

BAPTISM. No. VI.
THE SUBJECT AND DESIGN.

CONTROVERSIES on practical subjects may be reduced to an unit. There is, generally, some one prominent point on which the attention may be fixed that will forthwith decide the question. This is the case with the subject before us. Although many volumes have been written on the questions, Who are the subjects? and what is the design of baptism? Still the whole controversy turns on the decision of the last question.

If baptism is for the purpose of making a public profession of faith in Christ, as the Baptists contend; then it can be designed for none but those who have come to the years of understanding. But if the act was ordained by God for remission of sins, it can be adapted to the case of none but sinners; it cannot be designed for infants, for they have no sins to wash away.

That baptism is for remission of sins is a point which can be triumphantly established from not only the word of God, the writings of all the primitive fathers, but also from every creed in Christendom, of half a century old. In some future number, the Lord willing, we shall lay before our readers extracts from the fathers, ancient writers, and the various confessions of faith, to confirm this assertion. At present we shall confine ourself to a few facts.

The church of Rome emphatically declares that it inculcates and believes in "*one baptism for remission of sins.*" To this the Greek Church and the Church of England agree. All the prayers and instructions connected with baptism in the latter church, where they have reference to infants, or adults, exhibit unequivocally the above doctrine. Wesleyan clergymen use the same Liturgy when they administer the ordinance. If they believe what they repeat on such occasions, when do they administer baptism for the same purpose. They make it synonymous with the new birth: "Seeing this child is born anew of water and the Spirit," &c. (we quote from memory, not having a Prayer book at hand) is the language used in the hearing of every one; and these are the persons, too, who say we make too much of an external ordinance. They attach the same importance to the baptism of an unconscious babe without knowledge, faith, repentance, or change of heart, that we do with all those united. But this by the way. Our last mentioned friends may say, though this is found in the Liturgy, and our clergyman repeat it when they administer baptism, yet still these are not the sentiments of Wesleyans generally. Where, then, shall we learn their sentiments on the design of baptism? They all believe as did Mr. Wesley, "our venerable founder," as he is styled. All who are ordained as preachers in the connexion declare, if we are correctly informed, that they believe Mr. Wesley's notes on the New Testament. Read, then, his comment on Acts xxii. 16. "Baptism to all penitents is both the means and the seal of pardon; nor did God ordinarily in the primitive church, bestow pardon only through these means." We are bound then to conclude that all Wesleyan clergy-