

This Kind Only Comes Out by Prayer and Fasting': Prayer and Fasting as Ritual Efficacy

The practice of prayer and fasting can be shown to be a ritual process in use during the second century CE. In early Christian literature of this time, fasting and prayer is accompanied with decision making, but also in response to situations of social and psychological pressure. This paper will examine the phenomenon in the apocryphal Acts of Peter and Acts of Paul and note how it explains the widely attested variant of Mark 9.29 and may help explain other incidents in the gospels (e.g. John 5). The widespread acknowledgement of this process points to an important aspect of early Christianity. Faced with crisis situations, early Christians needed the human satisfaction of a ritual they could rely on and invoke in their needs. This practice not only sheds light on their magical thinking, but also shows their attitude to prayer and worship.