

The Devil Is Missing From New Church of England Baptism Service

The Church of England has been accused of “dumbing down” the baptism service following the introduction of an alternative liturgy in which parents and godparents need not repent of their “sins” or reject “the devil.”

In the traditional version of the service, parents and godparents are asked: “Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?” and “Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbor?”

In the alternative version, now being tested in 400 churches, parents are instead asked to “reject evil and all its many forms and all its empty promises.”

Writing in the *Mail* on Sunday, former Bishop of Rochester Michael Nazir-Ali said the new service is part of the “constant dumbing down of Christian teaching.”

“It is best to call a halt to this well-meant effort before it further reduces the fullness of the Church’s faith to easily swallowed sound bites,” said Nazir-Ali.

A limited trial aimed at making the baptism service more acceptable to people who do not believe in a physical devil, sin or the need to repent was approved by the church’s governing body, the General Synod, at the end of 2012.

It followed a request from clergy in Liverpool that the baptism service should be held in culturally appropriate and accessible language.

The trial version ends at Easter (April 20); the alternative texts have no formal status until they are approved by the

General Synod.

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