

The Christian baptismal ceremony was at first quite simple; by the beginning of the third century it included complex anti-demonic rites. Henry Ansgar Kelly here describes the evolution of the rites of baptism from New Testament times to the present day and explores the impact of demonological theories on Christian liturgy. Kelly begins by identifying the nature and origins of the evil spirits that are referred to in the New Testament, which proved to be major subjects of speculation and theological development by the Church Fathers. He then traces the history both of Christian demonology and of the initiation rituals, clearly illustrating their parallel evolution and their interaction. In his analysis, Kelly examines not only the direct expression of demonological theory in the original ceremonies but also the symbolic reinterpretation of theoretically untenable rituals into allegorical dramas. An astute and ambitious work, *The Devil at Baptism* covers all the anti-demonic rites of the catechumenate and baptismal services and compares developments in East and West since the emergence of Christianity. It will be essential reading for anyone interested in the development of Christian liturgy in particular and in the history of religion in general.

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