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GLOBE-TROTTING With GINNY

Old French Baptistry  
Used For Immersion

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POITIERS, France (BP)--When the terrifying hordes of Moslem Arabs swept across North Africa, Spain and southern France, it appeared that Europe would become dominated by Moslem culture. It was near Poitiers in 732 that the French king, Charles Martel, defeated the Moslems and saved Europe for the Christian culture.

Today, there are no visible reminders of that historic event but there is a most interesting reminder of early Christian influence.

The St. Jean baptistry, built around 360, is the oldest Christian edifice in France. Of particular interest to this Baptist sightseer is the fact this baptistry was designed originally for baptism by immersion.

The building which now covers the original pool is about 40 by 25 feet. Inside, excavations are still going on because under the baptistry are ancient Merovian burial grounds.

The excavations have confirmed the fact that the original baptistry was for immersion, though it was covered over some centuries later when sprinkling became accepted. Roman aqueducts furnished the water for the baptismal pool.

Before Christianity was first introduced in the third century, this site was used for a barbarian altar connected with superstitions surrounding death and burial.

For many centuries, St. Jean was probably the only baptistry for immersion in France, though filled in, hence hidden to men.

Today French Baptists and English-speaking Baptist churches are building baptistries for immersion as the number of their churches increase each year. Early French Baptists used rivers for the ordinance of baptism by immersion.

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Outline: St. Jean Baptistry (by immersion).