

Bagatti tends to assume that submersion was the norm, but he does not discuss this in terms of the measurements he provides and these do indicate that in many instances it was impossible. At Eleona the water could scarcely have reached above the ankles, at Bersabea just above the calf and at Garisim, el-Merd and Khlrbet Malehat'ha close to the knee.

A parallel situation is to be seen in Egypt and North Africa. At el-Flousiyeh the font of the North Church is, as in Syria, a shallow basin in a small apse; while in the South Church it is only 50 centimetres deep, but in the basilica of Arcadius at St. Menas it descends to 1 metre 55 centimetres. At Belezma the font is 42 centimetres; at Tlgzirt approximately 60 centimetres; at Carthage, in the subterranean baptistery, 75 centimetres, and at Hippo and el-Gouea 1 metre; at Eued Ramel it is 1 metre 10 centimetres and at Sabratha I it is 2 metres. Even amongst these last examples in which submersion, according to the figures, might seem to have been practicable, it did not certainly take place; so, the example, the diameter of the circular font at el-Gouea is only 80 centimetres, which allows insufficient room for movement, while the font at Carthage is placed over a well with a loose-fitting cover closing the mouth; this was not water-tight, and affusion must therefore have been the only feasible method.

in France at Civray-sur-Cher the font is 35 centimetres deep, at Melas, 40 centimetres, at Port-Ball, 60 centimetres, at Marseilles 70 centimetres and at Frejus 82 centimetres.

The evidence thus passed in rapid review indicates that in all areas there was a majority of fonts in which submersion was impossible. There still were some in which it could have taken place, and there would seem to be two possible explanations of this difference. The actual practice of baptism may not have been everywhere the same; it is a priori possible that the ritual was more complex in certain large centres than in remote country districts or that it differed, for example, in Italy from that in Greece. Alternatively, the practice may have been more or less uniform: what can hold a lot can hold a little, and there is no reason to suppose that the more spacious fonts were ever completely filled; indeed, many of them have no evacuation ducts, and in the dry lands of the Middle East water was by no means plentiful. The candidate could have stood in the font in the water to the knee or waist and have been baptized by having his head immersed, without plunging his whole body beneath the surface -- and, indeed, unless some such practice was observed, we must deny the prevalence of any uniformity. And, moreover, such a practice would seem to underlie the statement of Chrysostom: 'It is as in a tomb that we immerse our heads in the water . . . then when we lift our heads back the new man comes forth.' Indeed, modern research has by no means invalidated C. F. Roger's thesis that submersion was not widely practiced, if at all. Even in the Lateran baptistery, of which the font was certainly large enough for submersion, it is probable that affusion was practiced. From the mouth of the golden lamb, given by Constantine, there issued a stream of water, and it seems likely that the officiant either guided the candidate's head under the flow or directed the flow on to his head with a vessel. This latter practice is evidenced by the design on a spoon from Aquileia of the fourth or fifth century which shows a figure holding a patera in the stream of water over the head of the catechumen.