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Holy Baptism.

Written for the "Church Observer" by the
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A recent writer of our sister Church in the U. S. after a most exhaustive examination of the symbols and figurative language applied to Christian Baptism in our N. T., sums up the result of his examination thus:

"Therefore, after a rigid examination of all that the New Testament contains on the subject, we affirm, that there is not a precept, example, or allusion from which an undoubted inference for immersion as the mode of Christian Baptism can be deduced. Not one that any impartial or legal mind will admit, can be made the basis of an invariable law to bind the judgment and consciences of men."

I proceed to examine the testimony of history. Baptists are in the habit of making the broad assertion that "immersion was the universal practice of the Church for fifteen hundred years."

Let us see. Let us start from the time of the Reformation, and work backward to the Apostolic age.

In A. D., 1536, Calvin drew up a formula for the administration of the Sacraments in the Church at Geneva. In the Order of Baptism, we find this direction: "Then the Minister of Baptism pours water on the infant, saying I baptize thee in the Name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

In his "Institutes" Calvin writes

"The difference is of no moment, whether he that is baptized be dipped all over, and if so, whether thrice or once, or whether he be only wetted with water poured on him."

In 1422, one hundred years before the Reformation, Lynwood, the Dean of Arches under Henry V in his account of the English Constitution, speaks of Baptism by *pouring*, and *sprinkling*, as alike valid with *dipping*.

In 1380, Wickliffe, Rector of Lutterworth, and commonly called, "The Morning Star of the Reformation" says, "Nor is it material whether they be dipped once or thrice, or water be poured on their heads: but it must be done according to the custom of the place where one dwells."

Advancing onward another century towards Apostolic times, we come to the Synod held at Angiers in France, in A. D. 1275, which on the subject of Baptism directs that "The infant be dipped thrice, or the water poured on him three times, according to the general custom of the Church."

In A. D., 1255, Thomas Aquinas, the great Scholastic Doctor in Italy, writes, "Water is used in the Sacrament of Baptism for the purpose of corporeal ablution by which the interior ablution from sins is signified: and ablution with water can be made, not only by immersion but by aspersion, or affusion"

Assculpture, carvings, and paintings, cannot be affected by translations, but speak the same language to every age and to every nation, it may be well to see, as

we travel upwards through the Apostolic age, what the representations of Christian art teach respecting the mode of administering Holy Baptism.

In the work of the Rev. Dr. Hodge of Maryland on "Baptism, its subjects and modes," several representations of the mode of administering the Sacrament of Baptism are given: They run from the tenth up to the third century.

In a plate, preserved at Rome, the work of Greek artists of ninth century, there is a representation of the baptism of a boy outside the Church: the boy is nearly unclothed, and the priest is represented as pouring water from a pitcher, on the boy's head.

The next plate in Dr. Hodges' work represents the mode of administering Baptism in the eighth and seventh centuries. On one side of the plate we see the candidate kneeling down and praying by a bath of water; and a hand issues from the cloud above him to denote the acquiescence of heaven in his petitions. On the other side of the plate we see Baptism administered by pouring water out of a pitcher on persons who are kneeling on the ground, and not immersed at all.

The third plate in Dr. Hodges' work takes us back in the stream of Church history to the sixth and fifth centuries—The picture represents the Baptism of a heathen King and Queen. They are kneeling in a large bath, partially unclothed, and with their crowns on. The minister who is baptizing them is represented as pouring water on their heads from a pitcher.