

**A QUESTION IN BAPTIST HISTORY:
WHETHER THE ANABAPTISTS IN
ENGLAND PRACTICED
IMMERSION BEFORE THE THE
YEAR 1641? WITH AN APPENDIX**

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A Question in Baptist History: Whether the Anabaptists in England Practiced Immersion Before the the Year 1641? With an Appendix by William H. Whitsitt

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WILLIAM H. WHITSITT

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WITH AN APPENDIX

ON THE BAPTISM OF ROGER WILLIAMS, AT
PROVIDENCE, R. I., IN 1639.

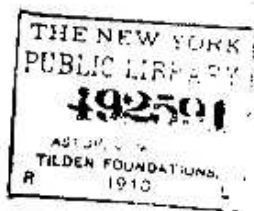
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TO F. W. W.

"AND SHE'S A' THE WORLD TO ME."

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INTRODUCTORY.

The question does not relate to the origin of immersion. Immersion as a religious rite was practiced by John the Baptist about the year 30 of our era, and was solemnly enjoined by our Savior upon all his ministers to the end of time. No other observance was in use for baptism in New Testament times. The practice, though sometimes greatly perverted, has yet been continued from the Apostolic age down to our own. As I understand the Scriptures immersion is essential to Christian baptism. The question as to the origin and essential character of immersion is, therefore, not in issue. That is a closed question; it does not admit of being opened among Baptist people.

The issue before us is far different, namely: Whether the immersion of adult believers was practiced in England by the Anabaptists before the year 1641? Whether these English people first adopted immersion for baptism and thus became Baptists in or about the year 1641?

This is purely a question of modern historical research. It does not affect any items of Baptist principle or practice. These are all established upon the Bible. Our watchword for generations has been, "The Bible, the Bible alone, the religion

of Baptists!" It is now too late in the day to alter our views and set forth any new battle cry. Baptists have always maintained that "the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience." Other foundation can no man lay. Whoever attempts it must inevitably fall into error. Let us stand by the old landmarks; let us walk in the old paths.

Several persons have undertaken original investigation at the British Museum to decide where the truth may lie in reference to this question. I had the honor to be of this number. My researches were prosecuted in the summer of 1880. The results of them are contained in a body of manuscript notices and extracts derived from various volumes, most of them found in that collection in the Museum which goes under the name of the King's Pamphlets.

A brief account of King George's Pamphlets may be recorded here. These were brought together by the royalist bookseller, George Thomason. When the Long Parliament assembled in the year 1640 there was a sensible relaxation of the authority both of Church and State in England. By consequence the public press was immediately employed by all sorts of people to a much larger extent than had been possible hitherto. Publications of every kind came teeming from it. About the year 1641 Mr.