presence of human bones, rotting flesh, and the overwhelming stench. The lid of the well was then put back in place leaving Singh in complete darkness. It is then recorded that Singh determined that "there was no possibility of help from any human source" and that the inner joy he experienced in previous persecution was not present for the duration of his time in the well.

The passage states that an unknown amount of hours passed and that Singh began to experience a level of pain from his arm that had been injured during his fall into the well. His pain from his arm is said to be no comparison to the "anguish of his soul." The passage says that Singh later recounted that he spent "two days and nights" in the well before hearing a sound above. From above the well, the cover was lifted, and a rope noose was thrown down in which Singh wrapped under his arm. He was slowly drawn up out of the well. Upon arriving out of the well, "gulping in the fresh air," he found himself "strangely revived and the pain in his wrenched arm" had disappeared. After coming to his senses, he found himself alone with "no sign of his rescuer."

Similar to other miraculous experiences when Sundar Singh's death appeared to be immanent, in this particular situation it appeared that Singh would die due to possible suffocation, exhaustion, or starvation. The passage records that the "inner joy" that Singh had experienced previously in times of persecutions escaped him during his time in the well. No performed prayer or meditation by Sundar Singh is identified in the passage. The miraculous occurrence in the narrative is that the mysterious person plucked Singh to safety from the well with a rope and saving Singh's life in the process. After arriving out of the well safely, the mysterious person then vanishes. It is unclear whether this vanishing individual is Christ, an angel, or a human being.

7. For a few moments I watched the silent figure of the sadhu. Then my eyes were attracted by something moving on his right. An animal was coming toward him. As it got nearer I saw that it was a leopard. Choked with fear, I stood motionless near the window, unable even to call. Just then the sadhu turned his face towards the animal and held out his hand. As though it had been a dog, the leopard lay down and stretched out his head to be stroked (Appasamy, 1956:28).

In this miraculous account witnessed by a friend and companion of Sundar Singh, the passage says that while Singh was praying with his eyes closed, a leopard slowly made its way toward Singh. As the witness watched motionless, fearing for the life of Singh, Singh suddenly turned to the animal, held out his hand, and began to stroke the leopard, which had laid down near Singh's side. The setting of the miracle was in the middle of the night. A companion of Singh's, who observed Singh in his time of prayer, witnessed the miracle. The nature of the supernatural happening in this event is that humans do not normally have control over beasts, but in this example Singh modeled such a super-human ability.

6.4 Desert Fathers essential texts

6.4.1 Visions

1. And when he had ended his prayer with tears, he sees a filthy Ethiopian standing over against his cell and aiming fiery darts at him, with which he was straightway wounded, and came out of his cell and ran about hither and thither like a lunatic or a drunken man, and going in and out could no longer restrain himself in it, but began to hurry off in the same direction in which the young man had gone. And when Abbot Apollos saw him like a madman driven wild by the furies, he knew that the fiery dart of the devil which he had seen, had been fixed in his heart, and had by its intolerable heat wrought in him this mental aberration and confusion of the understanding (*Cass. Incarn. Dom.*; Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:58).

The setting of this otherworldly vision is after an unknown monk had just completed his prayer. The monk's prayers were accompanied with the crying of tears. The passage states that the monk saw a "filthy Ethiopian" in his cell. It is unclear from this passage alone whether the descriptive term of "filthy" is to mark the Ethiopian's lack of cleanliness or whether this is a derogatory term used by the author of the passage. The Ethiopian stood within the monk's cell and aimed fiery darts at the monk. The monk was "straightway wounded" by the Ethiopian's fiery projectiles and the monk proceeded to come out of his cell. Outside of his cell, the monk ran "about hither and thither like a lunatic or a drunken man." The attacked monk continued to go in and out of his cell and then hurried off in the distance where the Ethiopian man had gone.

The Abbot Apollos, having witnessed the monk's interactions with his attacker in which the monk was like "a madman driven wild by the furies," interprets the fiery darts as being attacks from the devil. The passage goes on to describe that Abbot Apollos believed that the fiery darts had been shot and "fixed in his (the monk) heart" and that from these darts "intolerable heat wrought" brought forth "mental aberration and confusion of the understanding."

It is worth noting that in this descriptive vision, even as the monk performed the noteworthy act of praying, he is still promptly attacked. The adversary comes not in the form of a snake or dragon but rather in the avatar of a "filthy Ethiopian" archer. The attack on the monk took place in the monk's cell, normally a prescribed safe haven from such attacks from the devil. According to the monk Apollos, the means of the attack from the devil were fiery arrows of intolerable heat. The intolerable heat penetrated the monk's heart bringing forth "mental aberration," or an anomaly in mental stability, as well as "confusion of understanding." It is unclear from this passage, what exactly the "confusion of understanding" is referencing. The confusion could be referencing the monk's inability to grasp, such as a scriptural interpretation of a biblical passage, or understanding of the means and reasons behind the visionary attack.

2. While yet a child, Abba Ephrem had a dream and then a vision.
A branch of vine came out of his tongue, grew bigger and filled

everything under heaven. It was laden with beautiful fruit. All the birds of heaven came to eat of the fruit of the vine, and the more they ate, the more the fruit increased (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:59).

In this passage, the author indicates that Abba Ephrem, when still a child, had “a dream and then a vision.” From the phrase, the author makes the distinction between visions and dreams. The vision is described that Abba Ephrem saw a “branch of vine” coming out of his tongue that proceeded to grow “bigger and filled everything under heaven.” The passage then proceeds to describe that the vine protruding from Abba Ephrem’s tongue “was laden with beautiful fruit.” Next, the passage states how upon this vine, “all the birds of heaven came out to eat of the fruit of the vine” and that when more of the fruit was consumed, the more the fruit increased on the vine.

In contrast to the previous vision passage, the vision that Abba Ephrem experienced was not a vision experience of a personal attack or had any trace of maleficent. Instead the vision experience of Abba Ephrem consisted of a vision revealing a scene from heaven, which included the presence of animals. It is unclear the meaning of the vision solely from this passage. It can be assumed that the nature of the vision was one of blessing instead of a type of curse. Since the tongue of Abba Ephrem is referenced, this could be a reference to Abba Ephrem’s future ability of as a noteworthy homilist. Or the vision could be referencing that the messages Abba Ephrem would share in the future might be a blessing to others in that the fruit of his message would feed many. The message that he would share with many then would proceed to grow or multiply in abundance as others ‘consumed’ the fruits of the message.

3. Another time, one of the saints had a vision. According to the commandment of God, a band of angels descended from heaven, holding in their hands a kephalis (that is to say, a piece of papyrus covered with writing), and they said to one another, “To whom should we give this?” Some said, “To this one,” others, “To that one.” Then the answer came in these words, “Truly, they are holy and

righteous, but none of them is able to receive this, except Ephrem.” The old man saw that the kephalis was given to Ephrem and he saw as it were a fountain flowing from his lips. Then he understood that that which came from the lips of Ephrem was of the Holy Spirit (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:59).

In another vision involving the same Abba Ephrem, the narrative opens by describing how “one of the saints had a vision.” The reference to “one of the saints” is likely used to preserve the anonymity of the saint who shared or pinned the written account of the vision. The narrative proceeds to describe that according “to the commandment of God,” a group of “angels descended from heaven...” This phrase appears to show God as an initiator of action in the vision. The passage states that “a band of angels descended from heaven,” which from the passage “a band” is difficult to surmise numerically other than it is more than one. In the hands of the angels in the vision was a kephalis, or a piece of papyrus containing writing on it. Then a debate among the angels occurred, in which the ‘band’ of angels argued to decide to whom the kephalis should be given; “this one” is likely a reference to the unknown saint or Abba Ephrem. The passage states “the answer came” to the angels from a source unknown, possibly from either through the surmising angelic conversation and debate, or from God himself. The answer was that “Truly, they are holy and righteous” but none other than Ephrem would be “able to receive” the kephalis.

The kephalis is then given to Ephrem, which resulted in him seeing a “fountain flowing from his lips.” The unknown author interprets the fountain that flowed from the lips of Ephrem as symbolizing the Holy Spirit. It is difficult from this passage to determine if Ephrem is the author of the vision and wished to remain anonymous, or if another saint experienced the vision. It can be assumed that this visionary experience was a type of encouragement or blessing to the saint and not intended as a type of curse. This conclusion can be surmised because the Holy Spirit is mentioned and the presence of an evil entity is not mentioned. The setting of the unknown saint’s visionary experience cannot be surmised simply from the short passage. One fact of the setting of the vision is that the unknown receiver of the kephalis was not in heaven as the angels are mentioned

as “descending” to him, assumingly from the heavenly realms to the earthly realms to visit the recipient.

4. As Abba Silvanus was sitting with the brethren one day he was rapt in ecstasy and fell with his face to the ground. After a long time he got up and wept. The brethren besought him saying, “What is it, Father?” But he remained silent and wept. When they insisted on his speaking he said, “I was taken up to see the judgment and I saw there many of our sort coming to punishment and many seculars going into the kingdom.” The old man was full of compunction and never wanted to leave his cell. If he was obliged to go out, he hid his face in his cowl saying, “Why should I seek to see this earthly light, which is of no use?” (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:222).

This vision involves the Desert Father Silvanus, who is said to be sitting with the other brethren during the period of his visionary experience. The term of “brethren” is likely referring to other monastics. The passage states that Abba Silvanus was “rapt in ecstasy” and then fell “with his face to the ground.” It is described that Abba Silvanus remains in this facedown, laying position for some time. The passage states that “after a long time he got up” and then began to weep. The brethren in the presence of this entire happening began to question Abba Silvanus about the vision saying, “[w]hat is it, Father?” But Abba Silvanus did not answer the brethren but instead remained “silent and wept.” The brethren were persistent and insisted that father Silvanus describe to them what he had experienced.

Abba Silvanus then proceeded to describe his vision experience to the brethren. He first tells the brethren that he was “taken up to see the judgment” and there he saw “many of our sort coming to punishment and many seculars going into the kingdom.” It can be assumed from the aforementioned statement that Abba Silvanus was referring to monks when he used the phrase “many of our sort” that were coming to punishment. The reference of the “seculars” that would be entering into the heavenly kingdom, Abba Silvanus is likely either describing non-monastic Christians or possibly those that do not align themselves to the Christian

faith.

The passage then moves to the future where it states that Abba Silvanus, after seeing this vision, “was full of compunction” and that he never wanted to leave his cell. It can be assumed from this visionary experience of the judgment, Abba Silvanus interpreted what he saw in that vision as a type of warning that warranted action of “compunction.” Remaining primarily in his cell, the passage indicates that when he was obligated to go out of his cell, he covered and hid his face with a cowl. This appears to mean that Silvanus now felt that it was of no use for him to seek the earthly light. The avoidance of the earthly light can be assumed to be a reference of his continuance to feel great compunction after having experienced the vision of the great judgment in which he was likely, indicted among those of the “many of our sort.”

5. Another time his disciple Zacharias entered and found him in ecstasy with his hands stretched towards heaven. Closing the door, he went away. Coming at the sixth and the ninth hours he found him in the same state. At the tenth hour he knocked, entered, and found him at peace and said to him, “What has happened today, Father?” The latter replied, “I was ill today, my child.” But the disciple seized his feet and said to him, “I will not let you go until you have told me what you have seen.” The old man said, “I was taken up to heaven and I saw the glory of God and I stayed there till now and now I have been sent away” (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:222).

Another vision experienced by Abba Silvanus involved his disciple Zacharias. The narrative opens that Zacharias enters Abba Silvanus’ cell and finds the monk “in ecstasy with his hands stretched towards heaven.” It should first be noted that Abba Silvanus experiences a vision while in a position of standing upright with his arms outstretched. The disciple Zacharias proceeds to exit Abba Silvanus’ cell and later comes back at the sixth and ninth hours to find Silvanus in the same ecstatic state. At the tenth hour, the disciple returns once more entering into the cell to find Abba Silvanus at peace, having been removed from his experience of ecstasy. Zacharias asked Abba Silvanus about what had previously occurred, a

reference to Silvanus' ecstatic prayer, which Silvanus responds to Zacharias that he "was ill."

The narrative describes Zacharias' discontentment with Abba Silvanus' answer of having been ill. Zacharias grasped onto Abba Silvanus' feet and refused to let go of his feet until Silvanus described his visionary experience. Abba Silvanus then stated to his disciple Zacharias that he was "taken up to heaven" and that he "saw the glory of God." It is difficult to determine the exact meaning of being "taken" up to the heavenly realm, as Silvanus does not describe beyond this experience beyond that short phrase. It can be assumed that while in this state of ecstasy, Silvanus experienced the presence of heaven and "saw the glory of God." The narrative concludes with Abba Silvanus stating that his ecstatic, visionary experience had lasted for a long period of visits from Zacharias and that he had only "returned" out of the visionary experience because he had been sent away. It is inconclusive who, what, or why Abba Silvanus was sent away from during his time of ecstasy.

It is worth noting that after this vision experience Abba Silvanus was "at peace" when Zacharias arrived at the tenth hour. This phrase seems to indicate that Silvanus' experiencing of the vision was beneficial to the monk and a type of blessing, instead of a curse or an experience that fostered fear or compunction. The setting of the vision was in Abba Silvanus' cell and the duration of the vision lasted for at least four hours (sixth hour to the tenth hour).

6. He once told the brethren that when he was returning from the desert he was taken up in a vision into the heavens and saw all the good things that await those who are true monks, thing which no words can describe (*Hist. Mon. Aeg.*; Ward & Russell, 2006:85).

In this short passage, the monk Patermuthius tells his brethren, assumingly other monks, that when he was returning from the desert he experienced a vision. The passage describes what Patermuthius said to the monks regarding how he was "taken up in a vision into the heavens" and while there he "saw all the good things" that await true monks. Patermuthius, in recounting his vision, said that "no words

can describe” the “good things” that are in store for true monks after their death.

It is worth noting that the vision occurred when Paternuthius was “returning from the desert.” It is unknown whether the vision comes after a time of prayer and fasting in the desert. The exact details cannot be concluded of whether the monk had his journey interrupted by the vision, such as the vision experienced by the Apostle Paul (Acts 9). It is worth noting that this particular monk is unable to describe, or chooses not to describe with great detail, his visionary experience of the heavenly realms. The monk also does not describe, in the recorded passage, in detail what exactly the good things that come to true monks after death.

7. It was said of Abba Zeno, that when he was living in Scetis, he came out of his cell by night, going in the direction of the marshes. He spent three days and three nights wandering at random. At last, tired out, his strength failing him, he fell down as though he were dying. Behold, a little child stood before him with bread and a jar of water and said to him, “Get up, and eat.” He stood up and prayed, thinking that it was a delusion. The other said to him, “You have done well.” And he prayed a second, and then a third time. The child said again, “You have done well.” Then the old man stood up, took some food and ate. The child said to him, “As far as you have walked, so far are you from your cell. So then, get up, and follow me.” Immediately he found himself in his cell. So the old man said to the child, “Enter, and let us pray.” But when the old man went inside, the other vanished (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:66).

This passage retells a vision experienced by the monk Abba Zeno while in Scetis. The narrative describes how Abba Zeno left his cell and began traveling toward the direction of the marshes. Abba Zeno then is said to have spent “three days and three nights wandering at random.” It is inconclusive from this passage whether the monk’s experience is a reference to Christ’s three days and three nights in the grave.

Abba Zeno is described as becoming extremely tired to the point where his strength began to fail him and he fell to the ground “as though he were dying.” The narrative then describes how a “little child” stood before Abba Zeno and offered the monk bread and a jar that contained water. The child then proceeded to encourage the monk, telling him to “get up, and eat.” Abba Zeno did just as we told to by the child and then Abba Zeno is said to have prayed three times. The child of unknown origin then commended Abba Zeno’s actions of offering of three prayers by saying to the monk: “You have done well.” Abba Zeno then ate of the food that was given to him by the child. The child then said to Abba Zeno, “As far as you have walked, so far are you from your cell. So then, get up, and follow me.” The passage states that immediately Abba Zeno found himself in his cell. He then says to the child to enter his cell and to “let us pray.” As Abba Zeno went inside the cell, he found that the child had vanished.

Abba Zeno’s vision experience with the little child, in which the mysterious child offered the monk food, drink, and safe passage back to his cell, takes place in both the wilderness as well as at Abba Zeno’s cell. In this vision, it undeterminable from the passage the exact origin of the boy and whether he was tangibly real or a type of lack of food induced vision on Abba Zeno’s part. It appears topically, that Abba Zeno’s visitor, possibly of angelic sources, comes to bring a gift of benevolence of food, drink, and safe passage for the tired and possible dying Abba Zeno. Abba Zeno’s prayer before consuming his edible gifts, is described in the passage and his child visitor is said to commend these three prayers.

8. Nor was the Lord then forgetful of Anthony's wrestling, but was at hand to help him. So looking up he saw the roof as it were opened, and a ray of light descending to him. The demons suddenly vanished, the pain of his body straightway ceased, and the building was again whole. But Anthony feeling the help, and getting his breath again, and being freed from pain, besought the vision which had appeared to him, saying, “Where wert thou? Why didst thou not appear at the beginning to make my pains to cease?” And a voice came to him, “Anthony, I was here, but I waited to see thy fight; wherefore since thou hast endured, and hast not been worsted, I

will ever be a succor to thee, and will make thy name known everywhere.” Having heard this, Anthony arose and prayed, and received such strength that he perceived that he had more power in his body than formerly. And he was then about thirty-five years old (*Vit. Ant. 2*; Athanasius, 2010:17-18).

The passage describes Abba Anthony struggling, or “wrestling” with demons within his cell. The vision begins when Abba Anthony looked up and sees the “roof as it were opened,” and then a “ray of light” began to descend to the monk. Upon the roof opening and the light descending, the “demons suddenly vanished,” and the pain Anthony experienced in his body ceased. The passage then tells that after Anthony had gathered his stamina and found himself to be painless, he asked, assumedly God, where He was and why He did not appear at the beginning of his battle with the demons in order to cease his pain.

A voice, presumably of God or an angelic being, answers Abba Anthony’s inquiry by stating that “I was here, but I waited to see thy fight.” The voice then proceeded to tell Anthony that since he had endured and not been defeated, that He (likely God) would be Anthony’s “succor” and that his name would be known everywhere. After hearing these words, Anthony is said to have “arose and prayed, and received strength” and perceived that he was more powerful than before his vision experience.

In this vision experience, not only is the presence of demons found, of which Anthony struggled to fight with, but also a voice from above which dialogued with Anthony. The voice, presumably of God, offered the blessing of “succor” to Anthony and to make his name well known due to Anthony’s valiant fighting and his not giving up in his battle with his demonic counter parts. The passage also states that Anthony gained additional power that he did not possess before his interaction with the demons and his dialogue with the mystical voice. No prayer is mentioned within the vision experience except for Anthony’s audible inquiry to God why there was no assistance during the time of his battle with the demons.

6.4.2 Miracles

1. Another time when Abba Bessarion had occasion to do so, he said a prayer and crossed the river Chrysoroas on foot and then continued his way. Filled with wonder, I asked his pardon and said, “How did your feet feel when you were walking on the water?” He replied, “I felt the water just to my heels, but the rest was dry” (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:40).

In the miraculous account experienced by one of the Egyptian monks, Abba Bessarion, the passage describes a miracle in which Bessarion crossed a river by walking on top of it and being found to be completely dry. In the passage, the narrative opens with Abba Bessarion saying a prayer before attempting to cross the Chrysoroas River. The narrative says that he then “continued his way,” likely referencing that he continued on his journey and crossed the river. The unknown monastic author of the passage is described as being filled “with wonder.” The author then asks Abba Bessarion how his feet felt when he walked on the water. Abba Bessarion replies to the author that he “felt the water just to my heels, but the rest was dry.”

It is worth noting that prior to the miracle of walking across the river, Abba Bessarion is mentioned as offering up a prayer. After said prayer, the miracle follows closely thereafter. No meditation, fasting, or making the sign of the cross is said to be involved in this particular miracle account. It is worth noting that the miracle took place in the presence of another who was a witness to the miraculous event. The passage does not indicate whether there was any spiritual or bodily danger in need of a salvific miracle. The exception to this conclusion was if the river was dangerously raging, which does not seem to be indicated in the narrative.

2. Once when a hippopotamus was ravaging the neighbouring countryside the farmers called on this father (Abba Bes) to help them. He stood at the place and waited, and when he saw the beast, which was of enormous size, he commanded it in a gentle voice,

saying, “In the name of Jesus Christ I order you not to ravage the countryside anymore.” The hippopotamus, as if driven away by an angel, vanished completely from that district. On another occasion he got rid of a crocodile in the same way (*Hist. Mon. Aeg.*; Ward & Russell, 2006:66).

In this particular miraculous account, the Desert Father Abba Bes is called upon to provide assistance to the farmers living near his cell on a nearby countryside. The narrative tells of a hippopotamus ravaging the countryside. The account proceeds to describe how Abba Bes stood “at the place,” presumably the town, and waited for the beast to make an appearance so that he could engage the animal. When Abba Bes saw the beast, which is accounted as being enormous in size, the monk commanded the beast in a gentle voice by saying the words: “In the name of Jesus Christ I order you not to ravage the countryside anymore.” The passage describes how the hippopotamus, “as if driven away by an angel, vanished completely from the district.” The passage also indicates how Abba Bes performed a similar miraculous feat in which he commanded a crocodile to depart “in the same way.” The hippopotamus or the crocodile may even be considered to be a personification of a demon:

To the monks, the unseen spiritual powers they battled took the forms of Egyptian animal gods—Anubis the jackal god, Seckmet the lioness, or Sobek the crocodile. In this the monks were only following the lead of the apostle Paul, who himself had called the pagan gods demons (1 Cor. 10:21), and bishops like Cyprian of Carthage (c. 220–258), who taught, “The demons hide within the garlanded statues and images” (Severance, 1999).

The miracle in the recorded account is found in Abba Bes’ ability to command and persuade normally wild and uncontrollable beasts. In this case, Abba Bes wards off both a hippopotamus and a crocodile in order to provide help to the farmers who sought the monk’s assistance. No prayer, fasting, or meditation is mentioned as being utilized by the desert monk Abba Bes. The Desert Fathers’ marked gentleness is highlighted when he commands, in the “name of Jesus Christ,” for

the hippopotamus to yield its power to the holy Abba. In this particular miracle account, it can be assumed that the lives of the farmers were either in bodily danger or, at minimum, faced the possible destruction of their agricultural resources. Angelic beings are mentioned only in that the fleeing hippopotamus responded to Abba Bes as if the hippopotamus had been driven away as if it had seen an angel.

3. But when he [Anthony] was departing, and we were setting him forth on his way, as we arrived at the gate a woman from behind cried out, "Stay, thou man of God, my daughter is grievously vexed by a devil. Stay, I beseech thee, lest I too harm myself with running." And the old man when he heard her, and was asked by us, willingly stayed. And when the woman drew near, the child was cast on the ground. But when Anthony had prayed and called upon the name of Christ, the child was raised whole, for the unclean spirit was gone forth. And the mother blessed God, and all gave thanks. And Anthony himself also rejoiced, departing to the mountain as though it were to his own home (*Vit. Ant. 2*; Athanasius, 2010:68).

In this account, Abba Anthony departed from a village with his brother monks and then arrived at the gate of another village. At the gate of the village Anthony met there a troubled woman. From behind the gate she beseeched the Desert Father Anthony to stay in the village as she claimed to have had a daughter who is vexed, or troubled, by the devil. After seeking for an unknown agreement of approval from his brother monks, Anthony decided to stay and provide assistance to the woman and her daughter. The woman proceeded to draw near to Abba Anthony, and the child was placed on the ground before him. Anthony then prayed and began to call "upon the name of Christ," and the child was "raised whole, for the unclean spirit was gone forth." After this miraculous healing, the mother of the recently healed daughter "blessed God" and all present "gave thanks." Anthony also rejoiced as he departed to the mountains "as though it were to his own home."

It is worth noting that before the miracle took place, the trouble woman sought the help of Anthony, and out of her plea, Abba Anthony adapted his travel arrangements and provided her assistance. Anthony's miraculous account appears to show similarities to the New Testament accounts of Jesus healing possessed persons as he traveled from village to village. The child had some unknown period of "vex" from the devil, whether this "vex" was a demon possession or a physical ailment is unknown from the passage. The passage states that before Anthony healed the girl, he "prayed and called up on the name of Christ," which therefore shows, at least in this account, some correlation between prayer and the miraculous healing of the ailed girl. The setting for the event is a village and the passage indicates that many were present for the event as it is recalled that those who were present "all gave thanks." It can be deduced that the need for this miracle is found in the proposed suffering experienced by both the mother and her vexed daughter; out of this need, Anthony felt remorse for them and a miracle occurred through the Abba's prayer and calling on the name of Christ. All those present that witnessed the miracle were likely edified and encouraged by seeing the power and ability of the Desert Fathers' use of prayer and his calling upon of Christ's name.

4. Behold there are here some vexed with demons--now there were certain who had come to him very disquieted by demons, and bringing them into the midst he said, ---"Do you cleanse them either by arguments and by whatever art or magic you choose, calling upon your idols, or if you are unable, put away your strife with us and you shall see the power of the Cross of Christ." And having said this he called upon Christ, and signed the sufferers two or three times with the sign of the Cross. And immediately the men stood up whole, and in their right mind, and forthwith gave thanks unto the Lord. And the philosophers, as they are called, wondered, and were astonished exceedingly at the understanding of the man and at the sign which had been wrought (*Vit. Ant. 2*; Athanasius, 2010:69).

In another account of St. Anthony performing a healing miracle, the narrative opens with a conversation between Abba Anthony and the philosophers of an

unknown village or town. The conversation focused on those that were “vexed with demons.” The passage states that some that were vexed with demons were brought forth in the midst of Abba Anthony and the philosophers. Abba Anthony asked the philosophers by what means they cleanse them (those vexed with demons), and whether they used arguments, art, magic, or calling upon idols. Abba Anthony then told the philosophers to “put away” the strife they had with Anthony and his brethren, and that they will soon “see the power of the Cross of Christ.”

After saying these words, the passage describes how Abba Anthony “called upon Christ, and signed the sufferers two or three times with the sign of the Cross.” After Abba Anthony did these actions the individuals that were presumably those who were vexed with demons immediately “stood up whole, and in their right mind.” The healed persons then proceeded to give “thanks unto the Lord.” The philosophers, at the sight of the miracle, were filled with wonder and astonishment at the understanding of Abba Anthony and the “sign which had been wrought.” Remarking on this miraculous account, Galli commenting on the character of Anthony in this account:

This story, and others like it, show that by the end of his life, the solitary Anthony had gained a reputation across the Mediterranean world. Not only simple people but the sophisticated and mighty sought him out. His life and words inspired fellow Christians to greater devotion and, sometimes, moved pagans to convert. But it wasn't his wisdom and eloquence that astounded people as much as his laser-like devotion to Christ (Galli, 1999: “Best there Ever Was”).

It should be highlighted that the reason or purpose for the miracle can be identified as likely two-fold: to heal those who had been vexed by demons; and to prove the omnipotence of God over the means and methods utilized by the philosophers. Two primary methods that were employed by Abba Anthony in making the vexed men whole were Anthony's calling on the name of Christ, and his signing the vexed men with the sign of the cross two or three times. The

setting of this miracle was in the public and it appears that the philosophers were present to witness the miracle as the passage indicates that they were filled with wonder and astonishment.

5. Or when the same man as he went to a village was surrounded by mocking crowds, who sneered at him and showed him a man who was for many years deprived of the power of walking from a contracted knee, and crawled from a weakness of long standing, they tempted him and said, "Show us, father Abraham, if you are the servant of God, and restore this man to his former health, that we may believe that the name of Christ, whom you worship, is not vain." Then he at once invoked the name of Christ, and stooped down and laid hold of the man's withered foot and pulled it. And immediately at his touch the dried and bent knee was straightened, and he got back the use of his legs, which he had forgotten how to use in his long years of weakness, and went away rejoicing (*Cass. Incarn. Dom.*; Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:432).

This passage describes the miraculous workings of the Abba Abraham while he traveled through an unknown village. While in the village the monk found himself surrounded by mocking crowds who are said to have sneered at him. They bring forth a man who was "deprived of the power of walking" because of an ailment from an unhealthy knee. The man's ailment caused him to crawl due to his inability to stand. The crowd tempted the monk by saying, "[s]how us, father Abraham, if you are the servant of God, and restore this man to his former health" for the purpose that they "may believe that the name of Christ, whom you worship, is not vain."

The Desert Father Abraham is said to have responded "at once" by invoking the name of Christ. Abba Abraham "stooped down and laid hold of the man's withered foot and pulled it." As the monk pulled on the man's foot, "immediately at his touch the dried and bent knee was straightened..." The passage then states how the crippled man "got back the use of his legs, which he had forgotten how to use in his long years of weakness." After his healing of his appendages had occurred,

the healed man was said to have “went away rejoicing.”

The setting for the miraculous occurrence is in an unknown village where a crowd offers a challenge to the monk Abraham to heal a man’s knee, an ailment that the man had experienced for many years. The reasons for the miracle could be assumed to be three-fold: both to relieve and heal the crippled man’s ailments; to respond to the challenge put forth by the crowd to heal the man so that Abraham could be proven to be a true servant of God; and that the witnesses would “believe that the name of Christ” for who the monk worshipped was not in vain. The passage does not tell the responding actions of the crowd after Abraham healed the ailed man, but it can be assumed that they were likely impacted in some way in their witnessing the healing of the man. The means of restoring the man’s health by the monk are found in his invoking the name of Christ, and the physical act of touching and pulling the leg and foot until it was restored. Many were involved in the miracle including the monk Abraham, those in the crowd, and the man who had his ailed leg and foot restored.

6. And Archelaus too, the Count, on a time having found him in the outer mountain, asked him merely to pray for Polycratia of Laodicea, an excellent and Christian maiden, for she suffered terribly in the stomach and side through over much discipline, and was altogether weakly of body [sic]. Anthony prayed therefore, and the Count noted the day in which the prayer was made, and having departed to Laodicea he found the maiden whole. And having enquired when and on what day she was relieved of her infirmity, he produced the paper on which he had written the time of the prayer, and having read it he immediately showed the writing on the paper. And all wondered when they knew that the Lord had relieved her of pain at the time when Anthony was praying and invoking the goodness of the Saviour on her behalf (*Vit. Ant. 2*; Athanasius, 2010:60).

In this recounting of a miraculous healing involving the Abba Anthony, the narrative begins with Archelaus, the Count, asking Anthony to pray for Polycratia, a Christian maiden from Laodicea who “suffered terribly in the stomach and side,”

and was “altogether weakly of body.” Anthony obliged the Count’s request and prayed for Polycratia. It is unknown how or what words Anthony used in his prayer. It can be assumed that Anthony prayed for Polycratia and that he likely prayed for her physical healing. The narrative proceeds to describe that the Count noted on a piece of paper the date in which Anthony prayed for the maiden. After having departed to Laodicea, the Count found Polycratia “whole” upon his arrival. When the Count inquired to the maiden on what day she was healed from her infirmity, the Count brought forth the paper in which he had recorded the time Anthony had prayed for the maiden. The Count’s note recorded the exact time that Polycratia said that she was healed. The passage states that “all wondered” at the fact that the maiden was healed at the exact recorded time Anthony had prayed for her and invoked “the goodness of the Savior on her behalf.”

This particular miracle is unique in that it involves the Count and Anthony present with each other, but also includes another, Polycratia, a Christian handmaiden who was not present. It is not possible to know from this passage whether Polycratia had prior knowledge of the Count seeking prayer from Abba Anthony for the restoration of her health. The means of the miracle involved Anthony’s offering up prayer to God, which the author describes in terms of “invoking the goodness of the Savior on her behalf.” The possible purposes or reasons for the miracle to occur were to restore the Christian maiden Polycratia to wholeness and likely to encourage the faith of the Count and all others that “wondered.”

7. But when he was obliged to cross the Arsenoitic Canal and the occasion of it was the visitation of the brethren [but] the canal was full of crocodiles. And by simply praying, he entered it, and all they with him, and passed over in safety (*Vit. Ant. 2*; Athanasius, 2010:21).

In this short miraculous account involving Abba Anthony, the narrative begins by describing how Abba Anthony, and those that traveled with him, attempted to cross the Arsenoitic Canal in order to visit brethren on the other side of the canal. The canal Anthony and his companions were to traverse is noted as being full of crocodiles. Anthony, after “simply praying,” he and those with him “entered” the

canal and “passed over in safety.” The passage notes that before they crossed the treacherous canal, Abba Anthony utilized prayer, and assuming from the context of the narrative, he asked for God’s protection to cross the canal. The supernatural happening of the miracle account is found in the fact that Abba Anthony and his companions were able to traverse a crocodile-laden canal unharmed. The words “entered” and “passed over” describing how they traversed the canal are inconclusive on whether they waded or swam through the canal, if they walked on top of the water, or whether they utilized another method. The reason of the miracle was to likely instill protection on Abba Anthony and his companions as they passed over to visit brethren, as well as the probability to encourage the faith of all of those present during the miraculous crossing of the river.

8. A woman had an illness they call cancer of the breast; she had heard of Abba Longinus and wanted to meet him. Now he lived at the ninth milestone from Alexandria. As the woman was looking for him, the blessed man happened to be collecting wood beside the sea. When she met him, she said to him, “Abba, where does Abba Longinus, the servant of God live?” not knowing that it was he. He said, “Why are you looking for that old imposter? Do not go to see him, for he is a deceiver. What is the matter with you?” The woman showed him where she was suffering. He made the sign of the cross over the sore and sent her away saying, “Go, and God will heal you, for Longinus cannot help you at all.’ The woman went away confident in this saying, and she was healed on the spot. Later, telling others what had happened and mentioning the distinctive marks of the old man, she learned that it was Abba Longinus himself” (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:123).

In this passage the Desert Father and monk Abba Longinus were involved in a miraculously healing of a woman with breast cancer. The narrative begins by describing that an unknown woman possessed the unfortunate ailment of “cancer of the breast.” The passage indicates that the woman traveled to the Alexandrian desert to meet Abba Longinus. It is unclear whether she resided near or far from

the “ninth milestone from Alexandria” where Abba Longinus resided. The passage states that she was looking for the monk and it appears from the context of the passage that they had never had acquaintance with each other. The narrative describes that the woman met the Elder monk as he was collecting wood beside the sea but she did not know the true identity of the monk to whom she was speaking.

The woman inquired to the monk if he knew the location of where “Abba Longinus, the servant of God live[ed]?” Unbeknownst to her, the monk she was speaking with was in fact Abba Longinus himself, the monk she sought. For reasons unknown, Abba Longinus asked the woman, “[w]hy are you looking for that old imposter? Do not go to see him, for he is a deceiver.” Abba Longinus then proceeded to ask the woman what is wrong with her to which the woman responded by showing the monk where she was suffering. Abba Longinus then made the sign of the cross over the area that needed healing and sent her away saying, “Go, and God will heal you, for Longinus cannot help you at all.” The passage then reports that she “went away confident in this saying (that Longinus could not help her), and she was miraculously and suddenly healed of her ailment. Later, the passage states that when the woman was retelling her account of the “old man” with others and the distinctive marks on the unknown monk’s body, the woman was informed that the old man she spoke with was indeed Abba Longinus.

The surrounding need for the miracle to take place is found in the woman’s ailment of breast cancer and her heartfelt search for Abba Longinus. The miracle is also grounded in the profound confidence of the woman believing that Longinus could not help her, but instead that the blessing from the old monk was sufficient to heal her. The possible reason for the miracle is to encourage the faith of those that revealed Abba Longinus’ identity to the recently healed woman after she had told them about the old man’s distinctive markings. The means by which Abba Longinus healed the woman of her ailment was in his making the sign of the cross over the woman’s ailed body. He also employed a level of humility in informing her that Longinus could not help her at all. It appears from the context of the passage that Longinus spoke with a sincere level of humility when he referred to

“Longinus” as an “imposter” and a “deceiver.” The setting of the miracle is in the wild as the passage reveals that Abba Longinus was out collecting wood by the sea near his cell where the woman began her conversation with him.

9. Abba Ammonas was going to pay a visit to Abba Anthony, one day, and he lost his way. So sitting down, he fell asleep for a little while. On waking, he prayed thus to God, “I beseech you, O Lord my God, do not let your creature perish.” Then there appeared to him as it were a man's hand in the heavens, which showed him the way, till he reached Abba Anthony's cave (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:27).

The recounting of a miracle involving the Desert Father Abba Ammonas opens with Ammonas traveling on his way to visit Abba Anthony. On this trip, the passage states that Ammonas became lost. Abba Ammonas then is described as sitting down and falling asleep for a little while. Upon waking, he begins to pray to God saying, “I beseech you, O Lord my God, do not let your creature perish.” The passage then describes how “a man’s hand in the heavens” appeared to Abba Ammonas, which guided him on his way until reaching Abba Anthony’s cave.

It is worth noting that in this short miraculous account that a supernatural happening was needed because Abba Ammonas found himself in a dangerous situation when he found himself lost on his way to Abba Anthony’s cave. The passage reveals that before the miraculous hand from heaven appeared to guide Abba Ammonas, he “prayed thus to God” asking the Lord not to let him perish. After his prayer, inexplicably a human hand appeared in the sky to guide him to Abba Anthony’s cave. No fasting, meditation, or making the sign of the cross is mentioned as being performed on the part of Abba Ammonas during the miracle. The setting of the miraculous event is in the wild where Abba Ammonas had become lost. The possible reasons for the miracle were to prevent the monk Ammonas from imminent death. Another plausible reason for the miracle occurring is the likelihood that through his experience of this miraculous level of providence, Abba Ammonas’ faith would be encouraged.

6.5 Analysis of textual instances of visions and miracles

6.5.1 Sadhu Sundar Singh and Visions

The recorded visions that Sundar Singh experienced vary in a number of ways. Not only does the content of what was observed during these visions vary, but also the purposes for his experiencing of these visions. Singh's personal reaction to the experiencing of each vision also varies within each unique experience.

During a majority of the instances that Singh experienced visions, the visions occurred in the context of when he was engaging in a time of prayer. In one account, Sundar Singh began to see a vision of the "spiritual world" after spending "only a few minutes" in prayer (Singh, 1926:58). In other instances such as with Singh's initial vision of Christ, he had spent nearly an hour and a half in prayer (Singh, 1929:117-8). Reflecting on his vision experiences, Sundar Singh recounted that he is not able to call up visions at will but rather they come upon him suddenly during prayer or meditation (Singh, 1926:XXI). Singh wrote that these divine visions occur "eight or ten times" during these times of prayer and meditation (Singh, 1926:XXI). Sundar Singh writes that the visions he experienced could last "an hour or two" (Singh, 1926:XXI).

The settings and times when Sundar Singh experienced visions vary among the examined passages. All of the visions that Singh experienced occurred while not in the presence of others with the exception of the disappearing person. He experienced seeing visions in different locations such as while in his home (Singh, 1929:117-8) or on two occasions while he was in the forest (Singh, 1922:5; 1926:4). Other times the location of his vision experiences is inconclusive from the passage (Singh, 1926:58). On at least two different accounts, the passages recount that Singh experienced these visions during the hours of the night (Singh, 1922:5; 1929:117-8). The circumstances that preceded Sundar Singh's visionary experiences differ greatly. Described in most of the vision accounts the circumstances of Sundar Singh's visions occur during his practice of meditation or prayer (Singh, 1922:5; 1926:XXI, 4, 58). On one account preceding the seeing of a vision, Singh faced great turmoil in his desire to have

a personal experience with the divine, may that meeting be with “Krishna, Buddha, or some other Avatar of the Hindu religion (Singh, 1929:117-8).” Similarly, on another occasion it is described that before Singh experienced a vision, he had “laid before God” his “deep necessities, and besought his help,” likely referencing his engaging in prayer (Singh, 1922:5).

The content of what Sundar Singh witnessed in visions differ in each experience. In a number of the recounted vision experiences, Singh experienced transporting in some form to the heavenly realms, which are at times described as times of “ecstasies” (Andrews, 1934:98-100). To explain the realms that Singh visited in his visions, terminology such as “spiritual world” (Singh, 1926:58), and “heavens” and “glories of the Kingdom of God” are used (Andrews, 1934:98-100). Singh also described these visionary experiences as times when his “spiritual eyes are opened” (Singh, 1926:4). While engrossed in visions of the heavenly realms, Singh described what he witnessed were “many things which correspond to things of beauty in this world” such as “mountains, trees and flowers” that have their “imperfections taken away” (Andrews, 1934:98-100). This same vision experience is compared to the vision experienced by the Hebrew Patriarch Jacob (Gen. 28) when Singh described a vision where he saw things “beyond description” while witnessing the “glories of the Kingdom of God” (Andrews, 1934:98-100).

During these visions in the heavenly realms, Sundar Singh experienced being in the presence of spiritual beings (Andrews, 1934:98-100), as well as being in the presence and conversing with Christ himself (Singh, 1929:117-8). When Sundar Singh described the numerous spiritual beings he was in the presence of, some of which he held conversations with, he used terms to describe them as: “a great concourse of spirit beings and “considerable (amounts of) saints and angels” (Singh, 1926:4); and “spirits” (Singh, 1926:XXI). In the visions experienced by Singh, often times these spiritual beings are described as surrounding a throne in the center of the heavenly realm on which Christ sits (Andrews, 1934:98-100). In one of the vision accounts, Singh said that while in the heavenly realms he walked “in glory of the heavenly sphere with Christ Jesus” (Singh, 1926:XXI). In two of the vision accounts that differ from the others, Singh walked in the heavenly

realms instead of simply viewing them. During these vision experiences Singh met Christ in the form of a poor man on one occasion (Singh, 1922:5) and spoke with (and was rebuked by) Christ in bodily form on another occasion (Singh, 1929:117-8).

The reasons Singh experienced these visions can only be speculated upon due to the limited amount of information found in the content of the passages. Singh's reactions to experiencing these visions are informative when attempting to understand the purposes behind the visions. In one of his visions of the heavenly realms, the passage states that Singh "bowed in the presence" of the heavenly beings (Singh, 1926:4). With the vision of seeing the poor man, the passage states that Singh left the experience "weeping and lamenting" his "folly and lack of insight," likely signifying an action of repentance on the part of the Singh. The passage also states that Singh felt a blessing from Christ in the process (Singh, 1922:5). In the vision account where Singh witnessed Christ in bodily form surrounded by immense light, Christ proceeded to ask Singh "Why do you persecute me? See, I have died on the Cross for you and for the whole world" (Singh, 1929:117-8). From this vision that Sundar Singh experienced, one cannot speculate the reason(s) for the visions, other than that Christ had a purpose of leaving Singh with feelings of repentance, feeling blessed, in wonder, and encouraged. In the times that he was rebuked, a feeling of awe from Singh likely accompanied these experiences.

6.5.2 Sadhu Sundar Singh and Miracles

Of the seven miracles involving Sadhu Sundar Singh, they vary tremendously in the nature, setting, purpose, and means by which the miracle occurred. In a number of the miracles Sundar Singh was the recipient of benevolence. In the other supernatural happenings, Singh was identified as having participated in the miraculous event, such as in the healing of another, or with the event happening unbeknownst to Singh. The settings of the miracles, which involved Sundar Singh, differ in many ways. In one miracle involving a miraculous healing of a woman, the setting is on the road in a village (Andrews, 1934:146). The setting of the healing of the woman on the street is vastly different than a miraculous

healing that occurred in a hospital room (Andrews, 1934:146-7), in that Singh purposely went to the sick boy in the hospital. Another miracle actualized while Singh was traveling through a forest near a raging river (Andrews, 1934:73-4) shares similarities to when a miracle occurred while Sundar Singh was suffering in a dark pit in that both miracles involved a mysterious figure that saved Singh from imminent death (Andrews, 1934:75-6). Still another miracle occurred while Singh was traveling and an angel in-disguise traveled with Singh providing to him with encouragement during a rare moment of weakness (Andrews, 1934:74). The mysterious person, like in other accounts, disappeared when they had arrived at the destination. Another miracle had the setting of a patio where Singh was praying silently only to be encroached by a leopard, which he tamed and stroked (Appasamy, 1956:28).

The nature of the miracles involving Singh exemplifies variance in the ways supernatural events occurred and to the reasons why these miracles may have been needed. In one such miraculous example from Sundar Singh's life, while traveling through an unknown village, a demon-possessed woman called out to him saying, "My helper has come to relieve me!" As the woman exclaims these words and Singh passes by her, the woman is suddenly and supernaturally healed (Andrews, 1934:146). Similarly in another miraculous event Singh is asked by a mother to come and pray for her son whose life hung between life and death. Singh obliged to pray for the child (in his native language Hindustani) and the boy was eventually healed (Andrews, 1934:146-7). The boy's healing is unlike that of the woman on the road who was healed suddenly. In the boy's case, Singh had offered up prayer for the ailing boy, and instead of being healed instantly, only after his health took a frightening unsafe turn was the boy later restored to normalcy.

Another miracle involving Sundar Singh occurred when he traveled through a village, very near to a black panther, and remained unscathed from the beast (Andrews, 1934:128). The miraculous nature of the event is that many others had perished because of the panther, but Singh remained alive in its presence. In another account where Singh exemplified supernatural attributes over animals was when he calmly stroked a leopard that had approached him during a silent

time of prayer at night while Singh's companion watched with great fear and amazement (Appasamy, 1956:28).

In two other miraculous happenings, Sundar Singh faced imminent death only to be saved by disappearing saviors. In one account, Sundar Singh has been cast down by a Tibetan Llama into a dark and wet well to perish due to his illegally proselytizing. After two days and nights, an unknown person opened the lid of the well and threw down a rope to Singh in order to pull him up from the well to the surface. When Singh had escaped the well and had regained his bearings, the mysterious savior had vanished (Andrews, 1934:75-6). Similarly in another account, Singh had come to a vast and dangerous river that was unable to be crossed. With ferocious animals growling in the forest behind him, Singh had given up all hope. Suddenly a man from across the river called out to Singh that he was to come to Singh and bring him across the river. The mysterious man placed Singh on his shoulders and safely traversed the river only to later disappear after carrying Singh to safety (Andrews, 1934:73-4). In another miraculous account of a mysterious companion coming to the assistance of Singh, a stranger came and walked alongside Singh during one of his travels and engaged Singh in a "friendly and uplifting manner" (Andrews, 1934:74). When Singh and his companion arrived at their destination the mysterious guest vanished. Singh, reflecting back on the event, said that the man was sent to him to "strengthen and uphold" him in his "hour of weakness."

All of the miracles experienced by Singh were predicated on the possibility of someone's life perishing, which are the grounds by which these supernatural phenomenon likely occurred. In four of the six accounts, Singh's own life is spared from probable death, such as his death from an animal attack, starving in a well, or drowning in a raging river. In two of the six miracle accounts, individuals other than Singh had their lives restored including the boy being miraculously healed in the hospital and the woman who was supernaturally healed as she exclaimed the arrival of her "helper." Besides lives being spared from suffering, it is also likely that within these miraculous experiences where God expressed divine supernatural abilities, those that witnessed these miracles grew in their faith and understanding of God's miraculous ways.

All of these miracles incorporate different means by which supernatural happenings occurred. In the miracles involving miraculous healings, one of these accounts involved the miracle of the healed woman (Andrews, 1934:146), Sundar Singh is rather 'passive' in the means of the healing, as the narrative states that he had simply walked by the ailed woman. Unbeknownst to Singh the woman was healed as she exclaimed that her helper had arrived. In the other healing account involving a sickly, young boy, Singh prayed an unknown prayer in Hindustani and physically placed his hands on the boy, who was later restored to full-health (Andrews, 1934:146-7).

In two of the miracle accounts where Singh exemplified power over animals, in one of these miracles he is rather passive within the miracle as he safely walked by the dangerous black-panther in the village. While in the other miracle account involving dangerous animals, Singh offers his hand to the leopard, which allowed Singh to stroke its head like that of a dog. In two of the miracle accounts involving Sundar Singh, the means of the miracle simply happened to Singh when he faced a time of immanent harm such as his rescue from the well by the unknown savior or his being carried across the vast river to safety by the unknown man. In the other miraculous account, Singh believed that the person walking with him was a local townsman, but instead he determined that Christ had come to encourage him in his hour of weakness.

6.5.3 Desert Fathers and visions

Within the various experiences of the Desert Fathers where they witnessed visions beyond normal reality, these otherworldly experiences vary in a number of ways. Differences in the vision experiences can be found in the settings of where the visions were witnessed and whether this was directly experienced by one of the retelling monks or whether this appears to be a passed down account of a vision experience of another. The vision passages vary in the content of what was witnessed during the visionary experience as well as the proceeding disposition after the monk who had experienced the vision. Variance also exists in whether the vision experiences were interpreted as a type of warning, a type of blessing, or of another type. The interpreted purpose or reason of the visions

experienced by the particular Desert Fathers also vary.

Regarding the setting of where the monks experienced witnessing visions, a majority of the visions occurred while the monks were near or in their cells (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:66, 222; *Vit. Ant. 2*; Athanasius, 2010:17-18). The majority of the visions experienced by the Desert Fathers occurred while the monks were engaging in a time of prayer or shortly after a time of prayer (Athanasius, 2010:17-18; Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:58; Ward & Anthony, 2006:66). In some of the instances of the vision, the monks were gathered outside of their cell in the desert or were returning to their cell from the desert (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:58; Ward & Russell, 2006:85). One of the settings for a vision occurred during the childhood of the Desert Father Abba Ephrem and was accompanied with a dream (Ward & Anthony, 2006:59). The setting of one of the visions is inconclusive as the passage describing the vision is a recounting by a Desert Father who did not directly experience the vision himself (Ward & Anthony, 2006:59). During these moments of witnessing visions, other actions by the monks accompanied the instances such as weeping (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:58), the experiencing of ecstasy for hours (Ward & Anthony, 2006:222), prostrating face down (Ward & Anthony, 2006:222), and the physical inflictions by demons (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:58).

The content of the visions experienced by the Desert Fathers show slight similarities in nature, but also vary in what exactly the monks witnessed, experienced, and their proceeding compositions after being a part of these experiences. In one of the visionary experiences, a monk having recently finished his prayer, was assaulted by a “filthy Ethiopian” who shot fiery arrows at the monk causing him to experience “mental aberration and confusion in understanding” as he ran around as if he were a madman (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:58).

Another one of the Desert Fathers experienced more pleasantries during his vision such as when Abba Ephrem’s witnessed a vision of a branch of vine protruding from his tongue, which bore great fruit from whence all the birds of heaven were able to feed upon (Ward & Anthony, 2006:59). Abba Ephrem experienced another example of a pleasant vision when he was given a kephalis by a band of angels,

which resulted in him seeing a “fountain flowing from his lips” (Ward & Anthony, 2006:59). The unknown author of the passage interpreted the flowing fountain as symbolizing the Holy Spirit. In another vision with accompanied pleasantries or blessing, the Abba Zeno, having wandered in the desert for three days, is offered a vision of a little child who offers him bread and water, and then after Abba Zeno prayed, he was suddenly transferred to his cell (Ward & Anthony, 2006:66).

The content of the other visionary experiences by the monks neither convey a direct form of pleasantries or blessing experienced by the monk, and neither an assaulting attack. Instead in a number of the visions, mystery surrounds what exactly the monks witnessed. One of the monks sees a vision of the final judgment of monastics and the punishments some of them were to receive (Ward & Anthony, 2006:222). He also witnessed a number of the “seculars” being ushered into heaven. The monk’s response to witnessing this judgment day vision was for him to proceed to live a greater life of compunction in his cell. The content of two of the visions witnessed by the monks such as their seeing of “the glory of God” (Ward & Anthony, 2006:222) and the good things that were in store for “true monks” are shrouded in mystery with the use of the phrase that “no words can describe” the monks’ reward (Ward & Russell, 2006:85). In a vision experience where Abba Anthony wrestled with demons, whether literally or figuratively, Anthony saw the “roof as it were opened,” and then a “ray of light” began to descend to him, which followed by the demon vanishing. A proceeding dialogue with Abba Anthony and a voice from heaven follows in which Anthony is told that the mysterious voice would be his “succor” and that Anthony’s name would be known everywhere (Athanasius, 2010:17-18).

The reactions that the monks had to their vision experiences appear to have a corresponding relationship with the purpose or reason for the vision to occur. In the cases of two visions that Abba Ephrem experienced, it can be assumed that Ephrem experienced a level of encouragement and a type of foreknowledge into the blessings that would be given to him in the future. Another Desert Father, Abba Anthony received visions of benevolence, in which a divine voice declared that the divine entity would be his “succor” and thus his name would be well known. Abba Zeno experienced a vision of benevolence in that a vision of a child

gave him food, drink, and brought him to safe passage back to his cell narrowly escaping a possible death in the wilderness. The Abba Paternuthius also experienced a vision in which encouragement appears to be the reason or purpose of the vision in which he witnessed a vision of heaven in a way that “no words can describe” all of the “good things” that await monks after their lives have ended.

In the vision instance of the unknown monk that struggled with the Ethiopian archer, who shot fiery arrows at him causing him “confusion of understanding”, the vision could be determined as a type of curse for the assaulted monk (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:58). Alternately, for the Desert Father, Abba Apollos, that witnessed this same vision, it was a sign of insight into man’s soul and the inner-struggles man faces with demons. Abba Silvanus experienced two different visions that warranted differing responses. In one of the visions experienced by Abba Silvanus regarding a future judgment day, the particular vision was not one of blessing but instead a warning, which caused Silvanus to respond in part to live a life “full of compunction” and to never want to leave his cell (Ward & Anthony, 2006:222). Conversely during another vision experienced by Silvanus the experience was neither a curse nor a warning but instead during this time of prayer, he experienced ecstasy and the passage describes him as having “peace” after being found by another monk (Ward & Anthony, 2006:222).

6.5.4 Desert Fathers and miracles

Within the accounts of the Desert Fathers, both themes and variances occur within the settings, the contexts or events surrounding the miracle, as well as the reasons to why the miracle occurred. One reoccurring theme found throughout miraculous accounts is that all of the miracles occurred outside of the cells of the Desert Fathers. The settings for two of the miracles occurred by a waterway; four of the miracles occurred in or near a village, and three miracle accounts occurred in the wilderness. The miracles occurred either by the means of a monk traveling to another destination or the monk was in the wilderness near his cell.

Two of the miracle accounts involving the Abbas Bessarion and Anthony have similarities in that both accounts contain the miracle of traversing a waterway in

a miraculous way (Athanasius, 2010:21; Ward & Anthony, 2006:40). In the account of Abba Bessarion, after praying and crossing himself, he was able to miraculously cross the river by walking on the water as his confidants witnessed the supernatural event. Similarly, Abba Anthony, when faced with crossing the Arsenoitic Canal that was filled with crocodiles, Anthony prayed and then he and his disciples were able to enter and pass over the canal safely. Both accounts mention engaging in prayer by the Desert Fathers prior to the miraculous crossing of the waterways.

Of the miraculous accounts, two of the instances involving Abba Anthony mention the supernatural healing of demon possessed or “vexed” individuals. In the first miracle account, as Abba Anthony was leaving a village, he was met by a woman who beseeched Anthony to heal her demon-vexed daughter (Athanasius, 2010:68). After the child was placed before Anthony, he proceeded to pray and call “upon the name of Christ.” As a result of Anthony’s prayers, the child was raised whole and the unclean spirit departed. In the other miraculous healing account involving Abba Anthony, after Anthony asked a particular village’s philosophers what it means to cleanse those vexed with demons, such vexed individuals with demons were brought forth to Anthony (Athanasius, 2010:69). After Anthony told the philosophers to “put away” the strife they had toward Anthony and his kin, Anthony proceeded to call upon Christ and then signed those that suffered two or three times with the sign of the cross. The vexed men responded to Anthony’s actions by miraculously standing up “whole” and in their “right mind” and were healed of their demon possession. Actions that appear in both accounts (which are likely one in the same) are the noting of Anthony praying and his “calling upon Christ.”

Other miraculous accounts recount the Desert Fathers healing individuals with physical ailments. In the first miraculous account of healing, Abba Abraham is said to have found himself in a village surrounded by mocking individuals who tempted the monk to heal a man who could not walk because of a knee ailment (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:432). After the crowd challenged Abraham to heal the man, in order to prove that he was a servant of God and that Christ was not worshipped in vain, Abraham is said to have responded by invoking the name of

Christ, laying his hands on the man's withered foot and pulling upon it. The man's leg was miraculously straightened and the man "went away rejoicing." In another account involving a miraculous healing brought about by Abba Longinus, the event began when an unknown woman sought the Desert Father Longinus' assistance in order to heal her ailment of breast cancer (Ward & Anthony, 2006:123). Unbeknown to the woman that the person she was speaking with was indeed the Longinus she sought, she asked the unknown monk where she could meet the famed monk. Longinus, utilizing a degree of deception and/or humility, remarked to the woman that the monk she sought was an "imposter" and a "deceiver." He then asked the woman what was wrong with her and she responded by showing Longinus her cancer of the breast. Abba proceeded to make the sign the cross over her ailed area and sent her away saying that God would heal her and that the monk Longinus could not assist her. As the woman traveled, she was instantly healed of her cancer and after conversing with others she was informed that the monk she previously conversed with was indeed Longinus. In this unique account, although Longinus did make the sign of the cross over the woman's effected area, he also used a degree of deception in tricking the woman about his true identity, although he did correctly self-identify himself as a "deceiver" and an "imposter."

In the final account of a miraculous healing involving Abba Anthony, a Count is said to have sought out Anthony's assistance in praying for a Christian maiden named Polycratia who resided in Laodicea (Athanasius, 2010:60). Polycratia was said to have suffered from an ailment of her stomach and side. Anthony obliged the Count's request and prayed for Polycratia, for which the Count recorded the time that the prayer occurred. When the Count arrived in Laodicea, Polycratia was found to be miraculously "whole" and after the Count inquired when she was healed it was made clear from his previous written record that the healing occurred at the exact time in which Anthony had prayed. Similarly to the previous two healing accounts, the Desert Father in the process of healing the ailed individual invoked prayer, but in this case the signing of the cross was not utilized.

The last two miracle accounts of the Desert Fathers involve the safety of individuals being miraculously preserved. The nature of the first miracle involves

a hippopotamus that was ravaging a town's countryside and likely putting the town's people in danger (Ward & Russell, 2006:66). The people of the town summoned Abba Bes to ward off the beast for which he waited until a particular time to engage the beast. When the beast met Abba Bes, he used a gentle voice saying to the hippopotamus: "In the name of Jesus Christ, I order you not to ravage the countryside anymore." The account proceeds to describe that the beast was driven away from the district, as if by angels, and that Abba Bes had performed a similar miracle in which he also banished a crocodile (Athanasius, 2010:21). Again, the invoking of the name of Jesus Christ by a Desert Father is identified. In the final miracle account that involved the preservation of an individual's safety, the passage states how Abba Ammonas, while in-route to visit Abba Anthony, found himself lost on his journey (Ward & Anthony, 2006:27). Abba Ammonas proceeds to sit down and fall asleep. Upon waking up, Ammonas beseeches the Lord to "not let your creature perish." Miraculously and by divine providence, "a man's hand in the heavens" appeared to Abba Ammonas and directed safe passage to Abba Ammonas until he had reached Abba Anthony's cave. Abba Ammonas' incorporation of prayer was utilized in this miracle account and through divine intervention, his safety was preserved as he was guided to respite to Anthony's cave.

Of the nine miracle accounts involving the Desert Fathers, varying outcomes, purposes and reasons appear to be present within the passages. Within a number of the passages, such as the traversing of the waterway and the five accounts of the fathers' healing of the ailed or vexed individuals, the witnesses to the miracles reaped benefits of observing the supernatural happenings as the passages describe that they were "filled with wonder" (Ward & Anthony, 2006:40), that the onlookers "all wondered" or that they were filled with wonder and astonishment (Athanasius, 2010:69). It can be deduced that although in the miraculous cases when the individuals were healed of their physical ailments, those that were healed were in-part recipients of benevolence of the miracles, i.e. being made physically whole. Additionally, the witnesses to the events were also recipients, such as the philosophers or the Count, as they became secondary beneficiaries of "wonder" from the miracles. Similarly in the miracle involving the vexed daughter, not only was the daughter healed of her ailments, but the child's

mother who had sought Anthony's assistance in the first place, also was a beneficiary of the miracle in that her daughter was delivered to her in a healed state. It could be contended that in this passage Anthony exemplifies the practice of *apatheia*: the fruit of love or charity that finds its roots in the state of a monk's soul that has so much love towards God and men, that their heart leaves no room for human (self-centered) passions (Unknown Monk, 1986:15).

In regards to miracle involving Abba Ammonas (Ward & Anthony, 2006:27), divine intervention followed the monk's offering of prayer in order to preserve the safety of the lost monk in order for him to safely pass to Anthony's cave. In two of the other accounts, the miracles of the warded off hippopotamus and miraculous healing involving Abba Longinus, it appears that the health and preservation of the common townspeople and the woman with breast cancer appear to be the main recipients of the miracles. Although, those who informed the healed woman of Abba Longinus' true identity likely received spiritual encouragement from being involved in the unique event.

6.6 Evaluation of textual data for similarities and differences

When examining various passages that describe the witnessing of visions and the experiencing of miracles by both the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh, obvious similarities and differences become apparent within these experiences.

6.6.1 Similarities and differences in vision accounts

In examining the experiences of the Fathers and Singh regarding their witnessing of visions, similarities and differences can be identified in the areas of the setting in which they witnessed visions, the content seen in the particular visions, as well as the reasons or purposes for having experienced said visions. In regards to the setting of the visionary experiences, Singh experienced visions in two primary locations: within his room and while in the forest. Two of these vision experiences are said to have occurred at night. The locations from which Singh witnessed visions correspond directly with the settings and locations of where the Desert

Fathers were when they experienced their respective visions.

A majority of the visions experienced by the Desert Fathers occurred within their cell. Understanding that Singh did not utilize a cell or cave within his prayer rule, his home or the silence of his room has marked similarities to the cells of the Desert Fathers. Such as with the case of the father, Abba Zeno, who witnessed a vision of a child that guided him safely to his cell, Singh also experienced seeing a vision while outside of his home, mainly during a time of praying in the forest.

Within both the vision experiences of the Desert Fathers and of Singh, their visions occurred during a time of prayer or after a time of prayer. One unique difference in the settings of the visions experienced by Singh and the Desert Fathers is the example of Abba Apollos who witnessed a vision experience (the Ethiopian archer), which involved an additional monk who is unknown. This additional person present during the vision differs than any of the visions experienced by Singh as in all of Singh's vision experiences, he was found to be alone.

Within the content of what Singh and the Desert Fathers witnessed during their visions, firm similarities and stark differences are found. Firm similarities appear to exist between Singh's experiences of witnessing a vision of the "glories of the Kingdom of God" to that of the experiences of Abba Paternuthius. "Beyond description" is the phrase that is used to describe what Singh witnessed in his vision experience (Andrews, 1934:98-100). This terminology describing Singh's experience is very similar to that of Abba Paternuthius, whose own vision experience of heaven is described as "good things" that "no words can describe" what awaits true monks upon their death (Ward & Russell, 2006:85). Both Abba Silvanus and Singh's vision experiences were also described with the term of "ecstasy" (Andrews, 1934:98-100; Ward & Anthony, 2006:222). The use of the term "ecstasy" seems to denote that these particular visions were not of a nature of punishment but rather some type of benevolence.

Another similarity between the vision experiences of Singh and the Desert Fathers is the incorporation of seeing angels and "natural things" in the heavenly

realms. Abba Ephrem witnessed two visions (Ward & Anthony, 2006:59) in which a band of angels brought down a kephalis to him, and in another vision he witnessed a branch of vine protruding from his tongue bearing great fruit that the birds of heaven fed upon. Abba Ephrem's vision experiences show similarities to that of Singh's in that, Singh commenting on his visions of heaven, spoke of holding conversations with a "great concourse of spirit beings," and mentions the presence of "saints and angels" (Singh, 1926:4). Singh also spoke of when he was transported to the heavenly realms, there he saw "many things which corresponded to things of beauty in this world," such as "mountains, trees, [and] flowers" and that in their heavenly setting they had their "imperfections taken away" (Andrews, 1934:98-100).

The fact that both Singh and the Desert Father Silvanus felt a level of compunction or remorse after having witnessed these visions shows great similarities between their accounts. Singh felt great compunction marked with "weeping and lamenting" after having witnessed a vision of a poor man, who appears to be Christ in a disguise (Singh, 1922:5). This experience bears great resemblance to the experience of Silvanus (Ward & Anthony, 2006:222), who witnessed a vision of the final judgment of monastics (and "seculars"), which caused him to respond with compunction and to not want to leave his cell.

One major marked difference within the content of the visions witnessed by Singh and the Desert Fathers is that Singh experienced visions of Christ himself on a number of occasions, and in one of those visions, Christ himself rebukes Singh on his actions of folly. Within the visions of the fathers, no one appears to receive a vision of Christ in any form, although there is mention of a heavenly voice that Abba Anthony converses with after wrestling with a demon. Demonology or the presence of demons is not found in the vision experiences of Singh but appear in both the visions witnessed by the Abbas Anthony and Apollos.

The reasons or the purposes of the visions witnessed by the Desert Fathers and Singh have a marked level of similarity. Singh experienced a level of benevolence from a number of visions, exemplified by the use of the term "ecstasy" to describe his experience. While in another vision experience, Singh "bowed in the

presence” of the heavenly beings he witnessed (Singh, 1926:4). In other visions Singh is left “weeping and lamenting” his folly, and one occasion he is directly rebuked from Christ himself (Singh, 1929:117-8). These varying reactions from Singh of compunction, ecstasy, and blessing are all consistent with the reactions of the Desert Fathers after having witnessed their own particular visions. Many experienced a level of benevolence and blessing after their vision experiences such as: Abba Ephrem’s vision of foreknowledge of his future abilities (Ward & Anthony, 2006:59); Abba Anthony’s being promised the divine voice that would be his “succor” and that his name would be well known (Athanasius, 2010:17-18), as well as the experiences of Abbas Paternuthius and Silvanus who also came away from their visions with positive reactions. Others such as Abba Zeno had visions of a child who provided for him food, drink, and safe passage to his cell. Other Desert Fathers, similar to Singh, experienced responses of compunction and greater devotion, such as Abba Silvanus and his vision of judgment. Abba Apollos’ vision of the Ethiopian archer that attacked the unknown monk also called Apollos brought forth greater devotion.

6.6.2 Similarities and difference in miracle accounts

Within the passages recounting the miracles that the Desert Fathers and Singh performed and experienced, similarities and differences can be identified in the areas of setting in which the miracles took place, the content of the miracles, as well as the purposes and means by which the miracles took place. In regards to the settings of miracles involving Singh, all but one of the miracles occurred while he was outdoors, except for the lone miracle that occurred while inside in a hospital. Similarly, all of the miracles involving the Desert Fathers occurred outdoors. Three of the miracles experienced by Singh and the Desert Fathers occurred in the wild and involved a crossing of a waterway: one by Sadhu Sundar Singh and two by the Desert Fathers Bessarion and Anthony. Three of the miracles involving Singh occurred in a village or when traveling to a village. Similarly, miracles involving the Desert Fathers occurred near or in a village on four different instances. Other settings of miracles involving Singh that do not show similarities to the settings of the miracles involving the Desert Fathers were the accounts of Singh experiencing miracles in a hospital, in a well, and on the

porch of a home.

Within the content of the miracles examined, major similarities appear to exist between the miracles involving Singh and the Desert Fathers. One of the miracles involving Singh that shows a number of firm similarities to that of the Desert Fathers, was when Singh found himself distraught and facing a raging river. After crying out to God, a mysterious man proceeded to wade the river, put Singh on his shoulders, and again traversed the river only to disappear after bringing Singh to safety. Similarly, on two different occasions, Desert Fathers were said to have also miraculously crossed waterways. Abba Bessarion, after praying and crossing-himself, miraculously traversed a river with his disciples and remain dry. In another Desert Father account of a miracle, Abba Anthony and his disciples came to a canal ridden with crocodiles and, after praying, Anthony and his disciples were able to cross through the canal unharmed.

In miracles experienced by Singh and Abba Bes, both supernatural experiences reveal normally ferocious animals showing uncharacteristic restraint in harming the holy men. In showing this miraculous ability to go unharmed from such dangerous animals, Singh is recounted as walking unharmed through a village near a man-eating panther. On another occasion, during a time of prayer, when a leopard approached Singh, he proceeded to calmly stroke the beast as if it were a pet. Abba Bes similarly showed the miraculous ability to control animals from harming him. After being summoned by townspeople, Abba Bes was able to ward off a dangerous hippopotamus by simply using a gentle voice and calling upon the “name of Christ” (Athanasius, 2010:68). Bes was also said to have performed a similar miraculous act in warding off a dangerous crocodile.

Of the miraculous accounts of Singh and the Desert Fathers in the area of miracles involving the healing of ailed or possessed individuals, clear differences mark the supernatural happenings. In the passage, which described how a woman was miraculously cured of being demon-possessed when Singh walked by her, the supernatural healing happened unbeknownst to Singh. This type of ‘passive’ approach to the miracles is not present in the healing stories of the Desert Fathers. In the miraculous case of when vexed individuals are brought to

Abba Anthony, he clearly called upon the name of Christ, signed the suffers “two or three times” with the sign of the cross, and the healed individuals stood up “whole” in the presence of Anthony. Similarly, in the miraculous healing passage involving Abba Abraham, the passage states how Abraham took a more ‘hands on approach’ to miraculously healing a man with a bad leg by praying and invoking the name of Christ and by laying his hands on the man’s foot and pulling it until the man was healed (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:432).

In one of the miracles involving Singh, he is mentioned as putting forth a more ‘active’ and more ‘hands on’ approach to the healing of the young boy in the hospital. After the boy’s mother sought Singh’s assistance in the healing of the boy, Singh prayed unknown supplications in Hindustani to God and laid his hands on the ailed boy who miraculously was healed of his ailment. Singh’s healing of the little boy resembles the healing account of the young daughter that was brought by her mother to the Desert Father Abba Anthony. After Anthony prayed and called upon the Lord, the little girl was miraculously restored to health.

Three other miracles show similarities to each other in that for both Singh and the Desert Father Ammonas, divine intervention was needed to guide them safely to their destinations. In the case of Abba Ammonas, after finding himself lost on his way to see Abba Anthony, Ammonas prayed and a man’s hand appeared in the sky guiding him in the correct route to take until he arrived at Anthony’s cave. Similarly, Singh experienced a miraculous escape from a well when an unknown person removed the lid of the well and threw a rope down to Singh. After climbing and escaping from the well, Singh’s rescuer mysteriously disappeared when Singh attempted to thank him. On another occasion while Singh was walking to a village and feeling defeated, a stranger came and conversed with him. The stranger helped to lift Singh’s spirits with his presence, and after they arrived at the desired destination, the mysterious stranger miraculously disappeared. The unique miraculous accounts involving Longinus’ healing of the woman with breast cancer and Anthony’s healing of Polycratia do not appear to share any major similarities in nature to the miracles involving Singh.

The reasons for why the miracles involving Singh and the Desert Fathers occurred can only be speculated upon through a close reading of the examined passages. In a majority of the supernatural healing events involving Singh and the Desert Fathers, the purpose appears to be that those that were healed benefited most from the miracles, such as the young boy, the girl, Polycratia, or the demon possessed individuals. It can be assumed that the witnesses of the miracles were also recipients from the supernatural accounts in that they too were edified. Such witnessing individuals like the Count, the townspeople watching Singh go unharmed by the panther, or the philosophers that saw Anthony heal demon possessed individuals were also likely edified. In a number of instances, both Singh and the Desert Fathers' lives were miraculously saved from impending danger or death. In the cases of the lost Abba Ammonas, Bessarion and Anthony's traversing of the water, or Singh's hopeless case when he was thrust into the well, the preservation of lives for these particular servants of Christ appears to be the reason for why the miracles might have occurred.

The Desert Fathers continually invoked the "name of Christ" and were noted as praying in the process of the miracle occurring. The passages described the monks as performing the sign of the cross upon those they healed of infirmities. The passages describe that within the miracle accounts of Singh, he in fact prayed on numerous occasions calling upon the name of Christ, but was never identified as performing the sign of the cross, which appears to not be customary for him. In a majority of the miracles involving the Desert Fathers, they acted upon an issue, such a health ailment, whereas with Singh on a number of occasions, unbeknownst to him, miracles simply occurred because of his presence. Examples of Singh unknowingly being involved during the fruition of the miracle are when individuals mystically appeared to assist him and then proceeded to disappear shortly thereafter. Only after the mysterious guests had disappeared did Singh become cognizant that supernatural happenings occurred.

6.7 Conclusion

After examining the passages that recount visions and miracles involving both Singh and the Desert Fathers, it becomes apparent that they shared some similarities as well as a few poignant differences. Both Singh and the Desert Fathers experienced visions that left them responding in a number of similar ways, such as with compunction, weeping, ecstatic states, or blessings. A marked difference between Singh and the Desert Fathers' vision experiences is that Singh uniquely had visions where he walked and conversed with Christ. In regards to the miraculous events involving Singh and the Desert Fathers, one consistent theme appears to be that the purpose of the miracles was to assist others from ailed conditions, such as a ravaged village, a vexed girl, a dying boy, Singh, or the Desert Fathers themselves. One marked difference between the miracles experienced by Singh and Desert Fathers is found in that, Singh compared to the Desert Fathers, did not employ making the sign of the cross during the times when supernatural miracles occurred.

The goal of chapter 6 was to continue in the analysis process of the ascetic spiritual practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers within the specific ascetic practices experiencing visions and miracles. Within the overall research agenda of this dissertation, chapter 6 can be deemed invaluable especially in continuing the process of pursuing elucidation to the main research problem of whether Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers share similarities in their spiritual practices. Chapter 6 provided elucidation to two subsidiary questions guiding the research. To the guiding sub-question of whether parallel experiences can be found in the seeing of visions and performing miracles by the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh, the research has indicated that there exist parallels in the visions and miracles experienced by Singh and the Desert Fathers.

The analysis found that similarities in Singh and the Desert Fathers' experiences with visions and miracles include that, when experiencing a vision, both were left responding in a number of similar ways, such as with compunction, weeping, ecstatic states, or experiencing a type of blessing. Similarly, regarding Singh and

the Desert Fathers' experiences with miracles, a paralleled purpose within the miracles was to assist others from ailed conditions and appears to be a consistent theme throughout the accounts. Marked differences are also present in their vision and miracle experiences. When Singh experienced visions he routinely walked and conversed with Christ, a type of experience never mentioned within the accounts of the Desert Fathers. Another difference in the means by which miracles were instituted, the Desert Fathers routinely made the sign of the cross during the times that supernatural miracles occurred, whereas Singh did not employ such an instrument.

The findings in this chapter become a part in answering not only the subsidiary guiding research question into what ways do the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh differ from those practiced by the Desert Fathers, but also a piece into better answering the main research problem of whether Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers share similarities in their ascetic practices. A portion of the researcher's hypothesis, that the greatest level of marked differences in the practices of the Desert Fathers and Sundar Singh will come in this area involving visions and miracles, is also partially addressed. Within this area, marked differences are accounted for, but the thesis statement cannot be fully answered until the remaining research has been completed in the final section of the analysis in chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7

SURVEY OF THE ASCETIC PRACTICE OF SELF-DEPRIVATION

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 is the third and final installation in the analysis process of the accounts of the ascetic spiritual practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, specifically examining the ascetic practice of self-deprivation. This chapter is important in attempting to understand the main research problem of whether Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers share similarities in their spiritual practices. It is also the final piece of research of the hypothesis statement. The aim of this chapter, similar to the two preceding chapters, is to provide an elucidation of two subsidiary questions that continue to guide the research, specifically: in what ways do the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh differ from those practiced by the Desert Fathers; and in what ways are the self-deprivation undertaken by Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers similar. In addressing the aforementioned sub-questions, the overarching research problem can then be answered in its entirety. This chapter will also provide the final test of the validity of the hypothesis statement that the greatest similarities in ascetic practices will be found in the area of prayer and meditation, and that the greatest level of marked differences in the practices Singh and the Desert Fathers are in the area of visions and miracles.

Through the analyzing of various passages, similarities and differences are found in the ways in which Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers denied themselves. One means of self-deprivation that will be examined will be in regard to the possessions Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers refrained from owning. Also, to be examined will be how Singh and the Desert Fathers practiced fasting and from what did they choose to fast. The purpose of the engaging the ascetic practices of self-deprivation will also be examined in order to identify shared similarities and differences by which Singh and the Desert Fathers incorporated

self-deprivation into their respective faiths.

After the introductory section (7.1), section 7.2 will scrutinize texts authored by Singh himself in order to identify examples of self-deprivation. In section 7.3, the essential texts regarding the Desert Fathers will also be surveyed for examples of the ascetic practice of self-deprivation. Section 7.4 will put forth a thorough analysis of textual instances of self-deprivation from within surveyed texts regarding Singh and the Desert Fathers. Section 7.5 will provide an evaluation and findings of the textual data for similarities and differences in the ascetic prayer and meditation practices of Singh and the Desert Fathers, followed by a conclusion (7.6) regarding the relevance of the chapter to the overall research agenda.

7.2 Singh authored texts

1. For true service and the performance of duty my servants must be ready to offer even life itself--like that faithful soldier who remained at his post in the bitter cold and falling snow till he froze to death, and like a statue still kept his place, though the others of the watch went off to warm themselves at the fire. When the king came and saw him standing fixed and faithful still in death, he took off his crown and placed it for a space upon his head, saying: "Such a faithful soldier and servant is worthy of the honor and glory of my diadem. Would that he had lived, for then I would have made him the head of my kingdom!" Such must my faithful servants be in the service to which I have appointed them, and to those who finish their work with like faith and courage I will grant a fadeless crown of eternal kingship (2 Tim. 4:5-8) (Singh, 1922:30).

This passage records Sundar Singh retelling a conversation that he had shared with Christ regarding the topic of the amount of sacrifice that is required of disciples of Jesus. Singh writes that Christ revealed to him that similar to the faithful soldier, Christ's faithful servants are to "be in the service to which I have appointed them" and that to those who finish their work with faith and courage,

will be granted “a fadeless crown of eternal kingship.” It is worth noting that according to this passage, which is oriented more toward the theory of self-deprivation rather than a narrative describing self-deprivation, the passage says that similar to a soldier willing to offer his life in devotion to his king, disciples of Christ must be willing to deprive themselves even to the point of losing their life in devotion to their King, Jesus Christ. The passage emphasizes that the reward for those who offer the ultimate act of self-deprivation with faith and courage will be given “a fadeless crown of eternal kingship.”

2. Without self-denial it is impossible to serve God, and, as we mentioned before in the first chapter, we should first learn to live our lives with the Lord in secret, and learn the lessons of life while we sit at His feet (Singh, 1926:78).

In this short passage on self-denial, Sundar Singh discusses the relationship between self-denial and serving God. Singh puts forth the thesis that without self-denial it is “impossible to serve God.” The fact that Sundar uses such a definitive term as “impossible” is worth noting. He associates self-denial with the service of God. Singh correlates self-denial with living one’s life in the Lord, “in secret,” which presumably means devotional actions without others knowing of those actions. Next, the passage states how after living one’s life with the Lord in secret, one is able to learn the “lessons of life” while sitting at Christ’s feet. It is possible that Singh is saying that the act of denying oneself is directly related to serving God and the method of denying one’s self is to be found both in the process of learning to live one’s life with the Lord in secret and in learning the lessons of life while sitting at his feet. Self-denial, at least from this passage, is not to be correlated with any sort of self-inflicted bodily suffering such as the ascetic practices of fasting or denial of safety or shelter.

3. It was back in Sabathu that the thought crystallized into reality. He had returned there after his baptism, and remained for a month, gradually disposing of his belongings and preparing himself for what lay ahead. He spent hours in the forest praying and meditating (Parker, 2010:42).

In this passage that incorporates self-denial, the narrative begins by saying that the setting of the village of Sabathu, Sundar Singh's thoughts had "crystallized into reality" with the goal or ambition to travel sharing the good news of Christ as an evangelist. The passage explains that after his baptism, a pivotal point in Sundar Singh's conversion, he remained in Sabathu and there he spent his time "gradually disposing of his belongings and preparing himself for what lay ahead." The passage concludes that Singh also "spent hours in the forest praying and meditating," which may be synonymous or related to "preparing himself for what lay ahead." From this passage, in preparation for further ministry after his baptism, Singh proceeded to dispose his belongings, which we know from other accounts likely means that he gave his possessions away to those who had need. After disposing of his belongings, he then prepared for his ministry by spending "hours in the forest praying and meditating."

4. [Sundar] remembered how Jesus, at the very commencement of his ministry, went into the wilderness and fasted for forty days and forty nights. The thought remained in his mind, and he felt that he, too, should fast for that period... Then he went on, toward the forest. He took with him his New Testament and forty stones. The doctor had told him the likely effects of going without food and drink for a prolonged period, and he had decided that the best way of keeping track of time would be to throw away one stone each day. And so he started on his vigil deep in the forest, alone (Parker, 2010:84-85).

This passage begins by stating that Singh reflected upon the events that preceded the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, specifically going into the wilderness and fasting for forty days and forty nights. After reflecting on Christ's own journey to the wilderness, the passage states that Christ's fast would not leave Singh's mind and he began to feel that he too "should fast for that period." The passage then states that Singh began traveling "toward the forest." The belongings that Singh brought with him on his journey to the wild were only his "New Testament and forty stones." The passage then interjects by stating that a doctor which Singh had consulted with regarding his fast told him of the "likely effects of going without food and drink for a prolonged period..." The passage

then indicates that Singh determined that the best way of keeping track of the time while fasting in the forest would be to “throw away” one of the forty stones each day. The passage then proceeds to explain that Singh “then started on his vigil deep in the forest, alone.” The act of being alone that Singh practiced shares similarities to the isolation practices of the monastics, of which Nouwen (1991:25) describes this type of isolation practice of a person entering into the “furnace of transformation.”

There are a number of aspects that are worth noting regarding Singh’s actions of self-deprivation. The first is that Singh finds his example of self-deprivation of fasting in Christ Jesus himself and Christ’s forty days and forty nights fast in the wild. Secondly, Christ’s journey into the wild remained on Singh’s mind, a type of conviction or desire of Singh’s that lingered within his thoughts. The fact that Singh planned to fast for forty days and nights is important to note and that he had consulted with a doctor regarding the effects of attempting to complete such a feat. Singh assessed the physical and mental cost of his act of self-deprivation, but still followed through with completing the task. Besides fasting, the passage states that Singh brought along with him on his fast the resources of his New Testament and forty rocks to keep track of his time in the forest. The last sentence also utilizes the term “vigil,” which seems to denote Singh’s desire to stay awake, keep watch and to pray, which are common attributes when holding vigil in the Christian tradition (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

5. The *sadhu* had found a convenient clearing and, since he knew that he would not be able to count the days, had gathered forty stones, intending to drop one each morning. At first, meditation had been easy, but as the days passed weakness clouded his mind. Then, physical sensations growing less acute while spiritual perceptions quickened, a feeling of remarkable peace and happiness invaded him...He became too weak to move the stone by his side. Then, one day, there was darkness (Davey, 1963:52).

In another passage describing Singh’s forty days and forty nights fast, in this account the intricacies of what happened during his time in the wilderness are

provided. The passage begins by describing that Singh located a proper location to undergo his time of fasting. Such a location for his fast is described as “a convenient clearing.” His forty stones are again mentioned and his plan to drop, or “throw away” a stone every day he was fasting, just as the previous passage described. The passage then explains that during this fast period that Singh meditated and that at first, his “meditation had been easy.” The account then continues to describe that “as the days passed weakness clouded his mind,” likely due to lack of nourishment from abstaining from food, drink, and sleep.

Singh is then recorded as stating that his experience then went in a different direction, differing from the weakness that had previously clouded his mind. He says that the “physical sensations” began to grow less in acuity and his “spiritual perceptions” began to quicken. Davey does not further extrapolate on what exactly was involved in such “physical sensations,” but this could be an allusion to the weakness that had previously clouded his mind. The “spiritual perceptions” that were quickened during his fasting is also evasive to determine from this lone passage in what exactly entails these actions.

After his spiritual perceptions had quickened, “a feeling of remarkable peace and happiness invaded him.” It can be assumed that this peace and happiness is what Singh sought in the first place in his desire to fast for a prolonged set of time, a type of ecstatic connection to the Divine. Later the passage states that Singh became so weak that he was unable to move the rocks that marked his counting of days. Then “one day, there was darkness” alluding to Singh’s ‘blacking out’ due to exhaustion brought on from his fast. It is known from many sources recounting Singh’s life that he was found alive in such an exhausted state by an individual who likely saved his life.

6. To attempt such a tour in winter was to ask for hardship, and Sundar suffered every bitter agony the climate and people could produce. His thin yellow robe was no protection against the frost and snow; he was unused to sleeping in the open, as he was often forced to do; his feet, without sandals to protect them, were cut and bruised, leaving a trail of bloody footprints along the village streets

(Davey, 1963:52).

In this passage, Davey describes one of Singh's evangelism-oriented trips through Kashmir, Afghanistan, and then into the Himalayas. It is worth noting that Singh ventured on this trip voluntarily out of his immense desire to share the news of his beloved Christ Jesus with others in this mountainous and often detached area of the world. The passage reports that such an endeavor, especially in winter, "was to ask for hardship." This hardship that Singh experienced is elaborated upon by stating that he suffered "every bitter agony the climate and people could produce."

The passage continues to describe other hardships he faced on this trip. His thin, yellow robe, one of a traveling Sadhu, held no protection for Singh against the bitter frost and snow. The passage then states that Singh was often forced to sleep in the open, and highlights that he was not used to sleeping in such a way, especially in such harsh conditions. Next, the passage describes how Singh's feet left "a trail of bloody footprints along the village streets." Singh's bloody footprints were left on the village streets because he chose to travel without wearing shoes/sandals which left his feet unprotected, that eventually led to his feet becoming cut, bruised, and bloody.

A number of other acts of self-deprivation are worth noting which Singh employed throughout his life according to the passage. One was to venture to a land that was harsh and difficult to traverse, a journey that often led to death for those ventured into such places proselytizing a foreign religion. In his manner of clothing, Singh chose to wear a thin robe that did little to protect him from the freezing temperatures. He also deprived himself of the wearing of shoes, which led to his feet being covered in cuts, bruises, and often bloodied as mentioned in the text.

7.3 Desert Fathers essential texts

1. I have heard of a certain Julian in the region of Edessa, a very ascetic man, who wore away his flesh till it was so thin that he

carried about only skin and bone. At the very, end of his life he was counted worthy of the honour of the gift of healing (*Pall., HL.*; Palladius & Clarke, 2010:142).

In this short passage, a monk named Julian from the region of Edessa is described as living an ascetical lifestyle of self-deprivation. The passage tells that the monk Julian “wore away his flesh till it was so thin that he carried about only skin and bone.” It is unclear what the author exactly means when it is stated that Julian wore away his flesh. The terminology of wearing away flesh likely alludes to Julian’s engaging in the ascetic practice of fasting, which would have results similar to starvation leaving a person as if they were “only skin and bone.” It is inconclusive how exactly Julian engaged in the practice of the ascetic practice of fasting. But it is worth noting that the monk Julian was to be “counted worthy” at the end of his life and was honored with the “gift of healing.” The passage seems to indicate that, at least in this case involving the monk Julian, self-depriving oneself has a correlation of a blessing or honor being bestowed from God. The passage seems to indicate that for Julian as he lived his life of asceticism the specific reward bestowed upon him at the end of his life for such ascetic endeavors was the gift of healing.

2. Abba Isaac said that Abba Pambo used to say, “The monk’s garment should be such that he could throw it out of his cell for three days and no-one would take it” (Ward, 2003:101).

The passage describes that Abba Isaac recalled a phrase of Abba Pambo, that Pambo recommended that a monk’s garment should be of such a low quality that when thrown out of the monk’s cell, no one would desire to take the garment as his or her own. As in many contexts similar to the fathers’ Egyptian Scetis, where many had to struggle simply for subsistence, if a person were to find a nice garment with no known owner they may be moved to take that garment as their own. Abba Pambo seems to indicate that in such a context, a monk should wear garments so poor in quality that no one desires to take the apparel. This passage highlights one aspect of self-deprivation of the monks in that it was not customary for the monks to own nice garments. The passage does not indicate why exactly

the Scetis monks were not allowed such 'luxuries' like desirable garments. It appears that since Abba Isaac is repeating the words of Pambo this type of voluntary self-deprivation might be commonly held, chosen, and prescribed by the monks.

3. A brother questioned Abba Euprepus about his life. And the old man said, "Eat straw, wear straw, sleep on straw: that is to say, despise everything and acquire for yourself a heart of iron" (Ward, 2003:62).

In this account, an unknown monk is recorded as questioning the Desert Father, Abba Euprepus, about his life. Euprepus responds to the monk's inquiry by offering a phrase focusing on the object of straw being a model for the ascetic struggle. The young monk is told eat, wear, and sleep on straw. It is assumed that Abba Euprepus means that a monk's food, clothing, and housing should be very simple and/or very undesirable. These choices by the monks in their dress, shelter, and food assisted them in their ability to better control their passions. Some have commented on the monastic diet when saying:

...A carefully controlled diet helped. Monks recognized, along with medical writers of the day, that certain foods lowered one's sexual drive. Wine, meat, and rich foods, which had the opposite effect, were of course avoided. Jerome, citing the physician Galen, states that "bodies of young men...and women glow with innate warmth" and that "all food is harmful which tends to increase that heat." He advised them, "Drink only water...avoid all hot dishes...With vegetables also avoid anything that creates wind or lies heavy on the stomach...Nothing is so good for young Christians as a diet of herbs... By cold food the heat of the body should be tempered." Monastic diets varied, but bread, lentils, and vegetables were among the staples (Goehring, 1999).

Abba Euprepus then elaborates on the phrase by stating that a monk is to "despise everything." The passage seems to indicate that "everything" a monk is

to despise is correlated to what a monk eats, what clothing he (or she) wears, and where they choose to sleep. It seems to be implied, that when given a choice, a monk is to voluntarily deprive themselves the luxuries of life in the areas of food, clothing, and a home but instead prefer simple rations, which might be symbolized by Euprepus' use of the choice word of "straw."

Abba Euprepus continues to the unknown inquiring monk that when a monk does despise everything, simultaneously or in result of despising everything, the monk pursues the correlated acquisition of a "heart of iron." It appears from the context that the despising of everything appears to reference the denying of anything beyond simplicity in a monk's choice of food, clothing, and shelter. The meaning of the phrase of "heart of iron" is inconclusive from the context of the passage but it appears to mean that a monk should not have a 'weak heart' but instead hope for a heart that is strong and unmoving.

4. Abba Bessarion said, "For fourteen days and nights, I have stood upright in the midst of thorn-bushes, without sleeping" (Ward, 2003:42).

In this short account of self-deprivation involving Abba Bessarion, the Desert Father remarks about how he had for fourteen days and nights submitted himself to standing within a bush of thorns and not sleeping for the duration of that period. From the passage, it appears that Bessarion voluntarily deprived himself of adequate sleeping, a necessity of humans. The passage indicates that for fourteen days Abba Bessarion chose to stand amongst thorny bushes, likely causing him a sizable amount of pain. This pain was a tool to him in not succumbing to sleep as per this passage seems to be an action of excess in which to refrain from.

5. Abba Daniel said of Abba Arsenius that he used to pass the whole night without sleeping, and in the early morning when nature compelled him to go to sleep, he would say to sleep, "Come here, wicked servant." Then, seated, he would snatch a little sleep and soon wake up again (Ward & Anthony, 2006:11).

This passage records Abba Daniel reflecting upon the sleeping habits of the Desert Father Abba Arsenius. Abba Daniel speaks of Abba Arsenius stating that Arsenius would pass the entire night without participating in sleeping. The account explains that in the early morning, “when nature compelled him to go to sleep” Arsenius then would speak to sleep or perhaps another personified entity by saying, “[c]ome here, wicked servant.” After saying such things to sleep, Abba Arsenius would then fall asleep in a seated position for a short time before waking up again. It is worth noting the level of self-control that Abba Arsenius appears to possess as he refers to sleep as a “servant.” It appears that Arsenius may in fact see himself as sleep’s master who has the ability to control such a natural inclination as sleeping. Abba Arsenius appears to choose to deprive himself of sleeping large amounts of time at all, such as at night or otherwise, as the passage states that he snatched “a little sleep and soon” he would then wake back up again. It cannot be surmised from this single passage on whether Abba Arsenius and his pursuit was toward extreme bodily self-control in all areas including sleep or whether he felt as if sleeping was the major transgression from which to refrain.

6. Abba Joseph asked Abba Poemen, “How should one fast?” Abba Poemen said to him, “For my part, I think it better that one should eat every day, but only a little, so as not to be satisfied.” Abba Joseph said to him, “When you were younger, did you not fast two days at a time, abba?” The old man said: “Yes, even for three days and four and the whole week. The Fathers tried all this out as they were able and they found it preferable to eat every day, but just a small amount. They have left us this royal way, which is light” (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:171).

In this passage, a conversation between the Desert Fathers, Abbas Joseph and Poemen, is recorded where Abba Joseph asks Abba Poemen how a person should fast. The reply that Poemen offered is that the way that one should fast is to “eat every day, but only a little, so as not to be satisfied.” It worth noting that Poemen’s answer highlights that the monk should in the process continually leave his body’s hunger unquenched or unsatisfied. Abba Joseph responds by asking

Poemen whether he fasted for two days at a time when he was younger. Abba Poemen confirms that he indeed fasted for two days as well fasted for a whole week. Abba Poemen then remarks that the “The Fathers” (likely Desert monks before their time) had tried all of the different types of fasting but they found it best or preferable to eat a small amount every day, instead of completely refraining from food for days at a time. Abba Poemen then, reflecting on the eating of small amounts of food daily, referred to it as the “royal way, which is light,” which was “left” down to “us.”

Satiation of a monk seems to be a major focus within the conversation between Abbas Poemen and Joseph. The body’s desire of being full or satisfied seems to be what Poemen highlights as not the directive a monk should venture upon in the area of fasting, but the complete refraining of food is also not recommended. Benedicta Ward, an expert in the ascetic practices of the fathers, remarks on the fasting practices of Abba Poemen when she writes:

By the time Cassian came to Egypt (in the late 300s), this custom seems to have become universal, and the visitors from Palestine observed that this was already the case. They were given food when they arrived at a place, but usually the monks ate a light meal at the ninth hour of the day.

It was not only the frequency of eating that was restricted but also the kind and quantity of food. The quality of food in the desert was, of necessity, not noticeably poorer than that of the average peasant; indeed it might be better. A comparison that delighted the monks was that between the sophisticated food eaten by Arsenius at court and the poor fare he had in the desert (Ward, 1999: “Diet for a Large Soul”).

Poemen refers to the monk’s lack of satiation, the depriving of “fullness”, as a means of the “royal way” of the ancient fathers, which is also referred to as being “light.” The use of the word “light” by Poemen appears to indicate that this method of fasting should be the highest aspiration of a monk as it is divine in nature.

7. He (Poemen) also said, “Poverty, hardship, austerity and fasting, such are the instruments of the solitary life. It is written, ‘When these three men are together, Noah, Job, and Daniel, there am I, says the Lord.’ (Ezek. 14.14) Noah represents poverty, Job suffering and Daniel discernment. So, if these three works are found in a man, the Lord dwells in him” (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:175).

The advice of the Desert Father Poemen is again referred to in this passage as the Abba speaks of instruments that a monk should aim to possess within his monastic practice. He highlights that “the instruments of the solitary life” are “poverty, hardship, austerity and fasting.” Although it is difficult to determine how exactly Poemen might define these four instruments or terms within his particular context. One might define them in this way: poverty could be defined as the lack of material wealth; hardship as severe suffering; austerity as simple and plain in quality (Merriam-Webster, 2014); and fasting as the personal restraint of food, drink, and/or sleep.

Poemen then proceeds to assign heroes of the Jewish faith to these instruments and he then references Ezekiel 14.14. He highlights Noah as representing the instrument of poverty. To the person of Job, Poemen assigns suffering, which appears to be synonymous with the instrument of hardship. The biblical personality of Daniel is then aligned with discernment, which may correspond with the previously mentioned instruments of austerity and fasting. Poemen then concludes that when and if a man possesses the three works of poverty, suffering, and discernment the Lord will then dwell with them.

It is worth noting from this passage the self-sacrifice that is alluded to within Poemen’s advice. The passage seems to indicate that the monk’s desire of having the Lord present with him is uniquely coupled with the monk’s works of poverty. To allow and even to invite suffering or hardship within their life, as well as the work of discernment, could be described as a means of combining austerity and fasting.

8. Wherefore each one on his admission is stripped of all his former possessions, so that he is not allowed any longer to keep even the clothes which he has on his back: but in the council of the brethren he is brought forward into the midst and stripped of his own clothes, and clad by the Abbot's hands in the dress of the monastery, so that by this he may know not only that he has been despoiled of all his old things, but also that he has laid aside all worldly pride, and come down to the want and poverty of Christ, and that he is now to be supported not by wealth sought for by the world's arts, nor by anything reserved from his former state of unbelief, but that he is to receive out of the holy and sacred funds of the monastery his rations for his service; and that, as he knows that he is thence to be clothed and fed and that he has nothing of his own, he may learn, nevertheless, not to be anxious about the morrow, according to the saying of the Gospel, and may not be ashamed to be on a level with the poor, that is with the body of the brethren, with whom Christ was not ashamed to be numbered, and to call himself their brother, but that rather he may glory that he has been made to share the lot of his own servants (*Cass. Incarn. Dom.*; Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:452).

This passage by John Cassian states that the process of becoming a monastic and what level of self-denial is required of that particular calling and tonsuring. The passage tells of how after making his admission the initiated novice is first "stripped of all of his former possessions" to the point of the monk not being allowed to keep the clothes that he is wearing during the initiation process. The Abbot of the monastery then clothes the monastic novice in the dress that is customary to the monastery. With the goal of being "despoiled" of all of his old things and to lay aside all worldly pride. The monk is then clothed in his new garments in order to "come down to the want and poverty of Christ."

The passage describes how the newly welcomed monk will not be supported by wealth, or by the arts of the world as he may have formerly done, but instead he would now receive his rations from the "holy and sacred funds of the monastery."

This stripping of possessions instills in the new monk the understanding that he should not be anxious about his needs, which is in accordance with the Gospel accounts. The passage further commands the new initiate, in his voluntary poverty, not to be “ashamed to be on a level with the poor” in his new monastic state, as this is comparable to Christ’s self-degradation to the earthly realms and his calling himself a brother to mankind.

This account highlights a number of ways that a new monastic was called to live a life of acute self-deprivation. First, after his admission of his sins and his desire to join the community, he was then stripped of all his former possessions, including the clothes he was wearing. Next, the Abbot would fit the monk in the customary dress of the monastery. Throughout the whole process of the passage, it appears to indicate that all of these actions, the putting away one’s own clothes, wealth, and self-determination, was to become the means of shedding one’s pride to accept the rations of the “holy and sacred funds of the monastery.” All of these acts of self-deprivation and volunteer poverty by the new initiated monastic were to represent Christ himself as he humbly came to earth calling us brother and sister.

7.4 Analysis of textual instances of self-deprivation

7.4.1 Sadhu Sundar Singh and self-deprivation

Within the passages cited above that mention Sundar Singh’s self-deprivation there are consistent themes as to how Sundar Singh interpreted self-deprivation and how he lived it out in his life.

The acetic practice of self-deprivation was exemplified in a variety of forms within the life of Sadhu Sundar Singh. In a number of the passages Singh voluntarily and consistently performs actions of self-denial. One of the accounts that describe an early act of self-deprivation in Singh’s life occurred shortly after his baptism. The passage describes that after Singh’s baptism he “gradually disposed of his belongings and prepared himself for what lay ahead” and it also says that after doing this Singh spent “hours in the forest praying and meditating”

(Parker, 2010:42). Not only did Singh rid himself of all of his belongings, he also traveled in a simple yellow robe and carried very few possessions. In the one of the passages, Singh's voluntary choice of self-depriving himself of commonly held 'adequate' clothing is described. On a missionary trip toward the Himalayas, Singh's wore only a thin yellow robe which led to his having little to no protection against the bitter frost and snow of the terrain as he traveled and slept in the open (Davey, 1963:52). Singh did not wear shoes during his trip and because of that his feet were commonly cut, bruised, and battered.

Not only did Singh voluntarily deprive himself of adequate clothing, he also practiced fasting, the action of depriving oneself of nutrition and sleep. Two of the passages describe Singh's ascetic practice of self-deprivation by means of fasting. The accounts tell of how Jesus' fasting for forty days and forty nights would not escape Singh's mind and how he felt that he too "should fast for that period" (Parker, 2010:84-85). The passages state that he set out for the forest to embark on a forty day fast accompanied by only his "New Testament and forty stones." Singh voluntarily chose to embark on this long term fast even after consulting a doctor who informed him of the "likely effect of going without food and drink for a prolonged period." After finding a "convenient clearing" as a proper location, Singh began his fast. He notes that his "meditation had been easy" at first but as the days progressed "weakness clouded his mind." Eventually in his fasting, Singh found himself to be "too weak to move the stone by his side" and that then, "one day, there was darkness."

From the accounts of Singh engaging in self-deprivation it becomes clear what his motivation for choosing to live out such acts voluntarily and what he hoped to gain from living such a life of self-control. Singh's motivation was to share the Gospel message of Christ to those who had not heard it, a desire that necessitated his sub-adequate dress as a shoe-less Sadhu in order to establish with those he interacted a level of trust. When examining why Singh would participate in a debilitating forty day and forty night fast, even after knowing the possibly deadly effects, the passage clearly states that he was motivated by a desire to emulate the model provided by his Savior Jesus Christ. During this time of fasting Singh also experienced a time in which his "spiritual perceptions

quicken...” and when “a feeling of remarkable peace and happiness invaded him” (Davey, 1963:52). Clearly from this account the acts of self-denial in the form of fasting and keeping vigil rewarded Singh with feelings of peace and happiness.

In two of the other passages regarding self-deprivation, Singh speaks of his motivations and the reasoning for his self-denial. In one passage, Singh uses an analogy provided by a conversation with Christ to describe what it means for a person to “be ready to offer even life itself” for their Savior (Singh, 1922:30). The analogy describes a soldier that was stationed at his post and that soldier held his post even to point of freezing to death. The soldier’s king, finding the soldier frozen to death, declares that the soldier is “worthy of the honour and glory” of his king’s diadem. The king proceeds to place his crown upon the soldier’s head. Elaborating on the meaning of this analogy, Singh recounts that Christ’s faithful servants are to “be in the service to which I (Christ) has appointed them” and to those who finish their work with faith and courage will be granted a “fadeless crown of eternal kingship.” Clearly, Sundar Singh believed that self-denial to the point of death is required of the followers of Christ. In another passage, Singh says that if a person is unwilling to deny oneself, it is actually “impossible to serve God” (Singh, 1926:78). Singh further believed that Christ followers must first live their “lives with the Lord in secret, and learn the lessons of life while they sat at His feet” (Singh, 1926:78). Since Singh utilized the word “first” it seems to denote that he believed that secret devotion to Christ is the initial step in the process of progressively increasing the denying of oneself.

7.4.2 Desert Fathers and self-deprivation

In can be seen within the recorded accounts of the Desert Fathers that they engaged in acts of self-deprivation, and that the fathers lived out their lives in a number of differing ways, all attempting to deny themselves as a method bearing their cross (Brakke, 2006:26). In some of the passages, a consistent theme of modeling their life after Christ can be found. In other passages, it appears that the monastics challenged themselves ascetically in continuing to progress in their abilities to gain greater self-control over their desires. Other fathers are mentioned as gaining other benefits as a type of reward for their self-deprivation.

In the passages recounting the Desert Fathers' ascetic lives, the fathers utilized different means or instruments in order further deny themselves the necessities of life. In the case of the Desert Father Abba Julian, his way of self-deprivation was fasting to the point where his flesh was so worn away that it "was so thin he carried only skin and bone" (*Pall., HL.*; Palladius & Clarke, 2010:142). The passage does not ascribe a motivation or reason to why Abba Julian carried out such self-denial but the passage does provide a correlated reward for his fasts, saying that Julian was "counted worthy of the honour of the gift of healing" (Palladius & Clarke, 2010:142).

Abba Poemen also practiced the self-depriving act of fasting. The passage tells of a conversation between Abba Joseph and Abba Poemen in which Joseph asked Poemen how one should fast (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:171). Poemen replies by stating that although he himself fasted for two, three, four days and even a week at a time when he was younger, he explained to Joseph that he thought "it better that one should eat every day, but only a little, so as not to be satisfied" (Ward & Anthony, 2006:171). This fasting to the point of always leaving oneself hungering for more is what Poemen indicates as what the fathers have passed down and that Poemen considered this fasting method to be the "royal way, which is light."

Other Desert Fathers were noted not as depriving themselves of food but instead choosing to fast from sleep. Speaking of Abba Arsenius, Abba Daniel claimed that the legendary Arsenius would pass the entire night without sleeping. When it became the early morning and nature "compelled him to go to sleep," Arsenius would command sleep to "come here, wicked servant" (Ward & Anthony, 2006:11). He would then fall asleep for a short time before awaking shortly thereafter. In the account of Abba Arsenius, sleep is described as "wicked" showing that Arsenius believed that engaging in sleep might be a type of transgression. Another passage recounts that Abba Bessarion stood upright for fourteen days and nights in thorn bushes in order to refrain from sleeping, using the pain of the thorns to keep himself awake (Ward, 2003:42). Neither passage provides a reason or purpose for doing such acts of self-deprivation. It appears that the fathers either considered sleep to be a type of transgression not

permissible of a monk or that they were engaging in such actions to further progress and challenge themselves in their levels of self-control and self-denial. Remarking on the act of fasting from sleep, Athanasius acknowledged that in the self-denial of fluids, the monk believed that they were able to limit the unwanted behavior of seminal fluid accumulation (Brakke, 1995:92).

In two other passages the accounts focused on the garments chosen by the monastic as the more humble state of garments. The Desert Father Abba Pambo is said to hold a view that a monk's garments should be of such low quality that if they were to throw them out of their cell, no one would choose to those garments as their own (Ward, 2003:101). This image commonly held among a number of monks, seems to indicate the humble state of clothing that the monks would choose to wear. John Cassian also recounts the process of becoming a monastic in one of the monasteries he visited in which the clothing of a monk holds particular importance. According to Cassian, the new novice monk was to be "stripped of all of his former possessions" including the clothes he was wearing at the time of the rite (*Cass. Incarn. Dom.*; Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:452). The abbot would then clothe the new monk in the dress that was custom to the monastery. The act of the monk becoming "despoiled" was for him the beginning of the process of becoming dependent not upon his own endeavors and belongings but upon receiving the rations of the "holy and sacred funds of the monastery" (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:452). This new monk's ridding of his own belongings was to assist him in not being "ashamed to be on a level with the poor," an act modeled by Christ when he laid aside his pride to come to the earthly realms to call those on earth a "brother" (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:452).

In the final two passages the Desert Fathers describe what might be the aim of engaging self-deprivation. In one of the passages Abba Euprepus explains that the monk is called to "eat straw, wear straw, [and] sleep on straw" (Ward, 2003:62). The phrase seems to indicate that monks are called to eat the most simple of foods, wear the most simple of garments, and sleep in the most humble of shelters. Euprepus then goes on to say that when a person despises everything, he can "acquire for [himself] a heart of iron" (Ward, 2003:62). It is difficult to determinate what exactly this phrase may mean but it seems to indicate

that by a monk choosing to live such a simple life, he will gain a strong heart, a trait that appears to be ideal for a monk. In the final passage, Abba Poemen mentions what he believes are the “instruments of the solitary life.” According to Poemen, a monk who wants to live a solitary life must utilize the instruments of poverty, hardship, austerity and fasting (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:171). He then applies Hebrew Bible heroes to the instruments: to poverty, Noah is assigned; to suffering/hardship, Job is assigned; and Daniel is assigned to discernment. Poemen states that when Noah, Job, Daniel are together, “the Lord is there,” a quote referencing Ezek. 14.14. To Poemen it appears that when a monk deprives himself of the niceties of life and lives an ascetic life, his goal or purpose appears to be the desire of experiencing the dwelling of the Lord.

7.5 Evaluation of textual data for similarities and differences

When examining various passages that describe the methods of self-deprivation that were employed by both the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh, obvious similarities and differences become apparent within their experiences. Similarities in the practices of Singh and the fathers appear to exist in the areas of depriving oneself of adequate clothing, fasting and abstaining from food, as well as the choice of owning few positions. Marked differences exist in the areas of sleep deprivation, methods in fasting, and the use of pain in the self-deprivation process.

The first similarity that becomes apparent when examining the self-deprivation methods used by Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers is the depriving of oneself of luxurious clothing and choosing to instead clothe themselves in humble garments. The examined passages describe that Singh, by choice, clad himself in a thin robed outfit of a Hindu sadhu holy man and wore no shoes (Davey, 1963:52). Because of this action of self-denial, Singh was said to have experienced “bitter agony” from the climate and by sleeping outside with no shoes, his feet were cut, bruised, and bloody. Similar behavior can be found in the lives of the Desert Fathers. According to Abba Pambo, a monk’s garments should be of such a low quality that if he were to place his garments outside of a monk’s cell for three days no one would choose to take those garments as their

own (Ward, 2003:101). John Cassian explained that when a desert monk was to shed his personal clothing for the monastic habit and garments, this ridding process is symbolic in nature of coming “down to the want and poverty of Christ” (*Cass. Incarn. Dom.*; Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:452).

Just as both Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers wore simple garments, both also shared the desire of not amassing a vast amount of possessions. Both chose to live a simple life free from the niceties that the world offers. Singh, shortly after his baptism, is recorded of gradually disposing “of his belongings and prepared himself for what lay ahead” (Parker, 2010:42). Singh was known throughout his life to have very few possessions even when he inherited money. Within the lives of the Desert Fathers a similar vein of keeping few possessions can also be found. Abba Euprepius, commenting on the need for monastics to live a simple life of despising everything and acquiring a “heart of iron,” said that a monk was called to “eat straw, wear straw, [and] sleep on straw” (Ward, 2003:62). According Euprepius monks are to live simply when it comes to what they eat, what they wear, and to where they find shelter. John Cassian said, commenting on a person being initiated into monasticism, that the monk would be first “stripped of all of his former possessions” and that the monks, who had previously relied upon their own support by the “world’s arts,” would now receive their ration from the “holy and sacred funds of the monastery” (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:452).

The accounts of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers recorded that both practiced the ascetic and self-depriving action of fasting, although they were different in their praxis. One of the accounts from Singh’s life records that when, after being compelled to emulate Christ, he embarked on a fast for forty days and forty nights (Parker, 2010:84-85). The passage states that even after consulting with a physician about the effects of abstaining from food and drink for this prolonged time period, Singh went into the forest where he abstained from food and drink, held vigil, until the point of blacking out. Similarly, the Desert Father Abba Julian was said to have worn “away his flesh till it was so thin that he carried about only skin and bone” (*Pall., HL.*; Palladius & Clarke, 2010:142). Conversely, Abba Poemen believed that a monk should, instead of depriving oneself completely of food and drink for long periods of time such as Singh practiced, the

monk should “eat every day, but only a little, so as not to be satisfied” (Ward & Anthony, 2006:171). Poemen described this fasting method as the prescription that had been passed down from the fathers and ascribed to this type of fasting the title of the “royal way, which is light” (Ward & Anthony, 2006:171).

The reward and reasoning for fasting in the lives of the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh, as recorded in the passages, revealed striking similarities and slight differences. All the passages seem to indicate that a reward or purpose for engaging in the ascetic practice of fasting is a greater connection to God. During his forty day fast, Singh noted that during this period his “spiritual perceptions quickened, [and] a feeling of remarkable peace and happiness invaded him...” (Davey, 1963:52). Poemen, describing the reward of practicing fasting together with poverty and hardship, said that they would bring forth the “Lord’s dwelling” with the person who practices such “instruments of the solitary life” (*Apoph. Pat.*; Ward & Anthony, 2006:171). One such example of the Lord’s dwelling amongst a monk is the Father Julian “who wore away his flesh...” with fasting and was found to be “counted worthy of the honour of the gift of healing” (*Pall., HL.*; Palladius & Clarke, 2010:142).

One stark difference in the ways that Singh and the Desert Fathers practiced their ascetic acts of self-deprivation is found in the Desert Fathers’ practice of fasting from sleep. Within the accounts of the fathers Bessarion and Arsenius, both fathers are recorded as vigorously abstaining from the natural inclination of sleep. Abba Bessarion is recorded, that for fourteen days and nights, he stood upright in the midst of thorn bushes in order to deprive himself of sleeping (Ward, 2003:42). Abba Arsenius was said to pass the entire night without sleeping and when early morning “compelled him to go to sleep,” he would beckon sleep, who he referred to as a “wicked servant,” to come to him and he would then fall asleep for a short time before waking up again (Ward & Anthony, 2006:11). From the passages, which recount Abba Bessarion and Abba Arsenius, it is unclear whether they believed sleeping to be some sort of transgression or a demonic power (a “wicked servant”) or whether abstaining from sleep was for the monk a form of gaining a greater level in self-control.

7.6 Conclusion

What can be concluded from examining the self-deprivation actions of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers is that both Singh and the Desert Fathers believed that denying oneself was an essential requirement for a disciple of Christ. Singh was said to believe that without a Christian disciple's performing actions of self-denial it was "impossible to serve God (Singh, 1926:78)." Singh compared a Christian disciple's self-denial and readiness "to offer even life itself" to that of a soldier that froze to death choosing to sacrifice his own life rather than to leave his post assigned to him by his king (Singh, 1922:30). According to Singh those who are willing and ready to offer their lives for Christ's sake will be rewarded with a "crown of eternal kingship" (Singh, 1922:30). For the Desert Fathers the actions of depriving oneself the niceties of life and even sacrificing the essentials like food, drink, and sleep, are emulating Christ's own laying aside of pride to degrade himself in the earthly realms where he calls his disciples "brothers" (Cassian & Ramsey, 1997:452).

The goal of chapter 7 was to provide an analysis of the recorded examples of the ascetic spiritual practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, specifically analyzing the practice of self-deprivation. Within the overall research agenda of this thesis, chapter 7 is central to understanding the subsidiary questions that have continued to guide it, specifically the questions of the ways the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh differ from those practiced by the Desert Fathers and how the methods of self-deprivation undertaken by Singh and the Desert Fathers are similar to each other.

The chapter's analysis found similarities in Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers' practices of self-deprivation. Both Singh and the Desert Fathers believed that denying oneself was an essential requirement for a disciple of Christ. Singh was said to believe that without self-denial it was "impossible to serve God" (Singh, 1926:78). Similarly, for the Desert Fathers the actions of depriving oneself the niceties of life emulate Christ's own laying aside of pride degrading himself to life in the earthly realms. These findings become the final part in answering not only the subsidiary guiding research question of what ways the ascetic spiritual

practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh differ from those practiced by the Desert Fathers, but also fulfill the goal of answering the main research problem of whether Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers share similarities in their ascetic practices.

In order to answer the research question of the ways in which Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers share similarities in their ascetic spiritual practices, four sub-questions guided the research:

- In what ways do the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh differ from those practiced by the Desert Fathers?
- Are there similarities and differences in the methods of prayer and meditation utilized by Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers?
- Through seeing visions and performing miracles, do the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh have parallel experiences in these areas?
- In what ways are the acts of self-deprivation undertaken by Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers similar to each other?

These questions were explored and the thesis statement can now be weighed for its validity.

In the researcher's opinion, the greatest amount of similarities in ascetic practices of the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh are found in the area of prayer and meditation and the greatest level of marked differences in the practices of the Desert Fathers and Sundar Singh are found in the area of visions and miracles. The thesis statement appears to be valid when weighing the findings against the researcher's hypothesis only in that the visions and miracles that were experienced by Singh and the Desert Fathers differed greatly. Although, vast similarities in prayer and meditation can be marked in the practices of Singh and the Desert Fathers, differences were also found to exist. In the researcher's opinion, the aforementioned differences in prayer and meditation were not as clearly distinct in comparison to the differences in Singh and the Desert Fathers' respective experiences of visions and miracles.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY OF THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES OF SADHU SUNDAR SINGH AND THE DESERT FATHERS AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF APPROPRIATING CHRISTIAN MYSTIC PRACTICES IN THE CHURCH TODAY

8.1 A summary of the comparative analysis of the practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers

8.1.1 Introduction

The goal of the analysis in the previous chapters was to explore in what ways the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh differ from those practiced by the Desert Fathers. Through this analysis process a number of similarities in were found in the practices of Singh and the Desert Fathers, as well as a number of marked differences. It appears that for the Desert Fathers and Singh, mystic practices were a foundational component in their respective connections with God. Today's Christians should consider Singh's advice that without incorporating such mystic practices into one's faith, such as the practice of self-denial, "...[It] is impossible to serve God" (Singh, 1926:78). The aim of this chapter is to provide a summary of research findings as well as to present the theological and practical value of studying the spiritual practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. Section 8.1 will offer the summary of findings from the analysis into the three specific areas of ascetic spirituality as practiced by Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. Section 8.2 will offer a critical assessment of the spiritual practices of Christian mysticism in the Church today, highlighting the benefits and dangers of the spiritual practices of Christian mysticism in the Church today. The pros and cons of using the spiritual practices of Christian mysticism in today's Church will also be addressed.

8.1.2 Summary of ascetic spiritual practices of prayer and meditation

When the passages were examined regarding the methodologies of prayer utilized by both the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh, similarities and differences were found. Such similarities and differences were found in the areas of the setting in which prayer occurred, the styles of prayer, the motivations for engaging in prayer, and the physical postures used during prayer. The accounts of Singh's practice of prayer presented multiple different settings of prayer, including an isolated cave, alongside a tree, in midnight silence, and in the presence of others. However, the most common setting of Singh's prayer was seclusion away from the presence of others. Notably, Singh's habit bears marked similarity to the settings in which the Desert Fathers engaged in prayer. On numerous accounts, the Desert Fathers were noted as praying, as was customary at the time, within the monk's private cell or cave. In other instances the fathers were noted as praying in a more corporate setting, which shares a similarity to Singh when he engaged in prayer while a pupil was present watching. Singh and the fathers both chose to vary the environment of their practice of prayer, but showed a marked preference for seclusion.

From the researched texts, it appears that Singh and the fathers also share similarities in the styles or methods that were used in their prayer practice. Both employed verbal prayer not only corporately, but also privately. The monks prayed aloud in their respective cells, and Singh uttered prayers of petition in public. One examined account reports Singh prayed aloud under a tree asking God to remedy a broken friendship he shared with a pupil, while the said pupil secretly listened.

Another noted area of similarity between the prayer styles of Singh and the fathers was the habitual act of daily prayer, also known as a "rule of prayer." The researched passages also found similar terminology when they described the prayer styles of Singh and the fathers. Such commonly held terminology in the passages described Singh and the Desert Fathers' prayer accounts with phrases and words such as: "secret," "silence," "quietness," "closing one's ears," or "entering one's chamber" and "shutting the door."

While examining the passages that described the forms of prayer used by Singh and the Desert Fathers, one marked difference was identified in the style of prayer utilized by Singh and the fathers. It appears from the passages that there are subtle differences in the amount of structure incorporated into the daily prayer life of Singh and the fathers. The Desert Fathers used the daily office in their prayer habit incorporating a rhythmic like pattern of prayer at the times of Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers, and Compline. From research of the passages it is inconclusive whether Singh ever incorporated this type of regimented instrumentation into his daily rhythm in his prayer life. The passages also noted that the fathers assigned Psalms to the particular services, which the research did not indicate a similar method utilized by Singh in his daily practice of prayer. The research also indicated that it was common for the Desert Fathers to utilize, along with their prayer, other spiritual actions of fasting, labor, and meditation. In the passages examined regarding Singh's daily prayer, there appears to be no direct mention of coupling his practice of prayer with the practices of fasting, labor, and meditation.

When examining the passages of the implied goals, reasons, or purposes of prayer employed by both fathers and Singh, the research identified a number of similarities. In the passages on prayer it is revealed that one of the goals or reasons for practicing prayer by Singh was in order to better "know gradually" the higher laws that are associated with miracles. Singh's marked reason for wanting to know more regarding the higher laws is very similar to the desires of the Desert Fathers' who practiced prayer and were transported or raptured the to heaven. From the accounts, it also appears that Singh believed that an additional purpose or goal of prayer was that it considerably helped men and could be used to remedy interpersonal conflict. Singh also believed that one of the results of praying was that it blessed others. The reasoning of helping others that was identified in the passages of Singh's practice of prayer coincides with the reasons by the Desert Fathers in that they believed that prayer was said to be a starting point of fostering a heart for one's enemies. The fathers also believed that prayer helped an individual in living "in good company" and helped the praying person to "be free from bad."

Per the research, it appears that the fathers commonly employed prayer to assist the monk in dwelling on contempt for themselves. This act of fostering contempt for one's self is very similar to accounts in which Singh utilized prayer to ask for forgiveness of his sins. The research indicates that the fathers and Singh both utilized prayer as a tool when they faced a time of needing assistance with interpretation. Singh used the act of prayer in the process of translation during an evangelism event whereas the fathers were noted as utilizing prayer to assist in their interpreting of Holy Scripture. The research did seem to indicate that one major difference in the reason or purpose of praying by Singh and the fathers is that Singh was noted as hearing the "voice of the Heavenly Father" through the "sweet voice of Christ." In all of the passages of exploring the prayer methodology used by the Desert Fathers, not once was their mention of a desert monk communicating directly with Christ or the Father. Although in other accounts of the fathers that were researched for the other ascetical sections, a voice from the heaven was heard by the Desert Fathers on other occasions.

It can be found from the research that one major area of difference exists in the physical positions used by Singh and the fathers during their time of daily prayer. The research indicates that the main physical positions used by Singh during a time of prayer was sitting cross-legged with hands clasped as well as the position of kneeling down upon the ground. These two styles of sitting cross-legged and hands clasped used in prayer by Singh are remarkably different than the positions that were used by the Desert Fathers during times of prayer as the research indicated that the fathers instead routinely utilized a bodily cycle of prostrations in their prayer. These slow moving cycles of prostrations used by the Desert Fathers would involve the praying individual standing upright with arms outstretched then moving downward to a face down position and then cycling back to a standing position. This process would then be repeated a number of times. Singh was never noted as doing any type of prostration like the fathers utilized.

The researched passages also found that another physical position used by the Desert Fathers in prayer, which shows little to no similarities with the practice of Singh, was that the Desert Fathers practiced prayer while engaging in manual

labor like weaving baskets. The passage indicated that this manual labor used by the fathers would be coupled with prayer and would often last for hours. None of the researched accounts seem to remark of Singh coupling his prayer with a time of dedicated manual labor.

The research into the ascetic area of meditation involving both Singh and the Desert Fathers indicated that they share similarities and differences in the settings they chose to meditate, the styles they used during the meditative times, and the implied reasons or purposes in their practices of meditating. From the research, Singh and the fathers share a similarity in their methods of meditating in that their respective practices were incorporated into their rhythm of life. Singh was noted as having practiced meditation from a young age, whereas the fathers incorporated meditation as a major pillar of their contemplative and ascetic rhythm of life. Singh varied from the Desert Fathers in that Singh practiced his meditation in a number of different settings such as during the leaning against a tree or during time of marked stillness in the forest. Albeit, similar to Singh in that seclusion marked the setting of the Desert Fathers' dedicated times of meditation, the fathers were noted as often meditating within the "secure harbour" of their private cells or caves.

The research indicates that the topic on which Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers meditated were only similar to the extent that both Singh and the fathers were said to have meditated on Scripture. Brakke (2006:153) contends that the fathers meditated on Scripture because they accepted the belief that in the recitation of the words of scripture a power existed to repel demons. It cannot be determined from that passages that Singh believed in the same efficacy of the meditation or recitation of Scripture. Singh was especially noted as having meditated on the New Testament with no mention of meditating on the Hebrew Scriptures or the Psalms. The passages researched noted that Desert Fathers uniquely meditated on various different topics such as: the meditating on the monk's own death; the calamity of Jesus' second coming; or meditating on the "evils that follow death." The passage did not directly identify that Singh had ever meditated on such topics.

One unique difference in the meditating practices between Singh and the fathers was that Singh would practice his meditation and said to have conjured the presence of Jesus Christ at times. Singh was said to have blissfully placed his hands in the hands of Jesus during these times of meditation and often faced difficulty in breaking away from Jesus' presence. The monks commonly carried attitudes in meditation far from the bliss that Singh experienced, although some of the monks were noted as experiencing "delight" in their meditation. A majority of the monks instead of experiencing bliss were noted as holding the prescribed attitudes of compunction and employed other actions of self-denial alongside their meditation such as fasting, vigils, and continuous labor. The research indicates that Singh and the Desert Fathers utilized the practice of silence during the time of their respective meditation practices and chose to not utilize vocal words. One of the passages noted that Singh utilized a period of concentration that would last 15-20 minutes before he was able to enter into a meditative time where he experienced the presence of Jesus. The common act of meditating for hours was found to be linked to both Singh and the fathers during their times of practice.

The research found similarities in the identifiable purpose or reasons for which Singh and the fathers practiced meditation. One noted reason or purpose to why Singh meditated is that he was able to receive "messages from the unseen world" that stimulated "ideas far above normal human thoughts." Singh's purpose of meditating coincides with the fathers' practices of meditating on "celestial things." Another similarity between Singh and the fathers' practices of meditation is that the research found that both Singh and the fathers believed that within the act of meditation one's attitude is examined. Singh remarked of this type of experience in meditation by stating that the "real condition of their soul is revealed" during times of meditation. Singh's statement shows similarities to the fathers' speaking of meditation as assisting a monk in conforming one's own attributes to the attributes of God, such as becoming "full of goodness, free from envy, devout, self-restrained, [and] gentle." It was noted that the fathers' practices of meditation assisted a monk with the purpose of attempting to gain "perfect self-restraint and true purity."

The research found that one major area of difference in the reasons or goals for Singh and the fathers' meditation practices, is that Singh experienced in his meditation the "opportunity to God to speak" and that in this process God blessed Singh with "His richest blessings." Not only did Singh hear the voice of God in his practice of meditation but also experienced times when the bodily presence of Jesus was actualized. This level of experienced intimacy of hearing the voice of Jesus and feeling (and touching) his presence is not identified among the examined passages that described the ascetic meditation practices of the Desert Fathers.

8.1.3 Summary of ascetic spiritual practices of visions and miracles

When researching the experiences of the Desert Fathers and Sundar Singh regarding their witnessing of visions, similarities and differences can be identified in the areas of the settings in which they witnessed visions, the content that were seen in the visions, and the reasons or purposes for their experiencing of the visions. The research found that in regards to the setting of their experienced visions, Singh experienced visions in two primary locations: in a room in which he stayed; and while in the forest. Two of these vision experiences were identified as occurring during the night. The locations from which Singh witnessed visions show a direct correlation with the settings and locations where the Desert Fathers were said to have witnessed their visions.

The research found that during a majority of the Desert Fathers' visions the setting of the experiences occurred during times when they were in their cells. Although Singh was not known to have used a cell or a cave within his prayer rule, his home or the silence of his room shares marked similarities to the safe haven atmosphere of the cells of the Desert Fathers. As with the Desert Father, Abba Zeno, who experienced witnessing a vision of a child who proceeded to guide him safely to his cell, Singh similarly had a visionary experience outside of his home during a time of prayer in the forest.

Of the passages that were examined, it can be found that in both the vision experiences of the Desert Fathers and of Singh, their respective visions occurred

during or after a time of prayer. Within the content of the passages, the settings in which the visions were experienced by Singh and the Desert Fathers is the unique example of Abba Apollos who witnessed a vision of an Ethiopian archer attacking another unknown monk. The additional person present during Abba Apollos' vision is an anomaly in comparison to the vision experiences of Singh as in all of Singh's vision experiences he was found to be alone during the time of these mystical experiences.

Within the content of what was seen during the visions experienced by Singh and the Desert Fathers, stark differences and firm similarities are found. The research found that similarities are shared between Singh's visionary experiences in which he witnessed the remarkable "glories of the Kingdom of God." The "glories" that Singh witnessed bear a level of similarity to the vision experienced by Abba Paternuthius. The terminology that is used to describe Singh's experience of the "glories of the Kingdom of God" that he witnessed was defined as being "beyond description." This terminology is very similar the description of the vision experience of Abba Paternuthius in that Paternuthius' vision experience of the heavenly realms is described as having "no words [that] can describe" all of the "good things" that await true monks upon the end of their lives. In both the vision experiences of Abba Silvanus and Singh, the accounts utilized the term "ecstasy," which seemed to denote that their respective visionary experiences were not maleficent in nature but rather contained a type of euphoric state or benevolence.

Another similarity that was found within the vision experiences of Singh and the Desert Fathers is while in the vision state both Singh and the fathers witnessed angels and "natural things" in the heavenly realms. The research found that Abba Ephrem witnessed two visions in which he saw a band of angels bringing down a kephalis to him. Ephrem also witnessed another vision in which a branch of vine protruded from his tongue that bore great fruit that the birds of heaven were said to have fed upon. The vision experiences of Abba Ephrem also show similarities to that of Singh's visions where he, when commenting on his visions of heaven, spoke of holding conversations with a "great concourse of spirit beings," and mentioned the presence of "saints and angels." In these vision accounts Singh also spoke of when he was transported to the heavenly realms

and while there he saw “many things which correspond to things of beauty in this world,” such as “mountains, trees, [and] flowers” that had their “imperfections taken away.”

The research found that there was a similarity in the fact that both Sundar Singh and the Desert Father Silvanus felt a level of compunction or remorse after the experiencing of seeing a vision. Sundar Singh was described to have felt great compunction after seeing a vision of a poor man, a disguised Christ, which Singh received with “weeping and lamenting.” Sundar Singh’s response to the vision of the poor man greatly resembles the experience of Silvanus who witnessed a vision of the final judgment of monastics (and “seculars”). After experiencing the judgment vision, Silvanus is described as being filled with compunction and now possessed the desire to not want to leave his cell.

The research indicates that one major difference within the content of the visions witnessed by Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers is that Singh was said to have experienced visions, on a number of occasions, in which Christ himself appeared. In one of these visions, Christ himself was said to have rebuked Singh on his actions of folly. Within the visions of the Desert Fathers, none of the monastic fathers were said to have received a vision experience of Christ in any form, although there is one account involving Abba Anthony where he converses with a heavenly voice after having wrestling with a demon. The research found that the presence of demons is not found in the visions of Sundar Singh like the demons that are found in the visions of Abba Anthony and Abba Apollos when the maleficent beings make an appearance.

The research indicates that within the purposes of the witnessing of visions by the Desert Fathers and Sundar Singh a level of similarity exists. Sundar Singh was said to have experienced a level of benevolence within a number of visions that he witnessed, which is marked by terminology such as “ecstasy” being used to describe Singh’s response. But the research did include regarding other visions involving Singh that he was said to be found “bowed in the presence” of the heavenly beings he witnessed in his visions. In another vision experience Singh was left “weeping and lamenting” his folly and on one vision experience, he is

directly rebuked by Christ himself. Such varying reactions from Singh such as compunction, ecstasy, and blessing show a level of consistency with the responsive reactions of the Desert Fathers after they themselves witnessed their particular visions. Many of the Desert Fathers were said to have experienced a level of benevolence and blessing from their vision experiences such as Abba Ephrem's vision of foreknowledge of his future abilities or when Abba Anthony's heard the promise from a divine voice that the source of that voice would be his "succor" and that his name would be well known. Other Desert Fathers such as Abba Zeno had visions of a child who provided for him food, drink, as well as safe passage back to his cell when he was lost. The research found that other Desert Fathers, similar to Singh, experienced responses of compunction and a level of increased devotion. Examples of this are found in the cases of Abba Silvanus and his vision of judgment and in Abba Apollos' vision of the Ethiopian archer that attacked the unknown monk.

It was indicated from the research that the miracles experienced by the Desert Fathers and Singh share similarities and differences exist. The setting in which the miracles took place bear similarities, as well as the content of the miracles such as who received benevolence from the miracles. The purposes and the means for which the miracles had taken place bear similarities as well. The research findings indicate that in regards to the settings of miracles that involved Sundar Singh, all but one of the miracles occurred while he was outdoors and only one of the researched miracles occurred while in the setting of a hospital. Similarly, all of the researched miracle accounts involving the Desert Fathers were found to have occurred while the monks were outdoors.

The research found within three of the miracles experienced by Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers the setting and happenstance of the miracles occurred while in the outdoors and involved a crossing of a waterway: one miracle involved Sundar Singh, and two miracles involved the Desert Fathers Bessarion and Anthony. Three of the miracles that were experienced by Singh occurred in the setting of a village or traveling to a village. Other similar miraculous accounts involving the Desert Fathers occurred near or in a village on four different occasions. Other settings of miracles involving Sundar Singh that show no level

of similarity to the settings of the miracles involving the Desert Fathers are the miraculous accounts of Singh healing a boy at a hospital, and his being thrown into a well/pit and miraculously escaping.

Within the content of the miracles that were researched, major similarities are found to exist between the miracles involving Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. One of the miracles involving Singh that showed a number of firm similarities to that of the Desert Fathers, was when Singh was said to have found himself distraught and facing the crossing of a raging river. After Singh was said to have cried out to God a mysterious man proceeded to wade the river, and after placing Singh on his shoulders, the mysterious man and Singh safely traversed the river only to have the mysterious rescuer disappear after bringing Singh to safety. Similarly, on two different occasions the Desert Fathers crossed waterways in a miraculous way. In one of the accounts, Abba Bessarion, after praying and crossing himself, miraculously traversed a river along with his disciples. In another account, where the Desert Fathers crossed a waterway in a miraculous way, involved Abba Anthony and his disciples coming to a canal ridden with crocodiles, and after praying, Anthony and his disciples were able to cross through the canal unharmed by the menacing crocodiles. A similar account of traversing a river in a miraculous way also includes the Father Amoun which was not examined (Vit. Ant. 60).

The accounts of Sundar Singh and Abba Bes reveal parallel examples of normally ferocious animals unexplainably being restrained from harming the holy men. Singh modeled this ability on one occasion when he was able to walk unharmed through a village near a man-eating panther. On another occasion, as Singh was in prayer he was approached by a leopard and he proceeded to calmly stroke the beast as if it were a tamed pet. In the accounts of the Desert Fathers, Abba Bes was summoned by local townspeople and he was able to miraculously ward off a dangerous hippopotamus by simply using a gentle voice and calling upon the "name of Christ." Bes was also recorded as performing a similar miraculous act in his ability to ward off a dangerous crocodile.

Of the researched miraculous accounts of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, the area of miracles involving the healing of ailed individuals, clear differences

exist in the ways the miracles occurred. In the passage that described how a demon-possessed woman was miraculously cured by Singh's passively walking by her, the miracle was said to have occurred unbeknownst to Singh. This type of 'passive' approach to the miracles is not present in the healing stories of the Desert Fathers. In the miraculous account of when vexed individuals were brought to Abba Anthony, he clearly called upon the name of Christ, signed the sufferers "two or three times" with the sign of the cross, and the healed individuals stood up "whole" while in the presence many. Similarly, in the miraculous healing account involving Abba Abraham, it is described that he took an active approach when he miraculously healed a man with a bad leg by praying and invoking the name of Christ, and then pulling on the leg until the man was healed. In one of the miracles involving Singh, he is mentioned putting forth a more 'active' and more 'hands on' approach to the healing of the young boy in the hospital. After the boy's mother was said to seek out Singh's assistance, Singh prayed unknown supplications to God in Hindustani and laid his hands on the ailed boy who was later healed. Singh's healing of the little boy shows resemblance to the healing account involving Abba Anthony, in that when a young girl's mother sought out the Desert Father and after Anthony had prayed and called upon the Lord, the girl was healed.

Three other miracles were found to resemble each other in that for both Singh and the Desert Father Ammonas, divine intervention occurred to guide them safely to back to their desired destinations. In the situation involving Abba Ammonas, after finding himself lost on his way to see Abba Anthony, Ammonas was said to have prayed and shortly thereafter a hand appeared in the sky guiding him toward the correct route until he arrived at the cave of Abba Anthony. Similarly, Singh was recorded as experiencing a miraculous escape from a well by the means of an unknown person rescuing him by pulling Singh out of the well and then disappearing. On another occasion, Singh was recorded as walking to a village and feeling defeated. A stranger was said to have come and conversed with Singh during his travel and in the process helped in lifting Singh's spirits. After having arrived at Singh's desired destination, the mysterious stranger was said to have miraculously disappeared. The unique miraculous accounts involving the father Longinus' healing of the woman with breast cancer and

Anthony's healing of Polycratia do not appear to share any major similarities in nature to the miraculous accounts involving Singh.

From the research, the exact reasoning for why the miracles occurred can only be speculated upon from the deducing of the narratives of the passages. In a majority of the supernatural healing events that involved Singh and the Desert Fathers, the purpose appears, at least topically, that those that were healed benefited most from the miracles, such as a young boy or girl, Polycratia, or a demon possessed individual. It can be assumed that the witnesses of the miraculous events are beneficiaries from the supernatural accounts in that they too were edified witnessing the miraculous events. In a number of the researched passages, both Singh and the Desert Fathers' lives were saved from impending danger or death. We see these miraculous examples of preservation of life in the case of the lost Abba Ammonas, Bessarion and Anthony's traversing of the water, or Singh's hopeless case of being exiled to death into a well.

The research found that within the miraculous accounts the Desert Fathers were said to have continually invoked the "name of Christ" and were noted praying. The examined passages found that the fathers were said to have performed the sign of the cross upon those they healed of infirmities. Within the miracle accounts involving Singh, he in fact prayed on numerous occasions calling upon the name of Christ, but in none of the passages was there any indication that he performed the sign of the cross. In a majority of the miracles examined that involved the Desert Fathers, in all of the examples they were actively a part of the healing process of individuals with ailments. Conversely, in the case of Singh, on a number of occasions, unbeknownst to him, supernatural happenings occurred. Examples of Singh unknowingly being involved in the fruition of the miracle are when mysterious people appeared to assist him, only to disappear shortly thereafter.

8.1.4 Summary of ascetic spiritual practices of self-deprivation

The research found obvious similarities and differences in the various passages that described the methods of self-deprivation that were used by the Desert

Fathers and Sundar Singh. Similarities in the practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers are found in the areas of depriving oneself of adequate clothing, fasting, as well as the choice to own few possessions. Marked differences exist in the areas of sleep-deprivation, the methods of fasting, and the use of pain in the self-deprivation process.

The first similarity, that is apparent when examining the self-deprivation methods used by Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, is the actions of depriving oneself of luxurious clothing and instead choosing to clothe themselves in humble garments. The research found that Sundar Singh, by choice, clad himself in the thin robe of a Hindu Sadhu holy man and chose not to wear shoes. Because of this action of self-denial, Singh was said to have experienced “bitter agony” from wearing such thin garments and sleeping outside in harsh climates. Due to his choice to not wear shoes, his feet were noted as being cut, bruised, and bloody. Similar to Singh’s choice of garments, it was found that in the lives of the Desert Fathers, according to Abba Pambo, a monk’s garments should be of such a low quality that if he were to place his garments outside of a monk’s cell for three days, no one would choose to take those garments as their own. John Cassian further elaborated on the monk’s clothing in that when a Desert monk shed his personal clothing for the habit and garments of a monk, this ridding process is symbolic in nature of coming “down to the want and poverty of Christ.”

Similarly to the choice to wear simple garments, both Singh and the fathers shared the desire of not amassing a vast amount of possessions and choosing to instead live a simple life free from all of the niceties the world offers. The research found that for Singh, shortly after his baptism he was said to have gradually disposed “of his belongings and prepared himself for what lay ahead.” Sundar Singh was known throughout his life to have owned very few possessions. Within the lives of the Desert Fathers a similar vein of keeping few possessions was identified. Abba Euprepius, commenting on the need for monastics to live a simple life of despising everything and acquiring a “heart of iron,” believed that a monk was called to “eat straw, wear straw, [and] sleep on straw.” The passage indicates that according to Euprepius, monks are to live as simply as possible when it comes to what they eat, what they wear, and to how

they keep their shelter. John Cassian, commenting on an unknown individual being initiated into monasticism, the monk would first be “stripped of all of his former possessions” and that instead of relying upon his own support by the “world’s arts,” the monk would now receive his ration from the “holy and sacred funds of the monastery.”

The examined accounts of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers also described how both practiced the ascetic and self-depriving action of fasting, albeit different in the methods they used in attempting to achieve their goals. One of the accounts from Singh’s life records that after he was compelled to emulate Christ’s fast, he chose to attempt to fast for forty days and forty nights. The passage states that even after consulting with a physician about the effects of abstaining from food and drink for this prolonged time period, Sundar Singh went into the forest where he abstained from food and drink and held vigil until the point where he blacked out. Similarly, the research found that the Desert Father, Abba Julian, was known to have worn “away his flesh [until] it was so thin that he carried about only skin and bone.” Conversely to both Singh’s forty-day fast and Abba Julian’s level of emaciation, Abba Poemen believed that a monk, instead of depriving oneself completely of food and drink for long periods of time, should instead “eat every day, but only a little, so as not to be satisfied.” This method of eating a little is described as a type of fasting that was passed down from the fathers and Poemen considered this type of fasting as the “royal way, which is light.”

8.2 A critical assessment of Christian mystic practices appropriated in the church today

8.2.1 Introduction

Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers are but a few in the long line of mystics that have passed down spiritual practices to today’s Church. The way that Christian mysticism uniquely manifests itself in today’s Church has been described as the modern day Christian “relating to God on the deepest level of our being. It means knowing and loving him [God] in a transcendent way, in keeping his infinite and unfathomable nature” (Mann & Zachariadis, 2014).

Some modern Christian movements, such as the Emerging Church movement, have incorporated forms of Christian mysticism into their spiritual practices. The Emerging/Emergent Church embraces spiritual practices such as symbolic, multi-sensory worship; centering prayer; prayer beads; icons; spiritual direction; labyrinths; and *Lectio Divina*, which have all been encompassed into the movement's definition of "spiritual formation" (Southern Adventist University). Exactness in defining the Emerging Church is difficult as the movement is grounded on a level of fluidity. Former leader in the movement, Marc Driscoll, highlighted the fluidity of the movement when he defined the Emerging movement as a broad category that encompasses a variety of churches and individuals who seek to be effective missionaries in their respective contexts. These churches and individuals include three distinct types of Christians: "Relevants, Reconstructionists, and Revisionists" (Driscoll, 2006:89). The aforementioned fluidity within the movement has opened the proverbial doors to the acceptance of mysticism and utilizing ancient ascetic practices in the formation of deepening one's faith.

Other leaders within the modern day Church have become outspoken opponents of the mysticism practiced by the Desert Fathers and their respective influence on today's Church. Ray Yungen (2006), a modern Evangelical leader, states that the errors committed by the Desert Fathers can be found in their practices of mysticism:

In many ways the desert fathers were like Cain—eager to please but not willing to listen to the instruction of the Lord and do what is right. One cannot fault them for their devotion, but one certainly can for their lack of discernment (44).

For critics of Christian mysticism like Yungen, the appropriation of Christian mystic practices in the Church today can be equated with the pluralizing of Christianity with Eastern religious traditions such as Hinduism (Yungen, 2006:42).

On the other hand, appropriating Christian mystic practices in today's church can produce numerous benefits, which can assist in the deepening of one's Christian

faith. However, today's Christians also need to be on their guard against appropriating unbiblical Christian mystic practices, thereby inadvertently making themselves vulnerable to practices and mindsets that run contrary to orthodox beliefs and practices. In the next section the pros and cons of Christian mystic practices appropriated in today's church, will be addressed.

8.2.2 The benefits of Christian mystic practices in the church today

By appropriating Christian mystic practices in today's church, modern Christians can reap many benefits that will further their love and devotion for Christ. Through the incorporation of ascetic and mystic spiritual practices such as Contemplative and Centering Prayer, Christians can begin to experience a number of benefits such as growing in their healthy and sacramental use of time, deepening their maturity in self-understanding and continuing and furthering their personal spiritual formation, in order to gain a better understanding of their active commitment toward living out the Gospel in the world.

Modern Christian leaders such as Diane Gilliam-Weeks (2009:13) have advocated the inclusion of Christian mystic practices in the daily spiritual practices of Christians across the theological spectrum. Father James Conner, a Roman Catholic priest, contends that for Thomas Merton (and the Greek Fathers of the Church), Contemplative Prayer is one way that modern Christians can begin to undertake the goal of being empowered to live as children of God. For Conner, Contemplative Prayer is the avenue to better understand and experience the ancient incarnation phrase: "God became man in order that man might become God" (Conner, 1993). Conner (1993) also expressed that the main fruit of practicing Contemplative Prayer was to foster greater compassion for others, a compassion that he deems is the main sign of the presence of God.

Gilliam-Weeks (2009:8) in her study of Thomas Merton's practice of Contemplative Prayer, found that one of the benefits of practicing this form spiritual practice is that one can begin to grow in one's involvement and love for the world instead of being shut away separated from the world or negating one's self from emotions or feelings. Through the practice of contemplative prayer,

specifically the practice of *Lectio Divina* or of orienting all one's senses to God by contemplating on an attribute of God, one is able to foster compassionate actions arising from prayer including driving emotions of "social justice, peace, artistic expression, interreligious dialogue, relating to creation, relationships and community" toward others in the world (Gilliam-Weeks, 2009:8). This ability to foster a form of compassionate love for those outside oneself becomes the means by which Christians can practice a system of prayer that was previously designated only for monasteries (Gilliam-Weeks, 2009:8).

Similar to Contemplative Prayer, Centering Prayer is grounded in the practice of resting in the silence of the presence of God with the ultimate goal of leading to the indwelling of the Holy Trinity (Gilliam-Weeks, 2009:8). The noted benefits that modern Christians can gain from practicing Centering Prayer are not found during the actual time of prayer but instead are found or exemplified in the daily life of the praying individual. The main benefit of Centering Prayer is inner-silence where a person can then begin to become aware of destructive and difficult emotions that come into the mind. After this awareness of difficult emotions has been fostered through the practicing Centering Prayer, one then acknowledges the destructive emotions and feelings. Through the ability to acknowledge one's emotions, one can then "let them go" and then center one's prayer on a sacred word or attribute of God (Gilliam-Weeks, 2009:10).

Such practices of Contemplative and Centering Prayer have begun to be practiced by Christian leaders and denominations. Denominational centres such as The Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, a spiritual formation venue for the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, have begun to incorporate mystic practices such as Contemplative and Centering for its leaders with the goal of gaining deeper levels of intimacy in the denomination's leadership (Gilliam-Weeks, 2009:12).

The benefits of practicing Centering and Contemplative Prayer across the theological spectrum of Christian traditions has been acknowledged by noted leaders within the Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Emergent churches. Some modern Eastern Orthodox Christian leaders have also begun to

incorporate the practice of Contemplative Prayer (Still Point Contemplative Ministries, 2014). Modern scholars, such as Noel Woodbridge (2007:203) have noted that, when the Emerging Churches of today appropriate Christian mystic practices in their corporate worship, a number of benefits can be gained, such as providing “a wide scope of experiences in the expression of worship,” “emphasis on authentic spirituality and reverent prayer,” as well as “positive worship through Liturgy and Ancient Church Traditions.”

8.2.3 The dangers of Christian mystic practices in the church today

Although a number of marked benefits can be experienced by appropriating some Christian mystic practices in the Church today, modern scholars have contended that there are other Christian mystic practices that when appropriated can be considered as dangerous and lead to undesirable consequences. As previously described, Woodbridge (2007:204) notes that although benefits exist when today’s churches appropriate certain Christian mystic practices in their corporate worship, such as Contemplative Prayer, the appropriation of other Christian mystic practices can have dangerous consequences, for example, (1) if worship becomes more focused on personal experience and ancient traditions than on the Word and (2) if personal worship and edification plays a more prominent role than the proclamation of the Gospel. On a more personal level, those that choose Christian mystic practices associated with the Emerging Church Movement, run the risk of encountering dangerous consequences, such as pushing oneself away from the true knowledge of Scripture, inadvertently believing heretical views like universalism or contacting demonic spirits, the most serious of all dangers.

Authors such as Scott Diekmann (2015:1) claim that the one of the dangers of practicing mysticism and practices associated with the movement, especially exemplified in the Emerging Church Movement, is that by practicing mysticism one is “pushing the experiential boundaries of the knowledge of God away from Scripture” and that they are being “lured away from a true knowledge of the Lord...” Diekmann (2015:2) contends that Christian mysticism practices such as contemplative prayer are based in pantheistic and panentheistic beliefs, both of which are generally deemed to be heretical views by traditional Christian

theology. Ultimately and emphatically, Diekmann contends that the principle danger of a Christian utilizing mysticism is that:

...[C]ontemplative prayer is an occult practice that will not lead to an encounter with God, but may lead to contact with a demon ...
The one thing it will not be is a prayer to God (2015:3).

Others have echoed Diekmann, such as Roger Oakman, who warns that precaution should be taken before Christians consider using spiritual practices such as Contemplative or Centering Prayer. Oakman (2015) contends that practices like Contemplative Prayer have their roots not in the Bible but rather in the “sacred writings of Eastern religions.” Oakman (2015) also contends that by practicing Contemplative Prayer, or as he jests “contemplative terror”, one can open oneself to contacting demons.

Another danger that Evangelical leader John Caddock presents regarding Christian mysticism is that practices like Contemplative Prayer promote universalism. Caddock (1997) contends in his article, “What is Contemplative Spirituality and Why is it Dangerous” that when authors such as Brennan Manning, who advocates Contemplative Prayer, quote from people who support universalism such as David Steindl-Rast, Manning is by default promoting universalism to those that practice Christian mysticism. Modern Christians that read the writings of authors like Manning and then proceed to practice Contemplative Prayer may fall into the danger of taking on beliefs of universalism, a deemed heretical view in classical Christianity.

Bob DeWaay (2004) in his article, “Contemporary Christian Divination--The False Claims and Practices of Christian Mystics,” contends that Christians who use spiritual practices that are similar to and/or are inspired by deep-breathing techniques, Transcendental Meditation, and hypnosis face the dangerous consequence of being deceived.

The restrictions God places on how and by what means we may legitimately come to Him and receive spiritual truth are for our own

good. The spirit world that Christian mystics like Morton Kelsey want to explore is far more complex than even Jung and Kelsey give it credit for being. The dangers of deception are far more real. In fact, if we journey into the world of the spirits by means other than what God has ordained, we will be deceived, not may be deceived. The spirits who inhabit that world have been there for many thousands of years practicing the art of deception.

In his article “Unbiblical Teachings on Prayer and Experience,” Bob DeWaay (2004) writes a definitive conclusion in which he warns against the dangers of the Emerging Church Movement, especially against those who teach and practice Christian mysticism:

The simple application is this: do not listen to them. They can only deceive you; they cannot make you more holy or pleasing to God. Only the finished work of Christ and His ordained means of grace can do that.

8.2.4 Conclusion: The pros and cons of appropriating Christian mystic practices the Church today

There are many benefits for modern Christians who choose to incorporate spiritual practices into their faith. By utilizing spiritual practices from Christian mysticism traditions, modern Christians can reap many benefits that will further their love and devotion for Christ such as deepening their healthy and sacramental use of time, growing in their maturity in self-understanding, continuing and furthering personal spiritual formation, and gaining better understanding in a Christian’s active commitment toward living out the Gospel in the world. But Christian mysticism can also have dangerous consequences if not practiced appropriately and cautiously. Those that inappropriately practice Christian mysticism face the danger of being deceived into heretical views, failing to believe in the preeminent place of Scripture, or the incredibly serious issue of contacting demonic spirits.

In his article, “Christian Mysticism: The pros and cons,” Presbyterian leader Daniel Townsend (2010) clearly and succinctly provides guiding principles on how mystic practices should appropriately be incorporated by today’s Church in order to avoid dangerous consequences. The first guiding principle that Townsend presents is that “The Holy Spirit never contradicts himself.” For Townsend, if mystics introduce a doctrine that is counterintuitive to that found in Scripture, the “canon” of our faith, then Christians should be suspicious of that proposed belief and consequently, the proposing leader.

The second guiding principle that Townsend (2010) proposes that will help prevent Christians from dangerous consequences in practicing Christian mysticism is that “The Holy Spirit continues to be active in the Church”. Townsend contends that although God “has not retired” and that He can still perform miracles. However, the Church believes that everything needed for salvation and appropriate spiritual practices can be found within the canon of Scripture and the traditionally held beliefs of the historical Church.

The final principle regarding guiding principles for practicing Christian mysticism that Townsend presents is that today’s Christians should have “A need for caution, but not skepticism” regarding those that claim mystical experiences. If one’s mystical experience contradicts Scripture, then the modern Christian should be skeptical of the validity of that person’s experience. Even as the Church holds to a level of caution, modern Christians should also heed Paul’s words to not quench the Holy Spirit and to not despise prophecies (1 Thes. 5:19-20).

8.3 Conclusion

This chapter provided a summary of research findings of the comparative analysis of the practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. Sections 8.1.2-8.1.4 offered a summary of the findings from an analysis of the three specific areas of ascetic spirituality as practiced by Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. Section 8.2 offered a critical assessment of the spiritual practices of Christian mysticism in the Church today. This section highlighted the benefits of spiritual practices in the today’s church such as gaining deeper intimacy with Christ as

well as with ourselves. The section also presented some dangers of the spiritual practices of Christian mysticism in the Church today such as falling into heretical error or inadvertently contacting demons. In 8.2.4, the pros and cons of using the spiritual practices of Christian mysticism in today's Church are also described including guiding principles that one may choose to follow.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION: A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

9.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a summary of research findings as well as present the theological and practical value of studying the spiritual practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. This chapter will also put forth the validity and significance of the conclusions and the author's recommendations regarding furthering one's spiritual practices utilizing ancient and contemporary resources.

Research was undertaken on gaining understanding into the spiritual practices of the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh. The research sought to illumine where those practices coincide and where they differ in nature. The research problem was then identified and defined in chapter 1. Chapter 2 provided a review of relevant scholarship and a brief section that introduced the literary genre of hagiography. Chapters 3 and 4 utilized scholarly resources in providing an introduction and historical background to the lives of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. Chapter 3 provided a survey of the life of Sadhu Sundar Singh and included special attention to his early years, his mysterious conversion, and his ascetic lifestyle. A survey of Singh's training and formation, his travels, and his mysterious death were then provided. In chapter 4, a survey of the history of the Desert Fathers was provided including the history of the monastic movement, a background to the corresponding literary resources, overview of ascetic spiritual practices of the Desert Fathers, and short biographies of notable Desert Father personalities.

Chapters 5-7 identified and examined several examples of ascetic practices in the areas of prayer and meditation, visions and miracles, and self-deprivation. Literary analysis of data found within the primary and non-primary texts was employed with given attention to specifically identify and examine the examples

of how, when, where, and why Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers carried out spiritual practices in the three ascetic practice areas. The primary texts that were utilized for the analysis of Singh's ascetical practices were: *At the Master's Feet; With and Without Christ; Wisdom of the Sadhu; Reality and Religion: Meditations on God, Man and Nature; Meditations on Various Aspects of the Spiritual Life; Visions of the Spiritual World*. The seven primary texts that were utilized for the analysis of the Desert Fathers' ascetical practices were: *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Apophthegmata Patrum); *The Lives of the Desert Fathers* (Historia Monachorum in Aegypto); *The Lausiac History* by Palladius of Galatia; *The Life of St. Anthony* by St. Athanasius; *Philokalia* (Vol. I); and *The Conferences and The Institutes* by John Cassian.

Chapter 5 provided identification and textual analysis of examples of ascetic practices of the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh in the areas of prayer and meditation. The results of the textual analysis of those areas were then provided. Both the Desert Fathers and Sundar Singh utilized seclusion and silence, as well as incorporated habits of daily practices of prayer and meditation into their ascetic lifestyles. The analysis found that Singh differed from the Desert Fathers in that Singh experienced a different type of intimacy with Jesus. In times of prayer and meditation, Singh was able to hear the voice of Jesus in prayer and experience the bodily presence of Jesus during these times. The attitudes held in the process of meditation differed between the fathers and Singh. Singh experienced a type of bliss when meditating, which differed from the Desert Fathers, who were noted as often practicing and meditating on ways of self-denial and holding attitudes of compunction.

The identification and textual analysis of the ascetic practices of the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh in the areas of vision and miracles was provided in chapter 6. The textual analysis of the passages revealed that Singh and the Desert Fathers shared similarities as well as a few poignant differences in their experiences in witnessing visions and miracles. Singh and the Desert Fathers were noted as responding in a number of similar ways to the experiencing of visions. Singh and the fathers were said to have experienced feelings of compunction, weeping, experiencing ecstatic states, and interpreting the visions

as a form of benevolence. One major difference between Singh and the Desert Fathers' vision experiences is that Singh was said to have walked and held conversation with Christ in some of his visions. Regarding the miracles that Singh and the fathers experienced, the research found that one consistent theme in the purposes for miracles occurring was the purpose to assist others in their ailed conditions. One marked difference found in the textual analysis is that Singh did not practice making the sign of the cross during the times the supernatural miracles occurred as compared to the Desert Fathers who commonly used the practice.

Chapter 7 contained the identification and textual analysis of passages that contained examples of self-deprivation in the lives of the Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. The analysis found that for Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers' self-deprivation actions were believed to be an essential requirement for a disciple of Christ. Both the Desert Fathers and Singh practiced self-deprivation in the form of fasting, with slight variations in the form and amount of food to be consumed. Only the Desert Fathers were identified as practicing abstinence from sleep. The analysis found that for Singh self-deprivation was associated with being rewarded a "crown of eternal kingship," whereas for the Desert Fathers the actions of depriving oneself the essentials of food, drink, and sleep was a way of emulating Christ's own laying aside of pride to degrade himself to the earthly realms.

Chapter 7 also contained the identification of completing the goal of the research by answering the main and sub-questions of the research problem. It also contained the measuring of the researcher's hypothesis for validity. The research found that in order to answer the research question of whether Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers share similarities in their ascetic spiritual practices, four sub-questions guided the research:

- In what ways do the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh differ from those practiced by the Desert Fathers?
- Are there similarities and differences in the methods of prayer and meditation utilized by Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers?

- Through seeing visions and performing miracles, do the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh have parallel experiences in these areas?
- In what ways are the acts of self-deprivation undertaken by Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers similar to each other?

These questions were illuminated and expounded upon, piece by piece in chapters 5-7, and throughout the research into the ascetic practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. The thesis statement was then weighed for its validity in whether the greatest amount of similarities in ascetic practices of the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh would be found in the area of prayer and meditation and that the greatest level of marked differences would be found in the area of visions and miracles. The thesis statement appears to be valid when weighing the findings against the researcher's hypothesis in that in the ascetic area of miracles and visions, remarkable differences were found to be identified in Singh and the Desert Fathers' identified experiences.

Chapter 8 provided a summary of the research findings of the comparative analysis of the practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. The research findings included a comparison (of similarities and differences) regarding the how, when, where, and why of the spiritual practices that Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers carried out throughout the recorded accounts of their lives. Chapter 8 also presented a critical assessment of Christian mystic practices appropriated in the Church today, including its benefits and dangers.

9.2 Restatement of the objectives and methodology of the study

9.2.1 Objectives of the study

The study was efficient in achieving the three fundamental objectives for which the research was designed. The first objective of the research was to introduce readers to the personalities and histories of the legendary Christian figures of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. Secondly, this study aimed to survey and analyze textual examples of documented prayer and meditation, visions and miracles, and self-deprivation undertaken by Sundar Singh and the

Desert Fathers. The study offered an evaluation of found similarities and differences in the ascetical practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. Thirdly, the study presented the pros and cons of appropriating Christian mystic practices in the Church today. Lastly, the research also offered the theological, practical value of studying the spiritual practices of these Christian legends and then made recommendations regarding the benefits of appropriating certain of these practices for deepening one's personal spiritual practices in the modern context and the dangers of appropriating unbiblical Christian mystic practices in the Church today.

9.2.2 Methodology of the study

The researcher conducted a pilot study, consisting of a literature study, consulted with experts on the history of monasticism (St. Anthony Coptic Monastery, 2014-02-06) and acknowledged the feasibility of the study. In particular, the researcher reviewed literature in the areas of hagiography, ascetic practices, as well as reviewed the highest regarded and accessible English translated literary sources of the lives and writings of the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh. Literary analysis of data found within the primary and non-primary texts was employed specifically to identify examples in how, when, where, and why Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers carried out spiritual practices in the three ascetic areas. The findings from the literary research portion were analyzed for similarities and differences in the practices of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, and the conclusions were then offered.

In the process of analyzing the literary data, the "Close Reading" method of Harvard Professor Andrea L. Volpe (2014) was utilized, which provide the following relevant criteria:

- Remember that close reading is both a process and a technique.
- Read with a pen or pencil in hand, and annotate the text.
- Look for patterns in the things you've noticed about the text - repetitions, contradictions, and similarities.

- Ask questions about the patterns you've noticed, especially how and why.
- Close reading and annotating will lead you to key terms.
- Remember that annotation has more than one "product".

9.3 Conclusions of the research

Particular conclusions, resulting from the research into the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, can be found in multiple areas and are relevant for the modern disciple of Christ. From the research, theological value can be found not only in the understanding of the lives Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, but also in the better understanding of the practices of prayer, meditation, visions, miracles and self-deprivation can be gained. A level of practical value is also gained from the research in the area of the importance for Christians to utilize the practices of prayer, meditation, visions, miracles, and self-deprivation in one's own spiritual life. Resources on how to begin to incorporate, in a practical way, spiritual practices into one's life are provided with the end-goal of obtaining greater intimacy with Christ

9.3.1 Theological value of ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers

From the findings of the research a vast amount of theological value can be mined from studying the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers. From a theological value standpoint, the knowledge of the history and information of the lives of the Desert Fathers is highly important. To understand one's own Christian history is to open oneself to the wisdom of his or her spiritual ancestors and to accept those legends that have gone before them as wise, spiritual guides assisting the modern day Christian in navigating their own spirituality. To better understand the historical figure and Desert Father Abba Anthony is to begin to comprehend the sacrifices that early Christians made in order to pass down the Christian faith to the next generation. One can also begin to understand the seeds of monasticism that began almost two millenniums ago and how that movement has influenced church history and the rhythms of today's

various different Christian traditions. Learning about how God interacted with the monastics in their daily lives and through their spiritual practices is invaluable in beginning to understand the inner workings into the relationship of God and man. Benedicta Ward (1992) provides an adequate summary of the Desert Fathers and how their theological grounded purpose can be interpreted as being “toil” to strive toward becoming a new man in Christ:

This pattern of being moved by the action of God first, of leaving the familiar place, going away and giving oneself over to the action of God in silence and solitude is the gateway in the desert to prayer and conversion of heart. What follows until death is the hard work of becoming the new man in Christ: one of the Fathers asked Abba John the Dwarf, “What is a monk?” And he said, “He is toil. The monk toils at all he does. That is what a monk is.” This 'toil', this 'hard work' lasted a lifetime. And the direction had to be constantly followed and kept clear. In this task, the monk had three assets: one was the cell; the second was the scriptures and the third was an old man, a father, as a point of reference in all he did (64).

This “toiling” in silence and solitude is a practice that modern Christianity needs to center itself around again, just as it had in the time of the Desert Fathers.

When researching and examining the life of Sadhu Sundar Singh, theological value is gained in better understanding what extreme discipleship to Jesus may resemble in a modern context. Theologically, the depth of spirituality and discipleship that was manifested in the life of Sundar Singh can be used as a type of role model in the areas of not only in ascetic spiritual practices, but also charity for others and zeal for evangelical missionary work. In examining Singh’s life, one catches a glimpse of the relationship that Christ has with a simple and humble man, a relationship that is marked with Singh conversing with Christ directly. This level of intimacy provides theological insights for the modern Christian not only in how Singh was able to rouse such an otherworldly experience, but also provides greater understanding into Christ’s benevolence in choosing to commune with his disciples in such a real and mysterious way.

In researching the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, conclusions about the importance of integrating spiritual practices into the Christian disciple's life can be better understood. The reality that Christians such as the Desert Fathers were steadfast in praying, meditating, seeing visions, performing miracles, and denying themselves luxuries almost two millenniums ago should begin to foster the same importance to such practices into the heart of the modern day Christian. Some have identified that Singh's visions and miracles, although difficult to understand the plausibility of such experiences, were experiences that were closely linked with his love for scripture:

It is very important to notice that besides the revelations in the Scriptures Sadhu Sunder Singh gives equal weight to the trances and ecstatic experiences of visions he has had...But it must be equally noted that all his ecstatic experiences were always in harmony with the Bible. In fact, the Bible was his primary form or standard. As such, one cannot carp on his resort to his ecstatic visions. At the same time we must also notice the Sadhu uses mostly the New Testament. There are hardly any references to the Old Testament. There is much written of what he thought about the relation between the Old and the New. But definitely he seems to have made no attempt to replace the Old Testament by the Indian scriptures, as some have done (Sumithra, 1990:99).

The mystical examples in the life of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the recounting of his ability to place his hands and commune with Jesus in a tangible and bodily form should illuminate, encourage, and challenge the modern Christian to strive toward greater devotion to Christ. With greater devotion, a modern day Christian may be able to gain such a reward of mystically experiencing Jesus, just as Singh had in his day. Finally in researching both the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, a glorious bridge in history of the similarities in their spiritual practices can be found. The ways how the ascetic spiritual practices of the Desert Fathers have changed and evolved over a seventeen-hundred year period and are exemplified in the life of Singh can also be better understood.

9.3.2 Practical value of ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers

When researching the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, numerous practical values can be found. Surveying and learning more about the lives of Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers have practical value in that the modern day Christian can gain encouragement from learning about the “saints” of old and those in a more modern context in that one may find themselves in awe, encouraged, and challenged to grow in their love and connectedness with Christ. The modern day monastic Ernest Larkin (2002) provides a challenge for the modern day Christian to venture into one’s own imaginary desert to pursue a greater surrendering to God:

In this setting [the Desert Fathers’ setting] Christian holiness was a kind of white martyrdom, a total giving over of one’s life to God, the shedding of all self-indulgence in favor of a single-minded search for God. The desert was a graphic symbol of the emptiness of life and the otherness of God. The emptiness translated into purity of heart, a heart freed from sinful affections and centered on God. Thus the beatitude that best sums up desert spirituality is “Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.” Contemplation is the goal, and letting go of all lesser aims and surrender to the living God the condition. This general principle is abstract and can be lived out in an imaginary as well as a real desert (2002:470).

From a practical standpoint, in researching the life of Singh, one can begin to understand how he was, “India’s ideal of the disciple of Christ---a barefooted itinerant preacher with burning love in his heart” (Moore, 2005:9). The research can also help in understanding the Desert Fathers and why they meticulously practiced and devoted their lives to the pursuit of deeper intimacy with God. Practical methods of praying, meditating, viewing visions, witnessing miracles, and self-depriving themselves can all be found in the surveying and examining the lives of Singh and the Desert Fathers. Along with learning the methods of the ascetic spiritual practices modeled in the lives and practices of Singh and the

fathers, one begins to better understand what to expect if they are to incorporate and engage in similar ascetic spiritual practices.

Practical value can be found in the researching and examining the lives of the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh in the areas of the practices of prayer and meditation. The research provided numerous examples of methods by which to pray and meditate as modeled by Singh and the fathers. Such examples were found such as the daily utilization of a prayer rule or the incorporation of silence and seclusion into one's practice. Different physical positions were offered for the practice of prayer and meditation including the positions of standing upright, full-body prostrations, or the sitting cross-legged on the floor. The results or purposes of the acts of prayer and meditation were offered including the illumination into a Biblical text, meditation on one's own death, or even to the point of meditating to the level of experiencing the bodily presence of Christ. There is practical value in the utilization of these methods to better understand the practice of prayer and meditation and to venture into beginning similar practices in one's discipleship to Christ.

The research was able to offer practical value in examining the visions and miracles that involved both Singh and the Desert Fathers. To the modern Christian it is clear that from the research, Singh and the Desert Fathers actually experienced visions that left them responding in a number of similar ways. To these visions Singh and the Desert Fathers responded with states of compunction, weeping, ecstatic states, and received them as gifts of benevolence. Uniquely, Singh was said to have had visions where he walked and conversed with Christ. These remarkable experiences of Singh's should encourage and challenge modern day believers to strive towards greater Christian discipleship. In regards to the miraculous events involving Singh and the Desert Fathers, the consistent theme seems to indicate that the miracles appear to have occurred in order to assist others from ailed conditions. This finding should encourage believers to consider using the methods of Sundar Singh and Desert Fathers, such as prayer and making the sign of the cross, in similar times of trouble that beckon supernatural miracles.

From the research findings in the area of self-deprivation, as practiced by Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, relevant practical value can be offered to the modern day Christian. It must be acknowledged that many instances in the lives of the Desert Fathers and Sundar Singh can be deemed too extreme or even dangerous to the modern day Christian, such as fasting for forty days, fasting to the point of emaciation, or using pain to abstain from sleeping. The main practical value to be understood from reading about the extreme examples of Singh and the Fathers is that the modern day Christian should be encouraged to simply try the ascetic practices as keys to further their discipleship. It should also be noted that Singh and the Desert Fathers did emphasize the importance of denying oneself the luxuries of life and Singh. For Singh and the fathers, without self-denial it was “impossible to serve God.” The common practices by Singh and the fathers of fasting and living simple lives can offer modern day Christians practical methods in their discipleship with the same goal of Singh and the fathers to better emulate Christ’s own laying aside of pride and self-sacrifice.

9.3.3 The pros and cons of appropriating Christian mystic practices in the Church today

By utilizing spiritual practices from Christian mysticism traditions, modern Christians can reap many benefits that will further their love and devotion for Christ such as deepening their healthy and sacramental use of time, growing in their maturity in self-understanding, continuing and furthering personal spiritual formation, and gaining a better understanding in their active commitment toward living out the Gospel in the world. Conversely, Christian mysticism can also have dangerous consequences including the dangers of being deceived into heretical views, failing to believe in the preeminent place of Scripture, or the incredibly serious consequence of contacting demonic spirits.

Daniel Townsend (2010) clearly and succinctly provides a set of guiding principles on how Christian mystic practices should be appropriated in the Church today in order to avoid dangerous consequences. The first guiding principle is that the “The Holy Spirit never contradicts himself” and if mystics introduce a doctrine that is counterintuitive to that found in Scripture, the “canon” of our faith, then

Christians should be suspicious of that proposed belief and the proposing leader.

The second guiding principle that will help prevent Christians from dangerous consequences in practicing Christian mysticism is that “[t]he Holy Spirit continues to be active in the Church.” Townsend contends that although God “has not retired” and that He can still perform miracles, the Church believes that everything needed for salvation and appropriate spiritual practices can be found within the canon of Scripture and the traditionally held beliefs of the historical Church.

The final guiding principle Townsend presents to today’s Christians is that there is “A need for caution, but not skepticism” regarding those that claim mystical experiences. If a person’s mystical experience contradicts Scripture, then the modern Christian should be skeptical of the validity of that person’s experience. However, today’s Christians should also take into account Paul’s words to not quench the Holy Spirit and not to despise prophecies (1 Thes. 5:19-20), if a person’s mystical experience is aligned with Scripture.

9.4 Recommendations for deepening personal spiritual practices in the modern context

In examining the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, practical recommendations of resources and methods can be offered to the modern day Christian with the goal of fostering greater levels of devotion and discipleship. Understanding that in the modern day Christian context, individuals have their roots in either a particular or specific historical traditions or utilize multiple traditions, to offer modern day Christians solely resources of spiritual practices from either Indio-Asian or Coptic Orthodox traditions would be inadequate for the modern day Christian. Unlike Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers, most modern day Christians are not living in monasteries, in caves as hermits, or as roving evangelists and missionaries. A lot of contemporary Christians are not living like sadhus and monks but instead are striving to live as disciples of Jesus in their respective busy lives, within a community or family unit, while connected or disconnected to a local church. All offered recommendations for greater devotion in spiritual practices will be offered

to Christians in the aforementioned context, where the given resources can be applied to the 'here and now' of a modern Christian life.

Found within the three prominent Christian traditions of Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism are resources and practices that can be utilized to better foster, in the modern day Christian, greater devotion in the areas of prayer and meditation, visions and miracles, and self-deprivation. Depending upon one's particular tradition, recommendations are made with the goal of deepening devotion to Christ while remaining in the comfortable folds of their respective tradition(s). The resources are provided as an option available to modern day Christians if they are willing to utilize other methods from Christian traditions that are not their own.

In regards to the ascetic spiritual practices of prayer and meditation, a list of recommendations and resources can be found within three traditions of Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism. These resources can offer insights and methods to better foster greater devotion and connectedness with Christ.

9.4.1 Roman Catholic tradition resources

Within the ancient tradition of Roman Catholicism is a plethora of relevant resources that can help the modern Christian advance in his or her spiritual practice of prayer and meditation. The spiritual practices of prayer and meditation have often been united within the Catholic tradition and there is a vast array of resources, techniques, and readings that can be utilized. One fruitful practice of prayer within the Roman Catholic tradition that is recommended to the modern Christian is the form or style that has been made popular by Father Thomas Keating, a Cistercian Monk, who practices a form of Centering or Contemplative prayer. Some have equated Contemplative prayer as being synonymous with meditation (Merton, 1996:23). The historic roots of Centering prayer is a method that is said to come out of the tradition of principally two sources: *The Cloud of Unknowing*, an anonymous authored fourteenth-century work; and from St. John of the Cross (Keating, 2005:11). The basic guidelines for Centering Prayer can be found in the four main principles:

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.
3. When you become aware of thoughts, return ever so gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes (Keating 2005:64).

Father Keating also recommends a rhythm of two periods of Centering prayer practiced daily as well as the utilizing of a daily devotion book that contains spiritual writings and Scripture (Iachetta, 2003:xiii).

Catholic monk Thomas Merton, the famous spiritual writer and theologian, also recommended a form of Contemplative prayer and meditation. For Merton, Contemplative prayer focused on the recollection of the "prayer of the heart." Others such as Daniel Maurin (1996:21) have contended that instead of focusing or contemplating on just one word such as Keating puts forth, one should consider contemplating a phrase related to God such as: "'My God', 'My God and my all', 'My Lord and my God', 'Thank you, God', 'Dominum', 'Deo gratias'..." or: "'Father', 'Pater noster', Abba..." or instead: "'Holy Spirit', 'Spirit of love', 'Veni Sancte Spiritus..." Through the practicing of Contemplative prayer, one is able to then cultivate "an 'attitude,' an 'outlook' [of] faith, openness, attention, reverence, expectation, supplication, trust, joy" (Merton, 1996:34).

Prolific author and Catholic priest, Henri Nouwen, believed that prayer can be utilized in a number of forms. Nouwen states that prayer should take the form of Unceasing Prayer, a form that is relevant to the modern Christian. Nouwen believed that Unceasing Prayer is found in the form of a three-fold process:

... "How to pray without ceasing?" I want to answer this question not in the context of the wide, silent Russian prairies of a century ago but in the context of the restlessness of our contemporary Western

society. I suggest that the practice of unceasing prayer is a threefold process: we first *cry out to God* with all our needs and requests. Then we turn our unceasing thoughts into *continual conversation with God*. Finally, we learn to *listen to God* in our hearts through a daily discipline of meditation and contemplative practice (Nouwen, 2006:58).

Others within the Catholic tradition have promoted the use of a common prayer book to foster a life of prayer in tandem with being a part of a worshipping community. One such Catholic community that has endeavored to foster such a united life of prayer is the Taize community in France. The Taize community has been described in this way:

At Taize, the search for the visible unity between Christians has always been integrated in a life of prayer and community. Over the years, the Community has evolved a form of common prayer, which is still only a provisional one. The search for what is most rewarding in the traditions of common prayer found throughout the universal Church has always been one aspect of a more general search for a living community not cut off from the world of the late twentieth century...Living 'a parable of Community', the Community has ever sought to celebrate a form of common prayer which would be at the same time firmly rooted in the great tradition of the Church's worship, but so adapted to our present day mentalities that it would truly nourish and stimulate a daily commitment of love and service in the world today (Chisholm, 1977:7-8).

Another resource for deepening one's spiritual practice of prayer, although not always universally accepted within the Catholic tradition, is the book: *Sadhana - A Way to God: Christian Exercises in Eastern Form*. In this work, author and priest Anthony de Mello, emphasizes Contemplative prayer in the form of contemplating in prayer groups. Expounding upon Contemplative prayer in a group form and how this group form may be carried out, de Mello (1984) writes:

I call them *Prayer Groups* or, more accurately, *Contemplation Groups*. Contrary to common belief, there is such a thing as group contemplation. In fact, in certain circumstances, contemplation is practiced more fruitfully in a group than alone...If you plan to conduct a Contemplation Group and use this book as text, all you have to do is take the text of each exercise and read it slowly to the group and have the group follow the instructions you read to them (8).

Within the Catholic tradition is a beautiful practice of prayer that is simply united with the daily life of a Christian, rather than only being done in a set apart or devoted time. The legendary Catholic nun known for her generosity and devotion to Christ, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, stressed the importance of prayer in the daily life when she said:

Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at his disposition, and listening to his voice in the depths of our hearts (Gonzalez-Balado, 1996:9).

Reiterating prayer as simply being a part of life is the Catholic monk Brother Lawrence. For Brother Lawrence, like Mother Teresa, prayer was a simple and normal process of life:

The most effective way Brother Lawrence had for communicating with God was to simply do his ordinary work. He did this obediently, out of a pure love of God, purifying it as much as was humanly possible. He believed it was a serious mistake to think of our prayer time as being different from any other. Our actions should unite us with God when we are involved in our daily activities, just as our prayer unites us with Him in our quiet time (Lawrence, 1982:20-21).

9.4.2 Eastern Orthodox tradition resources

Uniquely differing from the Catholic tradition, within the Eastern Orthodox tradition are useful resources that are recommended to foster deeper devotion in the modern day Christian in their practicing the ascetic spiritual practice of prayer. Father Deacon Charles Joiner (2014) provides a concise definition of what it means to live a life of prayer in the Orthodox tradition, which comes highly recommended:

How do you pray? First, establish a regular time and a private place. You should have a specific rule for both morning and evening. Don't try to 'wing it.' This is not a relaxation exercise, but a path of communion with your God. You will benefit from having a specific set of guidelines that you follow each time with no excuses for shortcutting them. In your rule, incorporate standing, prostrations, kneeling, making the sign of the cross, reading, and at times singing. Use prayer books and written prayers. The Orthodox prayer books are filled with prayers that have been well-tested and used for hundreds of years. Prayer does not need to be a creative activity. Above all, you need to be sincere. Keep your awareness in your heart and concentrate on the words of the prayer. Once you establish a rule, always keep it. Work with your spiritual Father on this (5).

Deacon Joiner presents a synopsis of how Orthodox Christians are to pray and to what resources they are to utilize. There are numerous common prayer books that can be utilized within the Orthodox traditions, both Western and Eastern in nature, which can be recommended for prayer and devotion. For Eastern Orthodox Christians, one could follow the prayer rule and Liturgical year/calendar in the commonly accepted *The Orthodox Study Bible* (1997). If one desires a more scholarly oriented rule of prayer with a focus on the Orthodox saints and their commentary on Biblical passages, then the authoritative resource, *The Bible and the Holy Fathers for Orthodox: Daily Scripture Readings and Commentary for Orthodox Christians* (1990), can be used.

In utilizing the Liturgical calendar within their prayer rule, other specialized resources can be used for different periods in the Liturgical year (i.e. Advent, or Lent) or for those who hope to study further into a specific topic or area. One Orthodox resource that can be utilized during the time of Advent is *Daily Meditations and Prayers for the Christmas Advent Fast and Epiphany* by Presbytera Emily Harakas and Father Anthony Coniaris (2000). In incorporating the study of a specific niche area into an Orthodox Christian's prayer rule, one could incorporate unique daily readings. For those that are interested in the specific topic of marriage, *Path to Holiness: Lives of Married Saints* (1999), describes the lives of married saints and how learning about their lives can further one's own relationships as a married (or single) Christian. This work by David and Mary Ford (1999) emphasizes the importance and relevance for the modern day Christian to study the sacrament of marriage and to incorporate in their prayer rule the lives of these married Saints.

Unseen Warfare (1997) is also a recommended resource to incorporate into a Christian's prayer rule and daily devotional reading. This work focuses on spiritual combat within one's soul and provides practical guidance about topics of prayer such as:

Prayer and contemplation are closely joined together; and as in contemplation, so in prayer, a time comes when we must rise above the colourful imagination and the busy intellect, and approach God in 'pure prayer'. By this is meant a kind of prayer in which the mind does not run from image to image, or from one consideration to another, nor work out its prayer in a coherent texture of words, but stands still in unmoving attachment to God. The various elements of prayer, penitence, supplication, intercession, thanksgiving, adoration etc., are not separately express in successive sentences; they are all present at once in the unity this prayer (Scupoli, 1997:20).

Christ the Eternal Tao (1999) is a unique devotional reading that is recommended as it provides a unique Orthodox reading and devotional format of Lao Tzu's *Tao*

Teh Ching. For Christian mothers, *The Ascetic Lives of Mothers: A Prayer Book for Orthodox Moms* (2014), by Annalisa Boyd is a recommended source for mothers who want to further their discipleship. For Orthodox Christians who follow the Western-Rite Orthodox tradition, *St. Aidan's Prayer Book* (1999) or the *St. Ambrose Prayer Book* (2008) can be utilized. In the *St. Ambrose Prayer Book*, the importance of work being incorporated into a Christian's daily rule of prayer is emphasized:

This little devotional manual is published in response to a very profound need of Orthodox Christians who worship in the Western Rite. It is our hope that it will find a real home in the devotional literature of the Church. No one should suppose that it is intended to be the only such prayer book, or that it is intended to replace other books authorized for our use. The chief value of this book will be found its daily use a manual of private prayer and devotion (i.)

Within the Orthodox tradition, one of the main methods of prayer that can be recommended is the Jesus Prayer, on which this simple prayer has already been expounded in previous sections. Deacon Joiner (2014), in describing the transforming effects of incorporating this simple prayer in one's daily prayer rule in a meditative state, writes:

"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God. Have mercy on me a sinner".

This prayer has the potential to transform your consciousness and bring you closer to God. It is a prayer rooted deeply in the tradition of the Church. It is a prayer to be repeated over and over, many times. You can begin to develop the use of this prayer by incorporating a number of repetition in your daily prayer rule. A simple prayer, you can learn to say it everywhere and at any time. In fact, your aim should be to make it an unending prayer. In this way your whole life becomes a life of prayer (11).

It is recommended that the repetition of the Jesus Prayer should also be used in the amount that is appropriate for each individualized person. The prolific Orthodox theologian, St. Ignatius Brianchaninov (2012), writes of the use of prayer in the Orthodox tradition:

The quantity of prayer is determined for each person by the manner of his life and the amount of his strength of soul and body. The widow's two mites, which she brought to the temple and which constituted all her possessions, turned out to be greater on the scales of the just God than the significant offerings of the rich, which came from their abundance...You should think this way about prayer as well: assign yourself a quantity commensurate with your strength, remembering the wise instruction of the great teacher of ascetics: 'If you compel your body when it is weak to labors that exceed its strength, you will instill darkness upon darkness into your soul and bring greater confusion upon her' instead of benefit (2012:267).

The Jesus Prayer is a rather simple, hesychastic prayer that usually entails the phrase or variations of the words: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." This simple prayer used for centuries in the Eastern Orthodox Church has an origin that is as mysterious as the effects the prayer on those who practice it. This prayer has been endorsed for beginners as well as for advanced initiates. Hopko writes of such 'endorsement of the prayer' for all people, when he writes:

This type of often-repeated short invocation is a type of prayer endorsed by the Eastern tradition for beginners and initiates as well--even for the 'perfect'--as prayer of great power and value. The 'Prayer of Jesus,' for example, is used in this way as the simple prayer for beginners (you just have to do it, say the Fathers) and as the abiding prayer of the perfect (it continues of itself in an almost physical-biological way as the constant 'prayer without ceasing,' is the experience (of the Fathers) (Aumann J & Hopko T & Bloesch,

1967:150).

The earliest account to a version that is similar to today's Jesus Prayer is found in *On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* written by St. Diadochos of Photiki (400-ca.486), a work that can be found in *The Philokalia*. No one can definitively say where the Jesus Prayer originated from, but one could imagine it possible that one of the early Christians could have started using the prayer to help in their understanding of the Gospel with the goal of communing with God. The Jesus Prayer could have also been a formulated response to the Apostle Paul's call to the Christians at Thessalonica to "Pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5.17).

It has to be mentioned that there has been great debate over who exactly is permissible (or at least advised) to practice the Jesus Prayer by Orthodox leaders. Is the Jesus Prayer only meant for the use of ascetic monk, who only in combined with their personal spiritual practices and silence, can discover the true mysterious power of the prayer? Or can any non-monastic Christian utilize the Jesus Prayer in their prayer life to go deeper into a relationship with God? Presently, the overall general consensus within the Church that every Orthodox (and non-Orthodox) Christian should utilize the Jesus Prayer in their prayer life, given the right conditions. The ancient voice of St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) advised the ways that laypersons should practice the Jesus Prayer, when he writes:

Let no one think, my Christian Brethren, that only persons in holy orders, or monks, are obliged to pray unceasingly and at all times, but not laymen. No, no! It is the duty of all us Christians to remain always in prayer...as is commanded by the Apostle Paul to all Christians in general: Pray without ceasing (I Thes. 5:17); and as the Prophet David says of himself, regardless of his being a king and having the care of all his kingdom: I behold the Lord always before me (Ps. 15:8), meaning I always mentally see the Lord before me in my prayer. And Gregory the Theologian teaches all Christians and tells them that we should more often remember the name of God in prayer than inhale air (Nikodemos, 2014).

Father James Coles, a modern voice in the Orthodox Church, explains the use of the Jesus Prayer for the layperson in this way:

Clearly, the Jesus Prayer is not only for monks. We are told that the prayer is for cab drivers, social workers, engineers, teachers, social media experts, psychiatrists, etc. We use the Jesus Prayer to do God's will, not our own bidding. Anyone, everyone can say the Jesus Prayer. The only prerequisites are to keep the Commandments, be a living member of the Church, and to have a guide (Coles, 2014).

Similarly to the advice given by Father Coles on using the Jesus Prayer, Kallistos Ware offers his recommendation that practitioners of the Jesus Prayer should exercise great caution in their practice:

The Invocation of the Name is a prayer of the utmost simplicity, accessible to every Christian, but it leads at the same time to the deepest mysteries of contemplation. Anyone proposing to say the Jesus Prayer for lengthy periods of time each day – and, still more, anyone intending to use breathing control and other physical exercises in conjunction with the Prayer – undoubtedly stands in need of a starets, of an experienced spiritual guide. Such guides are extremely rare in our day. But those who have no personal contact with a starets may still practise the Prayer without any fear, so long as they do so only for limited periods – initially, for no more than ten or fifteen minutes at a time – and so long as they make no attempt to interfere with the body's natural rhythms (Ware, 2010).

It can be concluded from Bishop Kallistos Ware's advice, that if a layperson is to practice the Jesus Prayer, it is essential that he or she have a spiritual father (*starets*) to help in guiding the disciple into the mysteries of the prayer and the practice of the prayer in limited durations of time. A practical introduction for the layperson to the practice of the Jesus Prayer is described in the Russian *Way of*

a *Pilgrim*, which explains an unknown layperson's travels to learn unceasing prayer.

So when does a layperson go about practicing the Jesus Prayer in their normal day to day lives? Fr. Coles provides advice to Christians on how they should practice the prayer:

... [It is] recommended in the morning, following our prayer rule, for some period of time, perhaps 10 or 15 minutes. If that is impossible, then sometime before noon, or in the evening. This formal' use of might be called 'the prayer. The second form of the Jesus Prayer is the 'free' use of the prayer. This means at any and all other times of the day, or night. This is especially true for the semi-automatic tasks such as driving, doing dishes, walking, being unable to sleep, etc. The Jesus Prayer is notably useful in time of extreme concern or upset...when alone, we might find it helpful to pray the Jesus Prayer, out loud. This can help lower the distraction level (Coles, 2014):

On how a layperson (or a monastic) should practice the Jesus Prayer, St. Theophan the Recluse, offers to Orthodox Christians these simple instructions:

The prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me" is an oral prayer like any other. There is nothing special about it in itself, but it receives all its power from the state of mind in which it is made...The various methods described by the Fathers (sitting down, making prostrations, and the other techniques used when performing this prayer) are not suitable for everyone: indeed without a personal director they are actually dangerous. It is better not to try them. There is just one method which is obligatory for all: to stand with the attention in the heart. All other things are beside the point, and do not lead to the crux of the matter...It is said of the fruit of this prayer, that there is nothing higher in the world. This is wrong. As if it were some talisman! Nothing in the words of the prayer and their uttering can alone bring forth its fruit. All fruit can be received without

this prayer, and even without any oral prayer, but merely by directing the mind and heart towards God (Theophan, 2014).

It is commonly understood within Orthodoxy that the Christian layperson should practice the Jesus Prayer by having intentions toward the right purpose. In regards to that goal or purpose of using the Jesus Prayer, St. Theophan the Recluse contends that the purpose is to keep the mind on God and should be pursued fervently by both monastic and lay Christians alike:

So this is what the Jesus Prayer is. It is one among various short prayers, oral like all others. Its purpose is to keep the mind on the single thought of God. Whoever has formed the habit of this Prayer and uses it properly, really does remember God incessantly (Theophan, 2014).

Orthodox Christians also pair the repeating of the Jesus Prayer with meditation. Meditation in the Eastern Orthodox tradition usually is performed in one of three different ways: meditation on Holy Scripture; Psalmody; or sitting in silence. Orthodox priest and theologian, Father Thomas Hopko, describes the three meditation styles in this way:

Meditation normally begins by reading from the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God. This is called in the spiritual tradition *lectio divina*. It is the slow and attentive reading of the Bible, or perhaps the writings of the church fathers and saints, not for the purpose of gaining information, but for the purpose of communion with God.

Psalmody, done either alone or in the churchly assembly...the person does not try to think about each word and phrase. Rather he cuts off all reasoning, and opens his heart to the Lord, uniting 'his mouth with his mind,' (St. Benedict) and allowing the word of God to be planted within him to blossom in his soul with the fruits of the Spirit.

There is also the type of meditation and contemplation done totally in silence, without any words or images or thoughtful activity at all, not even psalmody. The person merely sits in silence, often in the presence of holy icons, and emptying his mind of all thoughts, imaginations and desires, listens to God in silence, the divine “language of the Kingdom of heaven” (St. Isaac of Syria) (Hopko, 1984:140-1).

9.4.3 Protestant tradition resources

Within the Protestant traditions are numerous methods and resources that can be recommended for the modern Christian to assist them in going deeper into the spiritual practices of prayer and meditation. One well-known Protestant author, Richard Foster, has written a dynamic resource entitled: *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (1992). In this work, Foster, with a background primarily in the Quaker tradition, explores what prayer is and how it relates to the heart of God. He describes his book and the action of prayer in this way:

This book is written to help you explore this ‘many-splendored’ heart of God. It is not about definitions of prayer or terminology for prayer or arguments about prayer, though all of these have their place. Nor is it about methods and techniques of prayer, though I am sure we will discuss both. No, this book is about a love relationship: an enduring, continuing, growing love relationship with the great God of the universe. And overwhelming love invites a response. Loving is the syntax of prayer. To be effective prayers, we need to be effective lovers (1992:3).

In this book, Foster provides twenty-one different methods or ways to pray ranging from “Simple Prayer” to “The Prayer of Adoration,” and other prayer styles such as “Contemplative Prayer” and “Healing Prayer.”

One form of meditation that would be recommend which Foster puts forth in another one of his works, *Celebration of Discipline* (1998), is the “re-collection”

method which has its roots in the Quaker tradition. Foster describes the method of “re-collection” prayer and meditation practice in the following way:

The following is a brief exercise to aid you in “re-collection” that is simply called ‘palms down, palms up.’ Begin by placing your palms down as a symbolic indication of your desire to turn over any concerns you may have to God. Inwardly you may pray, ‘Lord, I give to you my anger toward John. I release my fear of my dentist appointment this morning. I surrender my anxiety over not having enough money to pay the bills this month. I release my frustration over trying to find a baby-sitter for tonight.’ Whatever it is that weighs on your mind or is a concern to you, just say, ‘palms down.’ Release it. You may even feel a certain sense of release in your hands. After several moments of surrender, turn your palms up as a symbol of your desire to receive from the Lord (1998:31).

The Protestant tradition possesses a long tradition in the utilizing of a Common Prayer book or daily devotional reading, just as in the Orthodox and Catholic traditions, with the goal of fostering more regimented times of daily prayer. Foster has provided a practical resource of daily readings from Christians of a number of differing traditions, which is entitled: *Devotional Classics: Selected Readings for Individuals & Groups* (1993). In describing the importance and method of incorporating devotional readings into one’s Christian practice, Foster writes:

There is a technical word for this kind of reading and it might be helpful for you to know it---*lectio divina*, ‘divine reading.’ This is a kind of reading in which the mind descends into the heart, and both are drawn into the love and goodness of God. We are doing more than reading words; we are seeking ‘the Word exposed in the words,’ to use the phrase of Karl Barth. We are endeavoring to go beyond information to formation---to being formed and molded by what we read. We are listening with the heart to the Holy within. This prayerful reading, as we might call it, transforms us and strengthens us (1993:2-3).

Other common prayer books found within the Protestant tradition that are recommended are two daily devotional books from the Bruderhof tradition that have a great level of practicality. One of the more modern and highly regarded Bruderhof writers is Johann Christoph Arnold who has authored a splendid devotion which is entitled, *Seeking Peace: Notes and Conversations along the way* (1998). In *Seeking Peace*, Arnold provides a daily devotional that looks to foster a peaceful spirit within the Christian reader, by helping the reader to find peace within themselves, with others, and with God by touching on different aspects of life such as “surrender,” “prayer,” and “simplicity.” One of Johanna Arnold’s relatives, Emmy Arnold, also has authored a daily devotional that is recommended and is entitled, *Inner Words for Every Day of the Year* (1975). This small devotional provides selected daily readings from famous writings authored within the Bruderhof tradition.

Two other Common Prayers that are recommended from the Protestant tradition are The Episcopal Church’s *Book of Common Prayer* (1979) and *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* (2010). The Episcopal Church’s *Book of Common Prayer* is recommended as it is arranged in more of a High Church tradition and it provides a wide range of daily and situational prayer options. The dated version of the book is recommended as following editions contain stark changes in the area of Christology. *Common Prayer*, authored by Shane Claiborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and Enuma Okoro, provides an essential resources for those who might find themselves disenfranchised by church institutions or more social justice oriented. In describing the aim of the book, the authors write:

Whether you are over-churched or under-churched, a proud evangelical, a recovering evangelical, or not evangelical at all; whether you are high church, low church, or no church, a skeptic or a Pentecostal; whether you have found a community or have burned out on community; this book is for you.

This is a different kind of book. It’s not a book you pick up and read straight through. In fact, this book is not designed to be read alone.

It is a book filled with songs, prayers, ideas, and memories that are meant to be spoken aloud and shared together in some form of community. That community may be our biological family or a small group of friends. IT could be a gather of folks in your public housing unit or dorm room, in your village or cul-de-sac. The early church met in homes and as congregations in local assemblies. Whatever form your community takes, this is a book about 'we,' not 'me' (2010: 9).

The final resource that is recommended is an ecumenical minded daily devotional, *The Journey Toward God: In the Footsteps of the Great Spiritual Writers---Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox* (2000). *The Journey* bridges the three main traditions and is a highly reputable resource that will challenge the modern Christian believer in a number of areas as they read through daily devotions of ancient and modern Christian authors.

In regards to the spiritual practices of visions and miracles, the recommendation that is offered to modern day Christian is to use extreme caution in seeking great aspirations in these specific ascetic areas. The Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh are spiritual legends for a reason and it is true that visions and miracles were an intricate part of their lives. Not only were Singh and the fathers known for the recorded visions and miracles that they witnessed, arguably more importantly, they were well known for their immense level of devotion to daily prayer and gratitude to others. To seek visions and miracles, while still in an immature state, without first proceeding to foster a life of prayer, love and sacrifice, seems to be unwise. St. Ignatius Brianchaninov offers a warning for those who desire to seek visions of Christ, saints, or angels, a warning that can be applied to those who also seek other types of visions or being a part of miracles:

If at the time of your prayer there appears to you sensibly or is depicted to you mentally the form of Christ, or of an angel, or of some St.---in a word, if there is any kind of image, in no way should you accept this manifestation as a true one. Pay no attention

whatever to it, neither enter into conversation with it. Otherwise, you will without fail be subjected to deceit and the most powerful harm will be inflicted upon your soul, something that has happened to many. Before he has been renewed by the Holy Spirit, a man is incapable of contact with saints. As one who is still in the realm of the fallen spirits, captive and enslaved by them, he is capable of seeing only them. And often, noticing in him a high opinion of himself and self-deception, they appear to him in the form of holy angels, or in the form of Christ Himself, for the destruction of his soul (2012:269-70)

It seems that a Christian who has a high level of maturity in their relationship with Christ, the instances of visions and miracles will appear in their life unexpectedly. Conversely, a novice in ascetic practices should believe that visions and miracles exist within the faith, but should assume extreme caution in actively seeking such lofty goals of seeing and experiencing visions and miracles.

When making recommendations in the ascetic spiritual practice of self-deprivation, recommendations from the three traditions can also be provided. Similar to pursuing visions and miracles, with the spiritual practice of fasting, a modern day Christian should use a level of caution when fasting as different individuals have various thresholds in refraining from eating, drinking, and sleeping. If one has the desire to fast one should consider Abba Pambo's recommendation that it is "better that one should eat every day, but only a little, so as not to be satisfied" as was previously discussed. When fasting it is recommended that one consult their doctor and their pastor or spiritual father to see if and how the practice can be appropriated for the individual.

One area within the spiritual practice of self-deprivation, for which the modern day Christians can strive, is to live a greater life of simplicity in regards to what they choose to own, who, and what they choose to support, and to the level of luxuries that they allow themselves. Even in this day, some Christians are called to live a life of monasticism, which may resemble to some extent the lives of the Desert Fathers. For those that are called to live in such a sacrificial way, to

passionately seek out those monastic outlets within the Catholic, Orthodox, and even the Protestant contexts is highly recommended. For those that are not called to monasticism within the three traditions of Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism, options towards greater self-denial and simplicity are still available.

There are numerous resources that can be recommended in the area of learning to live a more simple life in order to foster greater charity towards others and greater devotion to Christ. Four main books that are recommended are: *Simple Spirituality* (2008) by Christopher L. Heuertz; *The Wisdom of Stability* (2010) and *God's Economy* (2009) by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove; *Freedom of Simplicity* (1989) by Richard Foster; and *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics* (2008) by Ched Myers. How simple living is manifested for each individual looks uniquely different depending on a person and their respective context. Foster writes of that difficulty to pinpoint what exactly the practice of simple living looks like for everyone:

If simplicity were merely a matter of externals, things would be quite easy. We would then need only to formulate the system (no small trick to be sure) that defines that boundaries---Christian faithfulness would allow us to live in this income bracket but not that one, to purchase this house but not that one. We would have a clearly definable arrangement, even if it would need periodic adjustment to keep abreast of inflation. It would be clear who is in and who is out, who is faithful and who is not. Presto, a new pharisaism. Very fine, thank you (1989:8).

One option that is recommended to the modern Christian, in order to foster a greater level of self-denial and simple living, is to consider joining a religious intentional community. Within these communities one will be challenged in living simply by sharing resources with others they live with as well as sharing with those that are impoverished within their surrounding community. One will also learn tools to enhance their ability to solve conflicts within themselves and with others. Remarking about the importance of community in the self-sacrificial life of

a modern Christian, Trappist Monk Basil Pennington describes it in this way:

In a world where the gulf between the haves and the have-nots is growing ever wider we need to again be forcefully and persistently confronted with the ideals of the early Christian community. It is certainly a scandal when a person who professes to be a disciple of Jesus goes off to his bed well fed, and with food in his larder, while a fellow human hungers within his reach. It is certainly a scandal when a person professes to be a disciple of Jesus and uses his God-given talents only to augment his own wealth---while fathers cry out for an opportunity to earn a living for their children (Arnold, 1995: ix-x).

A modern Christian could choose to join an intentional Christian community for a short period, such as for a term of a year or two years. Numerous short-term intentional Christian community programs exist such as opportunities with organizations like Jesuit Volunteer Corps (Catholic), The Lived Seminary (Orthodox), or the Mennonite Voluntary Service (Protestant).

If one is called to live in a more permanent setting where intentionality is coupled with worship and simple living, there are a number of options that are recommended. Within the Orthodox tradition, one such community that is attempting to foster such practices is that community around St. John's Orthodox Cathedral in Eagle River, Alaska. In describing the process by which the St. John's Orthodox community was formed into the community that it is today, Father Marc Dunaway describes the community's formation in this way:

Thirty-five years ago a 'call for community' was part of the essential beginnings of our church in Eagle River, Alaska. What we meant by that 'call,' we said, was to make the church a priority in your life and to live near the church, ideally within walking distance. IN this way we hoped to give practical expression to the Christian call for love, forgiveness, accountability, and care for one another (Cook, 2010:7).

Another recommendation to consider for those from a Protestant tradition background is to consider joining a Christian intentional community like The Bruderhof or a New Monastic community. The Bruderhof, also known as the Society of Brothers or Church Communities International, originated in 1920 in Germany under the leadership of Eberhard Arnold (1883-1935). The Bruderhof faith emphasizes radical discipleship, community, pacifism, and the Sermon on the Mount teachings as the center of the Bruderhof daily life. The Bruderhof describe one facet of their emphasis on community and shared resources in this way:

Bruderhof members take lifetime vows of obedience and poverty. Anyone who wishes to become a member gives away his or her property before joining, and contributes his or her talents to stand on an equal footing with all brothers and sisters (Bruderhof: "Life," 2013).

The Bruderhof also emphasize community-centered education for children, and the incorporation of the elderly and disabled into communal activities and work. The Bruderhof communities are comprised of people from an array of ethnic and social backgrounds who reject and restrict private property, and instead share common dining and worship spaces. Living in modest apartments creating a village-like setting, the Bruderhof aim to foster a communal atmosphere (Kraybill, 2010:35). "Today the Bruderhof consists of over 2,600 men, women, and children living in twenty-three communal settlements of varying sizes on four continents" in the United States, Paraguay, England, Germany, and Australia (Bruderhof: "About," 2013).

Intentional Christian communities have a diverse and rich history that arguably began with the early Christian communities in the first century AD. Mennonite-Catholic scholar Ivan J. Kauffman identifies intentional Christians as:

...[T]he people who throughout history have read or heard the stories of Jesus from the Gospels, and have found themselves wanting, often passionately, to follow the example of the first

generation Christians (2009: xvii).

Intentional Christian communities have been a major part of the life of the church throughout Christian history, and communities have been birthed around such devout leaders as St. Anthony of the Desert, the desert mothers and fathers of Egypt, St. Benedict, Martin of Tours, Bernard of Clairvaux, Martin Luther, the Anabaptists, and the New Monasticism movement of today (Kauffman, 2009).

In the work, *Inhabiting the Church - Biblical Wisdom for New Monasticism*, the authors, Jon Stock, Tim Otto, and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, contend that four main attributes comprise the wisdom that Benedictine intentional Christian communities have practiced: vows, conversion, obedience, and stability. Jon Stock contends in *Inhabiting the Church- Biblical Wisdom for New Monasticism* in his essay on the topic of vows, when he writes:

We might even call the practice of vow making prophetic, in that vow making will often prove to tell the truth to the world around us, and in that vow making will never fail to tell the truth to us who enter into vows (2006:26).

The practice of taking a vow was a “public engagement of a person’s honor” (Stock, 2007:8) around such promises of celibacy, poverty, or another common communal practice.

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove defines the second attribute of intentional community in the Benedictine tradition as conversion, meaning, “turning against your own will, learning to deny the false self and to find your true self in Christ” (2008:52). This conversion act is indicative of a dramatic change in one’s life. The third attribute of intentional community is obedience. When one practices obedience to each other and to spiritual leaders in an intentional communal context, as Tim Otto describes it, obedience becomes like following a “good map, (which) we will, I believe, find ourselves walking with family toward home” (2008:85). The final attribute of Benedictine intentional Christian community is stability. The practice of stability could be defined as “taking a vow to stay in one place or to live under

one rule for the rest of your life” (Stock, 2007:87). The vow of stability is an essential part of intentional Christian communal life, as it becomes the framework for commonly held rules and practices.

Churches and communities within the New Monasticism have commonly held characteristics or marks that help guide the communities. The Rutba House, a New Monastic community, have identified some of these commonly held characteristics in their book titled, *School(s) for Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism*. The 12 marks that represent the core beliefs and practices of those that a part of the New Monastic movement, which emphasize the relocation to abandoned places of the empire, the sharing of economic resources with fellow community members and the needy, and offering hospitality to the stranger (Rutba House, 2005). Through these 12 marks, those within the New Monasticism movement believe that they are a part of God’s plan to help redeem the world by being a peculiar group of Christ-loving people (Wilson-Hartgrove, 2008:34).

If the modern Christian finds himself unable to uproot themselves in order to join a Christian intentional community then he or she should consider finding a cell-group or a simple-church that is more regionally located near their home in order to foster greater intimacy with Christ and others. It is recommended that by grafting one’s self into a simple church or a cell-group one can begin to obtain characteristics of the monastic spiritual practices such as greater accountability, group study of scriptures, and greater intimacy in discipleship.

The simple church or home church tradition (also known as “organic church”) is a movement founded on the practices of Christians gathering together for worship and discipleship in a more simplistic context compared to the traditional church model. Author Frank Viola (2009:125) argues that in the United States one million Christians leave the institutional church annually and that a lot of those Christians are joining simple churches to preserve their faith. The leaders involved in the simple and organic church tradition would argue that before the year AD 321 the early followers of Jesus met in simple, house church formats, from whence the movement draws its origin (Dale T, Dale F, 2009:25). Within the United States

context, Tony and Felicity Dale (2009:27) contend that in the 1970's Christians began meeting in their homes in reaction to problems they saw in their traditional churches. Today, scholars and leaders, such as Tony and Felicity Dale, David Watson, George Barna, Neil Cole, Wolfgang Simson, and Rad Zdero are teaching the methods of a simple church model to Christians in the United States and in numerous other countries.

Within the simple and organic churches, the main focus of the movement is reproducing disciples, leaders, churches, and movements. In order to reproduce, simple churches focus on four core beliefs to guide their individual churches (Dale T, Dale F, 2009:71). The first core belief is learning from the Bible. Simple churches practice learning from the Bible, not by utilizing a leader with professional biblical training, but instead disciple Christians to learn Scripture and apply it to their everyday lives (Dale T, Dale F, 2009:72). One simple study pattern that is utilized by simple churches is in the teaching of a method of studying the Bible through three teachable symbols: a question mark, a light bulb, and an arrow (Dale T, Dale F, 2009:72). The second core belief of simple churches is food and fellowship. Through the belief that eating together, just as Jesus ate with his disciples, simple churches incorporate this tradition into their church practice. Fellowship is the third core belief practiced by simple churches because sharing life with other believers is essential in the discipleship process. The last core belief for simple churches is the importance of prayer as the foundation for all of the church's guidance.

A simple church model varies in size but usually consists of fifteen to twenty adults that meet together in homes, coffee shops, or any other location. Neil Cole (1999:49) contends that there is five core principles for a simple church context to achieve its goal of changing the lives of people: a community of at least three people; confidentiality; accountability; flexibility and reproducibility. If a simple church actualizes the aforementioned core principles and the numbers of participants grow, the church then multiplies to form another church usually after twenty participants. Because of this simple form of church, in countries like China and India, hundreds of thousands have converted to Christianity (Dale F, 2010:6). After churches continue to multiply, a network of churches is then established,

where networks come together for regular network celebrations, special times for teachings, local mini-celebrations, or very few celebrations at all (Dale T, Dale F, 2009:213)

A cell church utilizes cell, micro, or small groups as an essential part of the way in which the church follows Jesus. Churches utilizing small group meetings are those that contain three or more people who meet together on a weekly basis. Cell group churches vary tremendously in regards to a standard format or attributes that a cell group contains. Most cell groups emphasize the meeting of believers in a small group format, as well as the incorporation of a corporate worship service, in a more traditional setting (Comiskey, 2007:19). Cell groups can be affiliated with particular denominations or have no denominational affiliation at all.

Because cell groups are usually connected to churches with particular theological traditions, cell groups can vary in beliefs similarly to simple churches. The consistent belief framework found within most cell groups is that the meeting time and space should center around: prayer, Bible study, and fellowship (Comiskey, 2007:19). Victory Christian Center, a church that successfully incorporates cell churches into its structure, have “special prayer workshop cell that has a main focus of praying for specific concerns like missions, international outreach, and special prayer requests.

Fellowship, or community, becomes a core principle in a cell group as it allows believers to minister to each other as the priesthood of all believers (Comiskey, 2007:19). Cell groups are traditionally flexible with regards to a cell’s structure, especially in a cell’s “homogeneity, lesson material, order of a cell meeting, location of the meeting, and degree of participation” (Comiskey, 2007:61). One format of cells is called the “G-12” format where leaders oversee twelve cell participants and are also part of a cell comprised of twelve cell leaders under the auspice of the corresponding church pastor (Hurtson, 2001:41). Cell groups also have “life-cycles,” which either means the cell will grow and multiply, or the cell will decrease in number and eventually “die.” Leaders within cell groups are usually invited, trained and/or become an apprentice to another cell leader before

they become the sole leader(s) over a cell group.

9.5 The validity of the conclusions

Regarding the validity of the aforementioned conclusions, much effort was employed in order to avoid errors in the research methodology and interpretation of collected data from the selected passages. In order to avoid the error of unsupported generalizations regarding the ascetic practices of Sundar Singh and Desert Fathers, conclusions were substantiated using an appropriate amount of literary analysis, and resulting interpretations were made with competent efforts to avoid the fallacies of appealing to emotions, “Argumentum ad Hominem” (argument against the man), or the putting forth of illogical conclusions. No errors were committed by inappropriately appealing to authorities or experts outside of scholarly studies or personal experience of the realms of Sadhu Sundar Singh or monasticism with the exception of consulting a modern day Coptic monastery in order gain their “blessing” and practical advice.

9.6 Contribution of this research to practical theology

The research into the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh and the Desert Fathers has provided a significant contribution to the field of pastoral ministry. Although, it should be acknowledged that this dissertation does not claim to hold universal applicability to the entire breadth of practical theology; instead, it contains one unique facet that can contribute to the greater field. Acknowledging that the study was confined to narrowing its research to a specific field of spiritual practices found within particular writings of a concise group of individuals as well as a literature review that focused on the history and theology of the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh, to the author’s knowledge, such research has never been attempted in the comparing of the ascetic theology of the Desert Fathers and Sundar Singh.

In addition, the research affirmed the suppositions of the researcher that in the ascetic areas of prayer and meditation, the greatest similarities in ascetic practices of the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh would be found in this

researched area. Another presupposition that was also found to be valid is that the greatest marked differences in the practices of the Desert Fathers and Sadhu Sundar Singh would come in the area of visions and miracles. These findings logically fit within the parameters of the field of practical theology. It is the hope and desire of the researcher that the findings of this research, the proposed conclusions and recommendations, will facilitate more effective pastoral ministry and a deeper desire to further the engaging of spiritual practices in the larger Christian community.

Since one objective of doctoral level research is to contribute new data to the fund of general knowledge it is the opinion of the researcher that this objective has been achieved. Previously from the literary review research was found that: (1) no endeavor has been made to thoroughly investigate the ascetic spiritual practices of Sadhu Sundar Singh from an unbiased standpoint; (2) and no research has been carried out to compare Singh's ascetic practices to those of the Desert Fathers. The combination of these two components allowed for the research to provide a contribution of new contextual data to the field of practical theology.

9.7 Conclusion

Clad in the garb of a Hindu holy man, a Sadhu set out on his final journey in the year of 1929 and shortly thereafter mysteriously disappearing near the Himalayas. That sadhu, Sundar Singh, was known around the world and inspired others through his preaching, writings and legends of his meditating for hours, his acts of sacrificial benevolence, and his experiencing of visions and miracles. In the 3rd century in Egypt, other holy men like St. Anthony, began a monastic Christian movement, that had also practiced withdrawing from society, hesychasm, charity and forgiveness, and scripture recitation, which beckoned thousands to join them. In the identifying and analyzing of the spiritual practices of these holy men of God, a greater depth of knowledge can be gained in the understanding of the often deemed mysterious attributes of the Christian faith in hopes that the spiritual aspirant and reader can improve their own spiritual practices in order increase their intimacy with God.

APPENDIX

Time of the desert monasticism movement:

- c. 251 Anthony is born; Paul of Thebes begins living in the desert
- c. 271 Anthony takes up “the discipline,”
- 286 Anthony withdraws into his fort
- 306 Anthony emerges from his fort
- 249–251 Decius begins persecution of Christians; many in Egypt flee to the desert
- 313 Anthony withdraws to the Inner Mountain, near the Red Sea
- c. 320 Pachomius founds the first monastic community at Tabennesi
- c. 330 Athanasius flees authorities, hiding with monks in the Thebaid; Amoun moves to Nitria; Marcarius the Great begins a monastery in Scetis
- 338 Anthony visits Alexandria and Nitria; founding of the Cells, a monastic community near Nitria
- 340 Athanasius, Ammonius the Tall, and Isidore visit Rome, and the monastic ideal spreads into the West
- c. 350 John of Lycopolis begins his 48 years as a recluse
- 356 Anthony dies
- 357 Athanasius writes his *Life of Anthony*
- 313 Edict of Milan gives official toleration to Christians
- 325 Constantine calls for the Council of Nicea to unify church and empire
- 328 Athanasius becomes bishop of Alexandria
- 383 Evagrius moves to Nitria
- 385 Cassian and Germanus arrive in Egypt
- 388 Palladius visits Alexandria, Nitria, and Cellia
- 391–2 Monks help destroy the Temple of Sarapis in Alexandria
- 394 Seven monks from Jerusalem visit Egyptian monks
- 399 Theophilus turns against the teachings of Origen
- 400 Synod at Alexandria condemns Origenism; Tall Brothers and others exiled from Egypt
- 403 The Synod of the Oak condemns Tall Brothers and John

Chrysostom; exiled monks return to their monasteries
380 Theodosius I makes Christianity the official religion of the empire
381 Council of Constantinople reaffirms Nicene Creed
386 Augustine converts after hearing about Anthony
404 Jerome translates the *Pachomian Rule* into Latin
407–8 First devastation of Scetis by Berber tribes
419–20 Palladius writes *Lausiac History*, a key source for this era
420 Cassian begins writing his *Institutes* and *Conferences*
c. 500 Benedict of Nursia withdraws to a cave to begin the monastic life

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