



THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST.

THIS plate is copied from the centre-piece of the dome of the baptistery at Ravenna, which was built and decorated A.D. 454. John the Baptist is standing on the brink of the Jordan, holding a vessel from which he pours water on the head of the Saviour, who is standing in the water. Over His head is the descending dove, a symbol of the Holy Ghost. The mythological figure to the left of our Saviour represents, according to the custom of the ancients, the river Jordan. The Catacombs near Rome, which were the hiding-places of Christians during the early persecutions, contain many representations of our Lord's baptism similar to the above. Rev. W. H. Withrow, in his recent and excellent work on the Catacombs, gives a number of these figures, and on page 535 he says: "The testimony of the Catacombs respecting the mode of baptism, as far as it extends, is strongly in favour of *aspersion or affusion*. All their pictured representations of the rite indicate this mode, for which alone the early fonts seem adapted; *nor is there any early art evidence of baptismal immersion*." No picture in the world older than the sixteenth century represents our Lord as being baptized by "dipping." (See pp. 44-47.)