

Baptized on Your Faith

A Biblical Answer to Infant Baptism

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1 • Before you read

"So then every one of us shall give account of *himself* to God" (Rom 14:12) — yet never alone; we believers have an advocate, Jesus Christ (1 John 2:1). Who are we, then, to be disobedient to him? Test everything you read here against the Scriptures:

First Thessalonians 5:21 · Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

Acts 17:11 · These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

And read to the end before you decide. Whatever objection is rising in you — "*but I was baptized as a child,*" "*isn't baptism a work?*", "*there is only one baptism,*" "*why divide over this?*" — be patient: this book takes up every one, and every other we could find or imagine, and weighs each against Scripture alone. Do not lay it down at the first difficulty; the answer to yours is almost certainly a few pages on. Read it as the Bereans read Paul — "*whether those things were so*" (Acts 17:11) — all the way through.

Test also the tract we are answering — Ernst Modersohn's «**Should I be baptized again?**» — with open eyes, for it rarely convinces from the text itself; it works in four ways. It **reads into** the Scripture what is not there: Modersohn admits that Mark 10 "really has nothing to do with baptism," and then makes it "a firm foundation for infant baptism." It **ridicules** the commandment: "ask them if they use an umbrella," as if baptism were merely a practical matter and not truly a spiritual one as well. Its argumentation is shaped as a "**conversation**" where the opponent yields on every point — "You are right," "I must confess" — so that you *feel* both sides have been heard, while Scripture is never really permitted to speak on its own, but read into. And when all else fails, the **unity card** is played: "do not contend—we want to be one" — so that holding to the commandment itself looks like the division, and you set it aside for the sake of peace. Where the text is silent or speaks against it, reading-in, ridicule, and emotion fill the void. So weigh the *arguments* against the Word, not the mood they are packaged in

— for we show you every passage, in his own words. Be also prepared for this message to be met with silence or inner resistance from the leadership of a congregation which oppose the true word of The Bible. Some have built their life and work, their reputation, or their financial prosperity upon the opposite understanding or direction, and a reckoning with Scripture may cost more than they are willing to give. I recently met a believer — a man who boldly preached the gospel in the streets — yet he admitted that he dared not say infant baptism was wrong until he had retired. As long as his livelihood rested on the opposite teaching, the price was too high; only when it no longer hung on it did the confession come. I don't think it was by chance I met such a brother exactly when I was working on this text, as I believe God calls us to step forward.

John 6:63 · It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

2 • Who was Ernst Modersohn?

The book to which we are responding is Ernst Modersohn's (1870–1948) German tract "Soll ich mich noch einmal taufen lassen?" — in Norwegian [Should I be baptized again?](#) (A pastoral conversation). We quote Modersohn verbatim throughout our response, and each chapter links to his own section — but those links are there **only so that you may read what we are responding to**. They represent *Modersohn's* view, not ours; our response is this book. If you want the core issue stated briefly and easily shareable, it can be found in [Believe and Be Baptized](#).

Before we test a book, we owe the man behind it justice. This is not an attack on Ernst Modersohn. He was a well-known preacher who, throughout a long life, called people to repentance and gathered many. If we are to answer his book, we must first see him as he was — who he was, where he came from, what he believed, and when and where he lived.

2.1 Where and when

Ernst Modersohn was born on February 14, 1870, in Soest, Westphalia, and died on February 2, 1948, in Bad Blankenburg, Thuringia — twelve days before his 78th birthday. He was German, and he was Lutheran from the very beginning: born into a church-going Lutheran family, the fifth child after three brothers and a sister.

His father, Wilhelm Modersohn (1832–1918), was a master builder — a strict and hard man to whom the children “found no real access.” His mother, Luise (née Heidebrink), he praised as a fine educator from whom he learned much. His older brother Otto Modersohn became a famous landscape painter, and his sister-in-law was the painter Paula Modersohn-Becker; another brother, Wilhelm, became a *Landgerichtspräsident* — president of the regional court. As a young man, Ernst wrote theater reviews and dreamed of becoming an actor; his father strictly forbade it, and Ernst later thanked God that his father had spared him “a false switch of tracks.”

2.2 What he believed — and where he came from

Here lies a detail that is decisive for this entire book: Modersohn was **baptized as an infant**, as Lutherans are. His turning point as an adult was not a baptism, but a **conversion** (1893, during his vicariate in Siegerland), where believing Christians showed him the way. He could not even name the exact day of his conversion. He was never himself baptized upon his faith as an adult. The man who wrote a tract that speaks people *out of* rebaptism was himself an infant-baptized Lutheran pastor.

Spiritually, he came from the holiness movement (*Heiligungsbewegung*) and neo-pietism — the Gnadau revival’s fellowship movement, centered in the Alliance House in Bad Blankenburg, where the German Evangelical Alliance called him in 1906. He soon became Germany’s most beloved evangelist and was called “the German Moody.” In 1919, he founded Harfe-Verlag, which printed his writings; in total, he authored 268 titles, translated into 60 languages, with a total circulation of around four million. His life motto — “Heilig dem Herrn,” Hallowed to the Lord — stood on the publisher’s gable, on the conference hall door, and above his weekly magazine.

2.3 His life and ministry

He was a pastor in Weidenau (1894–99) and thereafter in Mülheim an der Ruhr from 1900. The revival in Mülheim in 1905/06 was one of the starting points for the German Pentecostal movement, and Modersohn stood close to this movement in its early years. His power as a preacher lay not in signs and wonders, but in preaching, repentance, and sanctification: what he expected to follow him were souls saved.

2.4 The break with the Pentecostal movement

In 1909, he refused to sign the Berlin Declaration, which condemned the Pentecostal movement “from below.” But in 1911, he broke with the movement himself — especially regarding the doctrine of speaking in tongues as the visible evidence of Spirit baptism.

His mature pneumatology was a Keswick-influenced "deeper life" sanctification: the Spirit is received by faith (the seal, Eph 1:13), and the "fullness" (Eph 5:18) is a standing command to the one who is already a believer — not a second-blessing crisis, and not tied to tongues. He was no hard cessationist: in principle, he held the gifts valid until Jesus' return and called genuine speaking in tongues a heavenly language. But in practice, he was anti-Pentecostal. It is this conservative reflex — to defend the inherited order against those who took Scripture radically at its word — that we encounter again in his book on baptism.

Under Nazism, he was initially mistaken — for a time, he allowed himself to be carried away by Germany's apparent resurgence. But the regime turned against him: it branded him a "Landesverräter" (traitor to the country) for his confession of Christ, dissolved his prayer union, and the Gestapo arrested him. He was released with a nearly five-year ban on traveling, speaking, and writing. In 1947 — when many thought Christian conferences were impossible in the Soviet zone — he dared to gather people back to Bad Blankenburg for the first post-war conference. He died the following year.

And here the tragedy sharpens to a point. In his own book on being filled with the Spirit, *Werdet voll Geistes!*, Modersohn expounds the twelve disciples at Ephesus — he presses Paul's very question, "*Into what then were ye baptized?*" (Acts 19:3), watches them pass from John's baptism to baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus, and only then receive the Spirit. He handled, and preached, the one passage that shows a wrong baptism leaves the Spirit waiting for the right one — and still he defended the font laid on him before he could believe. He saw the door and described it to others, yet would not lead his own readers through it.

2.5 The man and the book

What Jesus said *stands*, and it is no minor matter: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ... except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, 5). The new birth is the very entrance. And precisely on this one point, Modersohn defended the tradition into which he was born, and to this day leads sincere people away from the clear command from Jesus' own mouth: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Therefore his book must be answered — with Scripture as our only guide.

Modersohn's entire book, [Should I be baptized again?](#), is now publicly available.

3 · Why We Respond

This book has one goal: to be faithful to the Bible. This is no quarrel, and no dispute over who is the most learned, but a question of obedience to God and His Word. Everything else—every quote, every reference, every argument—stands or falls on this one thing: what does Scripture say?

And it is not decided by how forcefully or emotionally something is said—for error wins by *persuasion*, not by force. Hear how precisely the Word hits: the very chapter upon which Modersohn builds his strongest argument (Col 2) opens with the warning “lest any man should beguile you with enticing words”—Greek *pithanologia* *πιθανολογία*^{G4086}, persuasive speech (Col 2:4). And to those who had been turned away from a clear command, Paul’s question sounded: “Who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? ... This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you” (Gal 5:7-8). We say no more about the man—his heart belongs to God. To the reader, we say only what the Word says: test the persuasion against the text.

I do not write as a spectator. I am myself a witness that the Word holds. I have gone through the water and risen as a new person, and received what He promised. That is why I cannot be silent. He who has seen that Scripture is true cannot calmly watch as people are kept from what it promises.

Acts 2:38 · Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Notice that it is not only baptism that is at stake, but *the promise that hangs upon it*: “ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Peter binds the two together—repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Spirit. (The order is not mechanical: with Cornelius, the Spirit fell *before* the water, Acts 10:44-47; in Ephesus *in* the baptism, Acts 19:5-6; here *after*. The constant is not a locked sequence, but that Spirit and baptism belong together—and precisely for that reason, the water cannot be the mechanical cause.) When the command is set aside, it is not just an act that is set aside; something is lost that God had attached to it. It is this loss that I have seen, and which does not let me be.

For over a hundred years, a book with a kind, pastoral tone has spoken sincere believers *out* of obeying. But the tone is not the whole picture—and it is precisely the tone that misleads. Beneath the gentleness, the book makes the believer who senses that baptism is right look slightly ridiculous, and plays on the fear of breaking unity and being left on

the outside. Mockery and fear, dressed in friendliness, lead more astray than open attack ever could. And it has gone too far. I can no longer stand still and watch it happen.

3.1 Tradition or the Word

Modersohn concludes his own book by warning against “clinging to the letter,” but Jesus warns against the real danger—that an inherited custom **annuls** the Word of God—just as Modersohn’s own tradition does:

Mark 7:13 · Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

This verse Modersohn himself uses against tradition. But hear then what is written about those who *refused* baptism:

Luke 7:29-30 · And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

See where the arrow points. Those who were baptized “justified God.” Those who *did not* get baptized *rejected the counsel of God*—in Greek *atheteo ἀθετέω*^{G114}, “to reject, set aside” God’s purpose (*boule βουλή*^{G1012}). It is exactly the same **action** that Modersohn himself condemns in Mark 7:13, where human commandment *akuroo ἀκυρόω*^{G208} “makes the word of God of none effect.” Two different Greek words—one and the same sin: to push aside what God has spoken. (Note: John’s baptism was the baptism of *repentance*, preparing for Christ—not the full baptism of water and Spirit in Jesus’ name that is commanded now. The parallel lies not in the two being the *same* baptism, but in the very *action*: to refuse the water God appoints.) And here is the sting: it was not the obedient who clung to the letter; it was those who *refused the water* for the sake of tradition. The question is never Modersohn against me. It is tradition against the Word.

3.2 If He is Lord

Luke 6:46 · And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

If we call Him Lord, then we do what He says. And He said it Himself, short and clear: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Believe *and* be baptized—

joined together with "and," not "or." Not a suggestion from a preacher, but the last words from Him who had just defeated death.

An honest note is in order: Mark 16:9-20 is missing in the oldest Greek manuscripts, and the textual history of the verse is disputed. But believer's baptism does not hang on this one verse. The command stands unshakable in the Great Commission—make disciples, baptize them (Matt 28:19)—and the pattern repeats in every apostolic instance: Acts 2:38; 8:36-39; 10:47-48; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27; Col 2:12; 1 Pet 3:21. The point is not the textual history of one verse, but that baptism is the Lord's command.

3.3 Therefore

Second Corinthians 5:14 · For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.

It is love, not strife, that drives this. We pass no judgment on Modersohn as a person. We contend against the doctrine on this one point, not against the man, and meet him with the same mercy he himself preached. But we set the infant-baptized believer free—the one who has never been told that there is another reading, and that the Master Himself calls him to the water.

"Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess 5:19). A people who set the command aside lose more than they realize. Therefore we write this—not to win a case, but so that no one shall stand before Christ and have called Him Lord while they set His word aside, and so that His people shall receive all He promised: the water, and the Spirit.

And let us clear one word out of the way immediately, for it decides the dispute before it is tested. Modersohn asks: "shall I let myself be baptized *one more time*?" But to be baptized *again* presupposes that the first *was* a baptism—and precisely that is the question. For the one who was watered as an infant, without faith, this is no *second* baptism; it is his *first true one*. Therefore we do not call it rebaptism, and we do not ask you to think of it as such. The question is not "one more time?"—but "are you yet baptized upon your faith?"

And here **Scripture itself tears down** the entire objection. Modersohn's rule is "you are already baptized—do not let yourself be baptized again." But that is precisely what the apostle *overruled*. In Ephesus, Paul found **adult** disciples who were already baptized—with "the baptism of John" (Acts 19:3), a true baptism of repentance, but not in Jesus' name and without the Spirit (v.2). Nevertheless, "they were **baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**" (Acts 19:5). Adults, once previously baptized, baptized anew. It was no *re*-baptism of a valid baptism—it was their *first true one*; the apostle's rule was never "one water, never more," but "the baptism must be the **genuine one**." If we are to deny

the infant-baptized the same, we must claim that we understand baptism better than the apostles themselves. And if even a *genuine* baptism of repentance had to give way to the true one—how much more the unbelieving infant-water, which bore neither faith nor repentance.

4 • The Household of Cornelius

4.1 Modersohn's Objection

It says "with all his house," and therefore it is at least as likely that there were children present as that there were none.

— Ernst Modersohn, *"The Household of Cornelius"*

Read him yourself: Modersohn, *"The Household of Cornelius"*.

4.2 The Answer

Here he misses the mark—and he misses it at the very place that actually tells us who was present. Modersohn builds upon *probability*. But Luke himself fills in who "all his house" were:

Acts 10:44-47 · While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

Read the sequence, word for word. The Spirit fell on "all them which **heard** the word"—Greek *akouō ἀκούω*^{G191}, to hear and comprehend. They "spoke with tongues and magnified God" (v. 46). *Only then* does Peter say: can anyone forbid them water? (v. 47). Thus: hear → receive the Spirit → be baptized. Each step presupposes a person who can hear, comprehend, and praise God. An infant does none of these things.

"All his house" (Greek *oikos οἶκος*^{G3624}) states *who belonged to the household*—not that there were infants there. Modersohn's "at least as likely" is exactly that: a guess,

built upon what the text *does not* say. But where the text does speak, it speaks against him—it fills the house with hearing, believing people. An argument from silence cannot support a doctrine; and here, the text is not even silent.

This pattern—preach, hear, believe, baptize—stands for every single recorded instance in the Acts of the Apostles, unfolded in "Through the Waters," the chapter "The Apostolic Standard." Cornelius is not an exception to the rule; he *is* the rule.

To be clear: that a household was baptized as a *unit* is correctly observed—I will grant Modersohn that. But the very scripture he cites describes those who were baptized as people who *heard* the word, *spoke with tongues*, and *magnified God* (v. 44–46)—actions no infant performs. The observation regarding household baptism stands; the conclusion regarding infants does not.

5 • Lydia's Household

5.1 Modersohn's Objection

There is not a word about those who belonged to her family and household becoming believers. Yet it is stated: When she and her household were baptized. Does that not give one something to think about?

— Ernst Modersohn, "Lydia's Household"

Read him yourself: Modersohn, "Lydia's Household".

5.2 The Answer

It does give one something to think about — but the opposite of what Modersohn intends. He builds again upon silence: the text does not mention that the others in the house believed, *therefore* (he argues) they could have been non-believing children. But hear what the text *actually* says:

Acts 16:14-15 · And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye

have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

And here we must be strictly honest, for otherwise we commit exactly Modersohn's error in the opposite direction. The text does *not* say who belonged to Lydia's "household" (Greek *oikos* οἶκος^{G3624}) — neither that there were infants there, nor that there were not. We read *adults* into it just as little as he reads *infants* into it. The point is not that we know the household consisted of adults; the point is that *no one* knows it, and that a *doctrine* cannot be built upon a household Scripture never describes. But where the text *speaks*, it speaks: "the Lord opened **her** heart, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (Acts 16:14) — she *heard*. Luke lets her stand for the whole household, just as he later says "Crispus with all his house," where the whole house explicitly *believes* (Acts 18:8). And when Paul and Silas were released, they went to Lydia's home and "saw the brethren, and comforted them" (Acts 16:40) — those in the house who are actually mentioned are referred to as believing brethren. That is the positive text we rely upon — not a guess about who else might have been there.

That only Lydia is *mentioned* as a believer proves nothing about the age of the others. Modersohn turns the absence of a mention into the presence of infants. That is to add to what Scripture does not say — and the Word itself warns against adding (Rev 22:18).

Clearly stated: that a household was baptized is correctly observed. But the passage mentions no children, commands none, presupposes none — and a passage that is silent about children cannot bear a *doctrine* of infant baptism. The observation stands; the conclusion does not.

6 • The Philippian Jailer

6.1 Modersohn's Objection

"He rejoiced with all his house, having believed in God." It does not say that "they" had come to faith, but "he."

— Ernst Modersohn, "The Philippian Jailer"

Read him yourself: Modersohn, "The Philippian Jailer".

6.2 The Answer

This is Modersohn's strongest household argument — and it is here that his own evidence turns against him. He fixates on the fact that *rejoiced* is in the singular ("he"), and concludes that the others in the house did not believe, yet were baptized nonetheless. But read the surrounding verses:

Acts 16:31-34 · And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straight-way. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

Look at verse 32: "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." The entire house *heard* the preaching — in the middle of the night, before the baptism. And verse 34: the jailer "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Here we must be precise: the Greek *pepisteukōs* — "having believed" — is in the **masculine singular**; it is the jailer himself who has believed, while *panoikei πανοικεῖ*^{G3832} is the adverb "with all his house." Modersohn is therefore correct that the verb of faith is singular. But for that very reason, the case does not rest on verse 34 alone: verse 32 explicitly states that *the whole house heard the word* — and it is the hearing house that was baptized and rejoiced, not infants who neither heard nor believed.

Ask yourself simply: can an infant be awakened in the middle of the night to hear the apostle's preaching? Can an infant "rejoice" — Greek *agalliaō ἀγαλλιάω*^{G21}, to exult — over the content of the Gospel? Modersohn's own key text presupposes a hearing, comprehending, rejoicing house. The evidence he builds upon tears down what he seeks to construct.

Clearly stated: verse 32 closes the door. The very scripture he cites says that *all in the house heard the word*. It does not support infant baptism — it contradicts it.

7 · Abraham

7.1 Modersohn's Objection

When God entered into the covenant of circumcision with Abraham, it was quite self-evident that all male members of the household were circumcised at the same time. At the time Christianity began, one could not imagine anything other than that the entire household was also baptized if a father of a family allowed himself to be baptized.

— Ernst Modersohn, "Abraham"

Read him yourself: Modersohn, "Abraham".

7.2 The Answer

Let us grant Modersohn his best argument with full force: the concept of the covenant. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant, given also to infants—and baptism is the sign of the new covenant. Is it not then self-evident that children should receive it as well? This is the strongest card for infant baptism, and it deserves an honest answer.

The answer lies in the very man he chooses: Abraham. For Abraham provides the *opposite* order:

Genesis 15:6 · And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Romans 4:11 · And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.

Abraham *believed* (Gen 15:6) — and was circumcised *years later* (Gen 17). Paul states it plainly: circumcision was a **seal** (Greek sphragís σφραγίς^{G4973}) of a righteousness he *already possessed by faith*. A seal confirms something that is already there; it does not create it. Thus went the path for *the one who himself entered into the covenant*: faith → sign. "But what about Isaac — did he not receive the sign as an infant, before faith?" Yes. But as a *natural descendant*, born into an earthly lineage, he received the *earthly* covenant sign

by birthright. And that is precisely what the new covenant does not have: no one is born into the Kingdom of God by flesh and blood (John 1:13; 3:6). The entrance is the new birth by faith — and there the path is always faith → sign, as it was for Abraham himself, the father of faith. Whoever wishes to make Abraham the authority for giving the sign *before* faith turns the father of faith on his head.

And "Eastern custom" — that a sheikh changes faith and the family follows — is precisely a *custom*, a cultural probability. It is not a biblical text. No text shows a head of a household carrying a *non-believing infant* to baptism.

Furthermore: the new covenant expressly breaks with the line of the flesh:

Hebrews 8:11 · And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

A covenant where *all* members know the Lord, "from the least to the greatest," can by definition not have non-knowing members. One is born into it from above, not of flesh (John 1:13). The covenant line is a genuine matter — but it leads to the baptism of believers, not away from it.

Here the covenant argument's best advocate will turn it around: "Precisely because the new covenant is *more* gracious and wholly God's work, the children must receive the sign before they can believe, as Isaac did—why should they get *less* under the greater covenant?" But they get nothing less: they are already safe by grace (Matt 18:14), carried until they themselves can answer, and they then receive the full reality—the new birth—not merely a sign. And the sign is not the same. Circumcision was not merely a mark of fleshly descent—it was the outer *shadow* of the heart-circumcision God promised to perform Himself: "the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart" (Deut 30:6; cf. Jer 4:4). And even it could be received in *two* ways: the child by birth (Isaac), but also the foreigner by his own choice—"when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised ... and he shall be as one that is born in the land" (Exod 12:48). The stranger heard, chose, received the sign, and came in—the path of the proselyte, and believer's baptism in figure: faith → sign. Baptism seals the very inner reality the shadow pointed to—having died and risen with Christ, "risen with him *through the faith of the operation of God*" (Col 2:12)—a reality received by faith, a faith an infant does not have. And here is the Scripture, not the inference: God Himself says the new covenant is *not* like the old, "for they continued not in my covenant" (Heb 8:9)—the old's flaw was members without faith. To bring the unbeliever in again is not to make the covenant more gracious; it is to carry the old covenant's defect into the new—the very opposite of "they shall all know me" (Heb 8:11).

And let it be said aloud, for it is the most astonishing thing in the whole matter: children are not outside and needing to be carried in — **they are already His**. God says it Himself, without qualification: *"Behold, all souls are mine ; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die "* (Ezekiel 18:4). Mark the architecture of that verse: belonging to God is the *starting state*; what severs is one's *own* sin. And stronger still — He calls them His outright: the children of His people are those *"whom thou hast borne unto me,"* and those sacrificed He calls *"my children "* (Ezekiel 16:20-21). He owns them before any ceremony and before any faith of their own. This is why David could say of his dead infant, *"I shall go to him"* (2 Samuel 12:23); why *"their angels do always behold the face of my Father"* (Matthew 18:10); and why it is not the Father's will *"that one of these little ones should perish"* (Matthew 18:14).

And Scripture draws it in a figure this book already knows: when the accountable generation fell in the wilderness, it was precisely the children *"which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil "* who crossed Jordan and received the land — *"they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it"* (Deuteronomy 1:39). Those without knowledge of good and evil went in; those who knew better and would not believe were left behind in the sand. And Jesus Himself draws the standing of children before God out of the Old Testament: when the chief priests were indignant at the children crying *"Hosanna,"* He answered, *"have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? "* (Matthew 21:16, citing Psalm 8:2 — where the Hebrew reads *"ordained strength"*). See then what this does to the fear that actually drives infant baptism — *"what if my child dies unbaptized?"* The answer is not a sacrament but a promise: the child is already His. The water adds nothing to what God already holds; it waits for the day the child can hear, believe, and answer for himself.

And I did not reason my way to this. In 2016 I asked the Holy Spirit how children who die before they can consciously choose Christ could enter Heaven, given the command of baptism — and He answered with a single word: *ablution*. I did not know what it meant and had to look it up: the priestly washing at Aaron's consecration, where the one cleansed does not cleanse himself (Leviticus 8:6). He gave the word and no explanation, and I did not understand that He had handed me the seed of this whole doctrine in one breath. The account, and what that one word opened, stands in [Born Again](#).

Clearly stated: none of the three texts command the baptism of an infant, and two of them (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:11) place faith *before* the sign. His best argument aims at a real target — and misses.

8 • Noah

8.1 Modersohn's Objection

This salvation of Noah's family is, after all, described by Peter as a type of baptism. We encounter the same thought regarding the cohesion within the household here.

— *Ernst Modersohn, "Noah"*

Read him yourself: Modersohn, "Noah".

8.2 The Answer

Modersohn is right that Noah's salvation is a type of baptism—Peter says so himself. But read what Peter says *the type means*, for it excludes precisely the non-consenting subject:

First Peter 3:20-21 · Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Peter binds baptism to the conscience: it is "the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet 3:21). Greek: *eperōtēma ēperōtēma*^{G1906} — a conscious answer, an appeal, a vow from a good conscience to God. An infant has no conscience with which to answer, and cannot subsequently claim to have made a vow it never knew about. The very type Modersohn invokes, therefore, requires one who *can answer God* — the opposite of a passive rite performed upon one who is not of age.

And note who the eight were: Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives (Genesis 7:13) — named, responsible individuals. But the *power* of the type does not lie in who was in the ark; it lies in what Peter says baptism *is*: a covenant of a good conscience, a conscious answer to God. And that is precisely what an infant cannot provide.

Clearly stated: the one passage Modersohn cites defines baptism as a *conscious covenant from a good conscience*. It does not reach the infant — it shuts it out.

9 · Crispus

9.1 Modersohn's Objection

To the apostle, there was no difference whether he said: I have baptized Crispus, or: Crispus and his house — for Crispus and his house belonged together; it was a single concept.

— Ernst Modersohn, "Crispus"

Read him yourself: Modersohn, "Crispus".

9.2 The Answer

Here, Modersohn draws an infant baptism conclusion from a text that says the exact opposite. Read what is actually written:

Acts 18:8 · And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

The text itself provides the sequence — for the whole group: they **heard, believed, and were baptized**. And regarding Crispus's house, it is explicitly stated that it *believed* "with all his house." This is not an infant baptism text; it is one of the *clearest* believer's baptism texts in all of Scripture. The house believed.

And his other card — that Paul in 1 Corinthians only mentions Crispus — points just as wrongly:

First Corinthians 1:14-17 · I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

But read what Paul actually says. He does not write that baptism is indifferent — he writes against *division*. The Corinthians had gathered into factions: "I am of Paul," "I am

of Apollos,” and made it a point of honor *who* had baptized them. “Is Christ divided? ... were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor 1:13). Therefore, Paul gives thanks that he himself baptized few — *so that no one could say they were baptized in his name* (v. 15). Yet, during his own ministry, the *entire* congregation was indeed baptized: “many other of the Corinthians ... hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8), throughout a year and a half in the city (Acts 18:11). That “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach” does not mean that baptism is unimportant, but that the apostle’s *primary mission* was the preaching; the act of baptism itself he usually left to others — just as “Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples” (John 4:2). Paul *did* baptize (Crispus, Gaius, the house of Stephanas), and it is the same Paul who teaches that we are “baptized into his death” (Rom 6:3). Modersohn’s trick is to turn “I baptized few *personally*” into “baptism is unimportant.” The text does the opposite: it forbids making baptism a partisan banner — it does not abolish it.

Clearly stated: of the two scriptures Modersohn cites, the one says “they heard, believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8), and the other concerns *factional strife*, not the value of baptism (1 Cor 1) — Paul forbids gathering around *who* baptizes; he does not abolish baptism. Both miss the mark on infant baptism.

10 • The Great Commission

10.1 Modersohn’s Objection

According to these words, one must first baptize and then teach, and of faith there is no mention at all... Note the expression “all nations.” Here is the biblical proof for the national church.

— Ernst Modersohn, “The Great Commission”

Read him yourself: Modersohn, “The Great Commission”.

10.2 The Answer

Modersohn would have it that Matthew 28 teaches “baptize first, teach later”—the opposite of Mark 16:16—and that one therefore cannot force Mark to require faith before baptism. But the Greek syntax itself tears this down:

Matthew 28:19-20 · Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

There is one—and only one—imperative verb in this sentence: *mathēteúsate* μαθητεύσατε^{G3100}, "make disciples" (aorist imperative). The other three—*going* (*poreuthentes*), *baptizing* (*baptízontes* βαπτίζοντες^{G907}), and *teaching* (*didaskontes*)—are all *participles*, subordinate to the main verb. They explain *how* the making of disciples occurs, not a mandated sequence. The sentence therefore teaches neither "baptize before you teach" nor "teach before you baptize." It teaches: make disciples—by, among other things, baptizing and teaching. It does *not overturn* Mark 16:16; the two stand in harmony: disciples are made of those who believe and are baptized.

And "all nations"—*panta ta ethnē*—is the *object* of "make disciples." One makes disciples *out of* the nations, one person at a time. The text does not make baptism a collective national rite; discipleship is by definition a personal response.

It is worth noting the irony: Modersohn's own advice is "do not press the letter." But here it is *he* who presses a participial sentence to become a reversed sequence that the Greek does not provide. Correctly read, the contradiction he requires disappears.

Clearly stated: the one passage he cites has one command—"make disciples"—and baptism is the means, not a sequence. It does not support infant baptism.

11 • The Church Fathers

This chapter stands apart: it is the one place where Modersohn does not argue from Scripture, but from church history. That his strongest "proof" for apostolic origin rests on tradition and not on the Word, is in itself telling.

11.1 Modersohn's Objection

One can conclude from Tertullian's opposition that infant baptism existed...
Origin: "The Church has received from the apostles the tradition to also impart baptism to little children."

— Ernst Modersohn, "The Church Fathers"

Read him yourself: Modersohn, "The Church Fathers".

11.2 The Answer

Modersohn is right about one thing: Tertullian's opposition (around the year 200) presupposes that infant baptism *existed*. But that only proves that the custom had *arisen* and was *contested* by the 3rd century—not that it was an apostolic command. That one of the church's foremost voices *fought* against it argues, on the contrary, that it was not an undisputed apostolic tradition. A dispute is not a decision.

Origen (around the year 248) *claims* apostolic origin—but does not cite a single scriptural proof. It is an undocumented claim of tradition, written down two centuries after the apostles: an argument from authority, not from source. He says the custom exists; he does not *demonstrate* it from Scripture.

And the Synod of Carthage (256) did not argue about *whether* one should baptize children, but about which *day*—whether one should wait until the eighth, as with circumcision. Even that presupposes two things: that the practice already existed, and the conscious connection to the eighth-day pattern of circumcision—that is, the very covenant-sign-replacement thinking which is the *disputed* doctrine, not an inherited command.

The fundamental principle is simple: **precedent is not prescription**. That something was done in the 200s does not make it apostolic. The infallible rule is Scripture alone (2 Timothy 3:16) — and it is silent regarding the baptism of infants.

The inheritance behind the argument. Finally, it is worth seeing where the method itself comes from. Weighing church fathers and councils alongside Scripture is no Lutheran invention — it is an inheritance from Rome, which at the Council of Trent (1546) elevated the method to dogma: the traditions are to be received «with an equal affection of piety and reverence» as Scripture itself. Modersohn would never have signed that sentence — yet in this chapter he argues by it. And the practice he defends has the same provenance: infant baptism did not enter the Lutheran churches from the New Testament; it was carried over from Rome through the Reformation, together with more of the furniture than we tend to notice — the calendar and the Sunday claim, the catechism's numbering of the commandments, the font as the door of membership. Luther purified the gospel; the furniture stayed. I have traced that whole line of inheritance — how the system arose, council by council, and where it departs from the Scriptures — in [When Tradition Took the Throne](#). Whoever wants to understand why a godly evangelist of the last century defended infant baptism with church fathers instead of apostles will find the roots there — and they run not to Jerusalem, but to Rome.

Let us be honest in both directions: church history does not settle the matter either way. There is also no first-hand 1st-century text that *forbids* infant baptism. But precisely

for that reason, the matter must be settled where Modersohn himself did not dare to take it here: in Scripture. And to that, we return.

12 · He who believes and is baptized

12.1 Modersohn's objection

He who does not apply Mark 16:16 to the founding of a church, but to a time and circumstance where a church already exists, tears the word out of its context.

— Ernst Modersohn, "He who believes and is baptized"

Read him yourself: Modersohn, "He who believes and is baptized".

12.2 The answer

Here, Modersohn is right in one thing — and wrong in two. Let us separate them, for the sake of justice.

Mark 16:16 · He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

What he is right about: the condemnation in the final clause falls upon *unbelief* — "he that believeth not" — not upon the unbaptized. Water in itself does not save; faith receives, God saves. That is a true and important point, and it is fully shared by us. Baptism is not a magical rescue.

What he is wrong about, firstly — the grammar: *pisteúsas πιστεύσας*^{G4100} (aorist, *active* — you believe, you act) is bound with *kai*, "and" (not "or"), to *baptistheís βαπτισθείς*^{G907} (aorist, *passive* — it is done to you). Active faith cannot be exercised by an infant. The verb form itself presupposes one who *can believe for themselves*. That the judgment hits unbelief does not make baptism *optional*; the command still sounds: "believe **and** be baptized."

Secondly — "only church founding": there is no marker in Mark 16 that limits the command to the mission field. On the contrary, the context *universalizes* it: "Go ye into **all the world**, and preach the gospel to **every creature!**" (Mark 16:15). The distinction

between "mission field" and "established church" has no anchor in the text — it is added, not read out.

Thirdly — his "counter-proof" from Matthew 28 rests on a pure syntax error (see the chapter "The Great Commission"): there, there is one command, "make disciples," and baptism is the means, not a reversed order.

Clearly stated: of three claims here, one hits the mark (judgment on unbelief) and two miss (mission field, and the Matthew 28 reversal). He is closer to the goal here than anywhere else — but the verse itself, read in Greek, requires one who can believe for themselves.

12.3 But does baptism itself not regenerate?

Here lies the deepest objection — and the actual foundation of the Lutheran church. It does not say, like Modersohn, merely that children *belong*; it says that **baptism itself works regeneration** — water is a *means of grace* that gives new birth, forgives sin, and gives the Spirit. If the child needs to be born again, and it does, then *give* it the baptism that regenerates. It is a serious thought, and it deserves Scripture's own answer. For Scripture answers — in the very verses upon which the doctrine is built.

Peter, whom they invoke, tears the foundation away himself — twice. His weightiest verse says "baptism saves" — but hear how he *immediately* qualifies it:

First Peter 3:21 · The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

"**Not ... but.**" Peter moves salvation *away* from the water on the body and *over* to the conscience's answer to God. And here we shall not rest on one translation, but on the Greek itself: the word is *επερώτημα* ^{G1906} — a word that appears **only this one time** in the entire New Testament. It contains "answer," "prayer," *and* "promise": in the legal language of the time, a *stipulatio*, an agreed, sworn pledge given to a higher authority (as LSJ lists it). Whichever nuance one chooses, it becomes one and the same: **a conscious answer from one who can answer**. An infant cannot provide it. The very word Peter reaches for excludes the one who cannot yet believe.

And in the *same letter* he says where the new birth comes from — again with "not ... but":

First Peter 1:23 · Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Born again (anagennáō ἀναγεννάω^{G313}) **by the living word of God** (lógos λόγος^{G3056}) — not by water. The apostle they cite to prove that water regenerates has already said that the *Word* regenerates, and that baptism saves *as a covenant of a believing conscience*. He never lets the water do it.

Paul says the same — and names who regenerates:

Titus 3:5 · Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

"The washing of regeneration" (palingenesía παλιγγενεσία^{G3824}) — but *by the Holy Spirit*, and **"not by works."** A rite performed on one who does nothing themselves is precisely a *work*; Paul closes off that reading. The Spirit regenerates; the washing seals what the Spirit does — and the verse immediately following addresses "them which have **believed** in God" (Titus 3:8).

And "infant faith"? That God gives the infant faith in the water is inferred, not stated. Scripture binds faith to the *heard* Word: "faith cometh by hearing (akoé ἀκοή^{G189}), and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17). An infant does not hear the message. And so it happened with Cornelius: "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which **heard the word**" (Acts 10:44) — *before* the water, so Peter could ask: "Can any man forbid water?" (Acts 10:47). Word heard, Spirit given, *then* water. Never the reverse.

"But does Scripture not give infants faith?" Two places are often brought into the field, and neither of them carries the weight. The first is John, who "leaped in his mother's womb for joy" (Luke 1:44). But the text itself makes him the *exception*: he was "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15) — the unique forerunner who knew the Messiah. And the word is skirtáo σκιρτάω^{G4640}, a *leap of joy* (the image is the life of the fetus moving), not a confession and not a baptism. That God can move an unborn child only shows that God can do anything — it does not make the leap into faith, nor does it bind it to water. One does not build a rule for all infants on the one who was sanctified in the womb. The second is "these *little ones* which *believe* in me" (Matt 18:6; Mark 9:42). But "the little ones" here are Jesus' tender words about the *humble disciples*: the chapter opens with "become as *children*" to enter (Matt 18:3-4), and "these little ones" are the sheep the shepherd searches for, the one "your Father [does not] will that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt 18:10-14). And "which believe in me" (pisteúō πιστεύω^{G4100}) *presupposes* faith — it confirms that they are believers, it does not give faith to one who cannot believe. It is the same key as "of such is the kingdom" (Mark 10:14): childlikeness and God's gracious demand, not infant faith. So infant faith remains just as unstated after these passages as before — Scripture still binds faith to the *heard* Word (Rom 10:17).

And the Old Testament cries out the same. Where the prophets promise regeneration, it is always *God* who works it, always in the heart, never a water that does the work. David prays: "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Ps 51:10) — the word is bara בָּרָא^{H1254}, to *create out of nothing*, used only of God (Gen 1:1). The Lord promises: "A new heart also will I give you... I will put **my spirit** (rúach רוּחַ^{H7307}) within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Ezek 36:26-27) — God gives, the Spirit dwells in the innermost being, and the fruit is a life that *follows* Him. Even the "water" in the promise is God's own image for the Spirit: "I will pour **water** upon him that is thirsty... I will pour **my spirit** upon thy seed" (Isa 44:3) — water and Spirit side by side, and it is the *Spirit* that does it. And the circumcision of the heart? "**The Lord** thy God will circumcise thine heart... that thou mayest **love** the Lord" (Deut 30:6) — God does it, in the heart, so that man loves. From Moses to Peter, Scripture says one thing: the new birth is the Spirit's creative work in the heart, received in faith — and water is its commanded *sign*, never its *cause*.

And test the thought to its end. If it were the *water itself* that regenerated, then one could save an entire city with a fire hose, or pour water over a crowd from above — and look, no one, not even the infant baptizer, does such a thing. Why not? Because everyone *knows*, deep in their marrow, that baptism is not something water *does* to an ignorant person, but something a believer *enters into*. Simon was truly baptized, with real water (Acts 8:13) — and was nonetheless "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:23); the water touched him, but did not save him. That no one saves by spraying is in itself a tacit confession that the sign requires one who believes.

And here is the crack in the foundation itself. There is no command for infant baptism in Scripture, and no example — this is admitted. The doctrine thus rests on *church tradition* and inference, not on a word from God. But precisely here, the Reformation's own root turns against it: Luther stood before the Emperor and said that the conscience is bound by Scripture *alone*, not by church councils and inherited custom (Worms, 1521). By his own principle — *Scripture alone* — the doctrine must fall, for it invokes the church precisely where Scripture is silent. One broke with Rome over *who has the final word*, but kept Rome's infant sacrament. It is not Scripture that bears this doctrine — it is tradition that speaks where the Word is silent.

So the pillar falls — not by our making baptism small, but by our letting Scripture say what *does* it. Baptism *truly* saves — but "as the answer of a good conscience" (1 Pet 3:21); the new birth comes by the Word received in faith (1 Pet 1:23; Titus 3:5); and water is the commanded *place* where God seals it. Water over an unbeliever regenerates no one. Therefore — and by the very words the doctrine rests upon — a *believer's* baptism.

13 · Covenant Standing

13.1 Modersohn's Objection

When children under the old covenant shared in the covenant sign, one cannot deny it to them under the new covenant either... I know well that this does not speak of infant baptism here—but this word [“let the little children come to me”] nevertheless becomes a firm support for infant baptism.

— Ernst Modersohn, “Covenant Standing”

Read him yourself: Modersohn, “Covenant Standing”.

13.2 The Answer

This is the book’s weightiest chapter, and it deserves to have every link tested. Modersohn cites about ten scriptures here for infant baptism. Let us count how many actually support it.

His own key text turns against him. Colossians links circumcision and baptism—but hear the concluding word:

Colossians 2:11-12 · In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

“Risen with him **through faith**.” The text Modersohn uses for covenant-sign continuity links the very effect to the *recipient’s faith*—which an infant does not have. His main text requires exactly what he wishes to omit.

But go deeper, for here lies the key. Colossians 2:11 says our circumcision is “**not made with hands**” (Greek *acheiropoietos ἀχειροποίητος*^{G886}). The outward circumcision was never the goal—it was a *shadow*. It pointed forward to a circumcision *God Himself* performs: “And the Lord thy God will **circumcise thine heart** ... to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart” (Deuteronomy 30:6); “**circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart**” (Jeremiah 4:4); “circumcision is that of the heart, **in the spirit**, and not in the letter” (Romans 2:29). The foreskin was the image

of the hard, insensitive flesh around the heart—the “stony heart” God promises to replace with a **heart of flesh** (Ezekiel 36:26), so that we become soft and responsive to Him. *That* is the fulfillment of circumcision: the new birth, the cleansing of the heart by the Spirit. And such a circumcision is precisely “not made with hands”—no one can inflict it upon an unbelieving infant with water. Here, Modersohn’s own covenant-thread turns against him: the continuity from circumcision to baptism passes *through the circumcision of the heart*—the new birth, received by faith—and baptism is the *place* where what God has done in the heart is sealed. Modersohn wants baptism to be a *physical* thing, an outward rite one can perform upon a minor; and precisely for that reason, he misses that it is the place for the **spiritual** rebirth. To baptize an unbelieving infant is to carry the carnal logic of the old covenant into the new—the exact opposite of “not made with hands.”

And here the matter reaches its climax. What, then, does the adult do who *knows*—and yet refuses the water? He reveals a heart that is not yet circumcised: “uncircumcised in heart and ears,” the kind that “always resist the Holy Ghost” (Acts 7:51). He wants the child’s security—for the child *is* secure by grace—but forgets what *makes* it secure: that it neither *knows* nor *is able*. Jesus draws a sharp distinction: the servant “which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself... shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not... shall be beaten with few” (Luke 12:47-48). “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). The infant does not know; the adult knows. Thus, the same exemption cannot cover both.

Can disobedience itself *draw upon* grace and free him from guilt? Paul asks the question and answers it himself: “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid!” (Romans 6:1-2). To make grace a shield for refusal is to “turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness” (Jude 1:4)—the stubbornness of the old, hard heart in new attire.

And observe the irony: Jesus said one must receive the kingdom of God “as a little child” (Mark 10:15)—humbly, trustingly, obediently. He who demands to be *treated* as a child while refusing to *bow* as a child does the most un-childlike thing of all: he sets his own judgment above the Master’s clear word. And the cleansing he rejects—the new birth from above, the circumcision of the heart by the Spirit—was offered in the very obedience he refuses. He is not drawing upon a grace that bypasses the command; he is rejecting the *place* where God cleanses. It is the man who refuses the water and calls himself washed.

Let it be clear what we *do not* say: we pass no judgment upon a single soul. God can do all things—the thief on the cross is the witness. But God has nowhere promised to count the one who *knows and wills* to refuse as an innocent child; and to demand that he *must* is itself hardness. Grace is never a reward for rejecting the commandment—then it would no longer be grace. The way is still open, and it is the child’s way: bow down, and be baptized upon your faith.

The baptism of girls collapses the equation. Circumcision was given *only* to male children:

Genesis 17:12 · And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

If baptism is the *direct* replacement for circumcision, no girl should ever be baptized. That we *nevertheless* baptize girls shows that baptism *is not* circumcision. But here we must be honest, for the best advocates of covenant theology have an answer: the same difference applies to adults *as well*—only men were circumcised, but adult women are baptized. The baptism of girls *alone* does not collapse the equation; it only shows that the sign has changed. The dispute is never about the **form**—gender or age—but about the **who**: the one who believes. And precisely there lies the deeper cut.

First cut—God Himself redefines the covenant. The best advocates of covenant theology demand: *show us where Scripture abolishes the place of children*. But God *has* said it. He defines the new covenant in His own words—expressly *against* the old:

Hebrews 8:11 · And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

Note what the word carries. The Hebrew “know” here is *yada* יָדָה^{H3045}—not cold knowledge, but *experiential knowledge*: the covenant-intimate, deep knowing, the same word as when “Adam *knew* (yada) Eve his wife” (Genesis 4:1). And the promise is that *all* shall know God in this way—“from the least to the greatest”—“for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness” (Hebrews 8:12). The Greek renders the promise with *εἰδὼ ἐῖδω*^{G1492}, “to know”; but the entire weight lies in the one word *all*. The new covenant, therefore, has no class of “member who must still be taught to know the Lord.” But that is *exactly* what an infant is: one who does not yet know Him experientially, one who *must* be taught. Then the covenant is not yet his—nor is its sign. *This* is the abolition the covenant-theologians seek: not of one verse, but of the covenant’s foundation.

And here stands the one counter-argument of covenant theology. It wishes to say: “Hebrews 8:11 applies to the *invisible* church—the elect who truly know God; the *visible* congregation is always mixed, and it is into that we baptize children.” Three things collapse this. *First*: precisely that mixture is what the new covenant is mentioned *against*—“not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers... because they continued not in my covenant” (Hebrews 8:9). The old covenant’s flaw *was* that it contained those who did not remain; to carry the mixture back in is to make the new covenant the old.

Then: the mixed-body words apply to the *world*, not a consciously mixed congregation—"The field is the **world**," Jesus says Himself (Matthew 13:38). *Finally—and here is the divide upon which everything hangs:* that a congregation *in practice* contains false professors is true (Simon believed, was baptized, and was yet unconverted—Acts 8:13, 21)—but they came in by *false profession*, not by a *rule* to baptize those who do not believe. Scripture never, not once, baptizes anyone *without* profession: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41); "when they believed... they were baptized" (Acts 8:12); "hearing, believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). And the households that are brought *against* this are examined one by one in the chapters on Cornelius, Lydia, and the jailer—not one infant is mentioned in a single one. The visible church's *principle* is therefore confessed faith—never birth. Mixed *in practice* by hypocrites is something entirely different than mixed *by design* by baptizing those who cannot believe. Infant baptism does not mix by accident, but by *rule*—and that is precisely the principle the new covenant rejects.

Second cut—God Himself redefines the "seed." The entire structure rests on the idea that the sign goes to the "seed," and that children *are* the seed. But hear the Hebrew: "seed" is zera זֵרָא^{H2233}, and God said that his zera should *be called* (qara קָרָא^{H7121}) "in Isaac" (Genesis 21:12)—the child of promise, not the firstborn of the flesh. God *names* the seed by election, not by birth. For He separated the seed already in Abraham's own house: Ishmael was Abraham's own flesh, *circumcised* as a thirteen-year-old (Genesis 17:25)—and yet rejected, not the child of promise. The sign was in the flesh; the promise ran another way:

Romans 9:7-8 · Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

The sign, therefore, *never* proved covenant standing—not even under Abraham himself. The flesh received the knife; the promise ran through faith. And who is the seed now? Scripture says it straight out: "they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7); "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed" (Galatians 3:29). If they say "the seed," Scripture answers: the seed is of faith, never of flesh. Thus the structure falls on its own history. Both cuts strike not the roof, but the foundation—the *covenant* and the *seed*. And both those words God has defined Himself. To escape, one must redefine what God has already decided—and *that* is precisely to read one's own ideas into where Scripture has spoken clearly.

The children he invokes turn against him. Jesus and the little children:

Mark 10:13-15 · And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

Modersohn admits himself that the passage is not about baptism—and uses it anyway. Two things collapse this usage. For the *first*: Jesus *blessed* the children and laid hands on them; He *did not* baptize them. A passage where Jesus expressly *does not* baptize children cannot be made into a warrant to baptize them. For the *second*: that the little ones are safe with God does not rest on the debated "of such" (Greek *toioutōn*, "of the likes of these") here, but on places that say it straight out—"even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:14), and David concerning his dead infant: "I shall go to him" (2 Samuel 12:23). If children are already in God's hands by grace, they need no rite to be brought in. And the Greek distinguishes: Mark uses *paidíon παιδίον*^{G3813} (children who can come and be carried), Luke uses *bréphos βρέφος*^{G1025} (infants, Luke 18:15)—but *no* baptismal command in the New Testament ever uses *brephos*.

And the "holy children" (1 Corinthians 7:14) is no baptismal warrant:

First Corinthians 7:14 · For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

The *same* verse "sanctifies" the *unbelieving spouse*. No one believes the unbelieving spouse should thereby be baptized. "Holy" here is relational household-belonging, not a baptismal mandate.

His one real card. There remains Acts 2:39:

Acts 2:39 · For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

This is the only place with real weight—and even it is undermined by its own wording. "The promise" is the gift of the Holy Ghost (v. 38), received by faith. "Children" is *téknon τέκνον*^{G5043}—descendants, not *brephos*, infants. And the sentence is closed by the qualification "as many as the Lord **shall call**" (*proskaleō προσκαλέω*^{G4341})—a call that must be *heard*. If "children" gave a right to baptism without faith, "all that are afar

off” would have to do the same—then the whole world was baptized. This is reviewed in its full breadth in *Through the Waters*, the chapter “The First Commandment.”

Clearly stated: the covenant-thought that underlies the chapter is a *genuine* concern—therefore this is not a zero. But of the about ten scriptures he cites, only Acts 2:39 carries a real claim *for infant baptism*, and even that is undermined by “shall call.” The others are not about baptism, or speak against him.

And the Lord Himself settled it—in one man. Nicodemus had everything a covenant sign given in infancy could provide: circumcised on the eighth day, a son of Abraham, a teacher of Israel. And to *him* Jesus says: you must be born again, of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5). But note *when* it is said—before the cross, before Pentecost. Baptism in Jesus’ name did not yet exist; “water and Spirit” here *cannot* therefore mean Christian baptism. And Jesus interprets Himself: what He calls “born of water and of the Spirit” in verse 5, He repeats immediately as only “born of the Spirit” (John 3:6, 8)—one single “of” (ek ἐκ^{G1537}) binds the two together. Water and Spirit are not two births, but one; the water is the Spirit’s own cleansing, not a separate bath alongside. On the contrary, Jesus reproaches him: “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?” (John 3:10)—and a human can only be blamed for overlooking what Scripture *already* has revealed. If Jesus meant Christian baptism, He could not possibly have reproached Nicodemus for not knowing a rite that did not yet exist. What he should have known was already written—straightforwardly—by the prophets themselves.

For this was no hidden type he could have missed. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart... and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26); “I will put my spirit within you” (v. 27)—the same promise yet again by the same prophet (Ezekiel 11:19-20). David prayed for it in plain words: “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Psalm 51:10)—and the word is bara בָּרָא^{H1254}, the creation-word from Genesis 1:1, in Scripture used only with God as the one who acts: not to polish an old heart, but to create it anew. Moses said it just as openly: “And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart... to love him” (Deuteronomy 30:6)—the circumcision God Himself does *from within*, of which the rite on the flesh was only a shadow. And Jeremiah: “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33). This was not a riddle hidden in a type; it was the open promise, written right through Moses, David, and the prophets—and a teacher of Israel should have known it by heart.

And three things recur in every single one of these words—and they are the whole matter: it is always **God** who does it, always **in the heart**, and always met by a living, responding soul. David *prays* for it; the people shall *then* walk in the commandments (Ezekiel 36:27); the circumcised heart *loves* (Deuteronomy 30:6). Never once is it something done *to* an unconscious person by water—it is God’s new-creating work received

in an awake soul. Therefore, even the naked rebirth, without a single shadow, points toward the one who believes.

The rebuke bites doubly, moreover. For the idea of rebirth *through water* was not foreign in his own world either. The Gentile who turned to Israel's God descended into the water and came up again, and the scholars called him "like a newborn child." That custom was old—older than the scholars could trace to writing—and the teacher of Israel knew the language; he had just never turned it toward himself. Precisely that is what Jesus does: even Abraham's circumcised son must be born again. But the weight does not rest on the custom, only on the prophet's own word; the convert's water is the shadow, the rebirth God promises is the body itself. (The mikvah's own sermon—that the water of the new birth had to come from above—is unfolded in [The Water From Above](#).)

And this newborn water is no late invention—it stands in the Scripture Nicodemus himself owned. Remember Naaman, the Syrian, a Gentile: "then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan... and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Kings 5:14). Hear the words underneath: "dipped himself" is tabal טָבַל^{H2881}—the very word behind the Jewish *tevila*, the immersion; "again" is shuv שׁוּב^{H7725}, the word for turning back and being renewed; "a little child" is naar נֶעָר^{H5288}, a word that reaches all the way down to the infant; and "clean" is taher טָהַר^{H2891}—*exactly* the same word Ezekiel uses when God promises "ye shall be clean" (Ezekiel 36:25). See then what that one verse carries: a foreigner descends, is immersed, comes up *again* as a child, and is made clean—the whole image of the stranger reborn through water, six hundred years before any rabbi wrote a single line. It does not *teach* baptism; it *depicts* the new birth so clearly that the teacher of Israel could not possibly have missed it. Rebirth through water was never something the scholars invented—it already lay in his own prophets.

Here a sharp reader will turn it: "But Ezekiel's *clean water* is fulfilled precisely in baptism—so the verse *grounds* baptism, it does not exclude it." Read then the verse itself. It is **God** who sprinkles the clean water (zaraq זָרַק^{H2236}, Ezekiel 36:25)—His own covenant-act, done *from within* on the heart, not a rite performed *upon* a human (see "The Form of Baptism"). "I will give you a new heart... I will put my spirit within you" (v. 26-27)—all of it *God's* work *in* the human. Therefore, Jesus sends Nicodemus to the prophet, not to a bath: what Ezekiel promises is the new birth the Spirit works, which baptism later seals—not the water that works it.

And here Modersohn is collapsed: if the covenant sign given in infancy were in itself enough to bring a person in, Nicodemus was already in. He is not. The hand-made circumcision did not make him reborn; the new birth he had to enter *himself*, by faith (John 3:15-16). It is Colossians 2:11-12 in flesh and blood: the perfectly circumcised man who *nevertheless* had to be born again.

14 · All Righteousness

14.1 Modersohn's Objection

I cannot comprehend how people can derive from these words of Jesus the necessity of being baptized in the same way Jesus was baptized... He who gives himself to fulfilling all righteousness has come under the law and does not understand the gospel.

— *Ernst Modersohn, "All Righteousness"*

Read him for yourself: Modersohn, "All Righteousness".

14.2 The Answer

Here we must divide the matter in two, for Modersohn misses the mark on one point and hits it on the other.

He misses—because he is attacking a straw man. He assumes that we derive the necessity of baptism from the idea that we must *imitate* Jesus' unique baptism and thereby "fulfill all righteousness" ourselves (Matt 3:15). But the case for believer's baptism does not ground baptism in *imitation*—it grounds it in *union*:

Romans 6:3-4 · Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

"Baptized **into** Christ"—Greek *eis eis*^{G1519}, *into*. We do not copy Jesus' baptism; we are *united* with it. Our water is His water; His death becomes ours. Thus, the objection "His baptism was unique, so we cannot derive a duty from it" does not apply—for we are not deriving an *imitation*, we are entering *into* what He has done. And the fact that *He* fulfilled all righteousness (Matt 3:15) is precisely the reason why *our* baptism is not a performance of works, but an entry into His finished work.

And this is the heart of it: baptism is the *place* where the old man is buried and the new is raised. "We were **buried** with him by baptism... even so we also should **walk in newness of life**" (Rom 6:4); "our **old man** is crucified with him" (Rom 6:6). He who

risers from the water has "**put off the old man**" and "**put on Christ**" (Col 3:9; Gal 3:27)—he is "**a new creature**: old things are passed away" (2 Cor 5:17). Paul calls it outright "**the washing of regeneration**" (Titus 3:5). What Modersohn would reduce to an empty outward act has become, in Scripture, a grave and a birthplace.

But *hear who does the birthing*: the washing "regenerates and renews **by the Holy Ghost**" (Titus 3:5); "that which is born of the **Spirit** is spirit" (John 3:6), and the Spirit "bloweth where it listeth" (John 3:8). It is not the *water* that regenerates—it is the **Spirit**, received **by faith** ("through the faith of the operation of God," Col 2:12). The water is the place and the covenant—**necessary, but not the cause**: just as water washes the exterior, the Spirit cleanses the interior. And precisely for this reason—because the new birth is the work of the Spirit, received by faith—it is impossible for it to be birthed in an unbelieving infant by water alone; if the water itself regenerated, infant baptism *would* work. Thus, Modersohn misses on both sides: baptism is neither an empty ceremony nor a magical water, but the *place* where the one who believes is born again from above and buries the old man.

Herein lies the gravity and the grace in one. John says it with a word we often lose in translation: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that *believeth not* [is *disobedient to*] the Son shall not see life" (John 3:36)—Greek *apeitheo ἀπειθέω*^{G544}, to be *disobedient*, not merely to doubt. Faith and obedience are one. But this is not said to threaten you; it is said to win you. He who calls you to the water is the same One who died for you and *makes intercession* for you (Heb 7:25). So it does not hang over you as a judgment—it stands as an open door. Come; bow down, and be baptized upon your faith.

He hits the mark—and it must be stated clearly. His deeper warning is true:

Galatians 5:4 · Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

If one makes baptism a *work of the law* intended to *earn* righteousness, one has come under the law and "fallen from grace." That is a genuine and necessary guard—and the side of believer's baptism must hear it. Baptism is the *response* of a faith that already saves, not a work that saves. He who is baptized to *become* good enough has misunderstood; he who is baptized because Christ has made him good enough is obeying.

But there is an opposite danger, and it is Modersohn's own: to despise the commandment because it is *too simple*. "If obedience consists in letting ourselves be immersed, then it was easy," he says. Naaman said the same. He expected a great deed, but the prophet only commanded him: "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean" (2 Kings 5:10). He became furious—were

not the rivers of Damascus just as good?—and was nearly on his way home, still a leper. But his servants said: "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" (2 Kings 5:13). Only when he bowed to the "too simple" command and stepped into the water was he cleansed—"like unto the flesh of a little child" (2 Kings 5:14). The simple was never the cheap; it was the test of whether he would obey. To mock obedience because it is easy is to make Naaman's mistake—and to come near to missing the cleansing.

Clearly stated: of two claims here, one misses (union is not imitation) and one hits (beware of making baptism a work of merit). The balance point we both must hold: baptism is the *commanded response* to saving faith—neither an optional extra nor a saving work.

15 • The Form of Baptism

15.1 Modersohn's Objection

It is not true that *baptizo* always means "to immerse"... All the children of Israel were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea—and we know that they went through the sea on dry ground. Thus, this is a case of a baptism where there was no water at all.

— Ernst Modersohn, "The Form of Baptism"

Read him for yourself: Modersohn, "The Form of Baptism".

15.2 The Answer

Here, Modersohn believes he stands on his strongest ground. But it is precisely here that he commits a category error: he uses an Old Testament *shadow* to determine the form of a New Testament *rite*.

First Corinthians 10:1-2 • Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

For what Modersohn cites is not *the baptism*—it is a *picture* of it. Israel “were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor 10:2): they went **through** the water, with the cloud above them and the sea as a wall on both sides. It is an analogy, a *shadow* (Col 2:17)—and the very image is that one goes *through* and is *enveloped* by the water. It is an **immersion** image, not a sprinkling image. That they went over **on dry ground** speaks to the *miracle*—not to the form of baptism. The point is not that the water was absent, but that it stood *around* them. To read “dry ground” as “therefore baptism can be dry” is to turn the image on its head—and to confuse an OT type with the New Testament rite.

And *even if* one were to give weight to the question of form, it does not touch the book’s actual dispute. It was never about the *amount of water*, but the *subject*: a confessing believer, or an incapacitated infant. Modersohn uses the form-argument to defend infant baptism—but even a valid point regarding form would not reach that goal.

But the *core* of the word, and the rite itself, is precisely immersion. baptízō βαπτίζω^{G907} is not the brief dip báptō βάπτω^{G911}—it denotes the *lasting* submersion that transforms (just as a vegetable is first *dipped*, then *submerged* until it is pickled). The practice of the apostles confirms it: “they went down into the water... they came up out of the water” (Acts 8:38-39); the image in Romans 6:4 (buried and raised) presupposes it. And had baptism been sprinkling or pouring, the words existed—rhantízō ραντίζω^{G4472} (to sprinkle, regarding the blood, Heb 9) and ekchéō ἐκχέω^{G1632} (to pour out, regarding the Spirit, Acts 2)—but the Spirit *never* used them for water baptism, not even once.

15.3 “But Ezekiel sprinkles, doesn’t he?”

Ezekiel 36:25 · Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

Modersohn also seizes upon this verse as “a biblical form” for baptism. But look at who is acting—and which word is used. “Sprinkle” here is zaraq זָרַק^{H2236}, the same word used when Moses “sprinkled the blood on the people” (Ex 24:8): God’s own covenantal act, performed *from within* upon the heart. It is not the word for the fine sprinkling with hyssop (nazah נָזַח^{H5137}, Num 19). Ezekiel is therefore not describing the *form* of baptism, but what God does in the heart *before* baptism: He sprinkles the heart clean—the cleansed one then descends into the water himself. The sprinkling verse stands *before* baptism, not in place of the immersion.

Ephesians 4:5 · One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

Clearly stated: in the New Testament, baptism *is* full immersion—that is the word, that is the image (one goes *through* the water), and that is the practice of the apostles.

The only thing Modersohn is right about is that the *amount* of water is not a magical condition for salvation—faith saves. But to go from there to “therefore one can sprinkle an infant” is a double misstep: he confuses an Old Testament shadow with the New Testament rite, and he swaps the *subject*—a believer—with an infant. He does not hit the mark; he is aiming at the wrong target.

And this was no new custom. John’s baptism spoke a language every Jew knew—the **mikvah**, the ritual bath of purification: full immersion in “living water,” which the individual *himself* stepped down into, the covenantal transition from unclean to clean through water. The Hebrew word for this bathing was *rāḥaṣ* רָחַץ^{H7364}—to bathe the whole body, just as the priest Aaron was first bathed (Lev 8:6), just as Naaman was told to wash himself in the Jordan (2 Kgs 5:10, 13), and just as the leper bathed himself in purification (Lev 14:8-9). Two features of the mikvah pointed forward: that the rite was *full immersion*, and that it applied to *the one who went down himself*. But it was a shadow (Col 2:17; Heb 9:10)—baptism in Christ is the reality it pointed toward.

And look at what happened when Naaman obeyed. Elisha told him to *wash* (*rāḥaṣ*); but when he went down, he *dipped* himself—*tabal* טָבַל^{H2881}, the immersion, the very word that became the Jewish *tevilah* and later the Greek *baptizō*—seven times, “and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of **a little child** (naar נֶעָר^{H5288}), and he was **clean** (taher טָהַר^{H2891})” (2 Kgs 5:14)—precisely the word for cleansing that Ezekiel uses (Ezek 36:25). Here lies the entire answer to Modersohn in a single image: rebirth through water belongs to the one who *himself* descends, *himself* obeys, and rises as a newborn child. Naaman had to be persuaded to obey, and he *chose* to go down. An unconscious infant can neither descend, obey, nor choose—it can be carried to the water, but it cannot be *born again* there. The very image Scripture gives of the new birth through water—the stranger reborn as a child—is the path of a *conscious* convert, the exact opposite of the sprinkling of infant baptism. And this was written six hundred years before any rabbi committed it to parchment: no late invention, but the prophets’ own shadow of the baptism of believers. (The full background of the mikvah is unfolded in [Through the Waters](#); the entire Naaman-sign, word for word, in [Naaman](#).)

And hear what the word itself carries: the Hebrew *mikvah* is *miqveh* מִקְוֶה^{H4723}—which means not only “a collection of water,” but *hope* (from *qavah* קָוָה^{H6960}, to wait and hope). The two are one and the same word. And the prophet binds them together: “O LORD, the **hope** (*miqveh*) of Israel... the fountain of **living waters**” (Jer 17:13). The true mikvah—the real hope, the living water one descends into—is God Himself. Therefore, baptism is never just water: it is to descend into Him who is the fountain, and to rise again, new.

16 • Conclusion

16.1 Modersohn's Objection

Whoever treads this path easily falls into legalism and narrow-mindedness...
Thereby, one tears apart the bond of unity between God's children. "One
Lord, one faith, one baptism."

— *Ernst Modersohn, "Conclusion"*

Read him yourself: Modersohn, "Conclusion".

16.2 The Answer

Here Modersohn is at his best, and it must be said clearly: his warning against legalism and narrow-mindedness *stands*. To deny a sincere fellow Christian a place at the communion table because, in our view, he is "not rightly baptized," or to label God's children as "unbaptized," is precisely the party spirit Paul fought against (1 Corinthians 1:12-17; Acts 15:1). He who wins people does not win them through contempt. We take this admonition to heart—and this book is written *without* that spirit: we do not de-Christianize Modersohn, and we shut no one out.

But his positive doctrine—"do not let yourself be re-baptized, for your infant baptism is valid"—rests on a link that does not hold:

Ephesians 4:5 • One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

"One baptism" *presupposes* that infant baptism *is* a baptism. And that is precisely what we deny. The infant never received "the one baptism"—faith *and* water—so when a believer lets himself be baptized, it is no *re*-baptism, but his *first* true baptism. The apostles did exactly this:

Acts 19:4-5 • Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

These men were already baptized with John's baptism. Yet Paul had them baptized anew—in the name of Jesus—because the first baptism was not the full one. Thus, "one baptism" is not an argument against believer's baptism; it *is* the one true baptism.

Here someone will object: "But John's baptism was merely preparatory; infant baptism is full Christian baptism—so the analogy does not hold." Then ask what *makes* a baptism full. Not the formula alone, but the faith it expresses. John's baptism at least carried *repentance and faith* (Acts 19:4); the infant water carries neither. If even a believing baptism of repentance had to yield to baptism in the name of Jesus, a baptism without faith has even less claim to be "the one."

Clearly stated: Modersohn's *love* hits the mark—we must not de-Christianize one another. But his *doctrine* that one should not be baptized upon one's faith rests on a premise Scripture does not provide: that a baptism without faith is already "the one baptism." It is not.

And this must be said plainly, for it has come at a cost. Where Scripture fails him, Modersohn does not lean on a "*thus saith the Lord*," but on what he *feels* must be right—and on a circular argument: "one baptism" forbids re-baptism only if one has *already* admitted that infant baptism *was* a baptism. Emotion and assumption, not the clear testimony of the Word. And the fruit is not small: his writing has kept many from obeying Christ in baptism—convinced that they were *already* baptized, when they never received "the one baptism," faith *and* water. A doctrine that closes the door to obedience is measured not by the author's good intentions, but by the Word.

Therefore, we do not even grant him his word. "*Re-baptism*" does not exist—for to re-baptize presupposes a *first* baptism, and the infant never received it. He who was watered as an infant and now descends in faith is not baptized *again*; he is baptized *for the first time*. The word itself is the argument smuggled into a label. We do not say this in contempt for the man. But precisely for that reason, we do not remain silent about what the doctrine has done. We ask you to do as the Bereans: test every link against the Word itself (Acts 17:11). What Scripture does not bear, does not hold. And regarding baptism upon your faith, Scripture says a clear yes.

Let us be open about what we are doing here: we lay his own words on the table and ask you to discern whom they strike. Modersohn warns those who want to be baptized upon their faith against falling "into legalism and narrow-mindedness," and against "tearing apart the bond of unity between God's children." But look at whom the words strike: the one who only wants to obey his Lord. It is *he* who is labeled a narrow-minded legalist and a man of division—and many a sincere soul has been wounded by precisely this: made embarrassed to desire obedience, talked out of going into the water. Then the warning turns against the one who gave it. It is not narrow-mindedness to bow to Christ's command, and it is no love to shame a child of God into disobedience. We return

the words—not to wound, but so that the one who *has* been wounded shall see where they belong.

And what was the fruit? Here we tread carefully, for Scripture draws a fine line. The new birth gives the Spirit, through faith—not the water; Cornelius' house received the Holy Spirit *before* baptism (Acts 10:44-47), and "he that *believeth* not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). So "without baptism, no new birth" is not true. But baptism is also no optional ceremony: it is the new birth's *presentation*—the burial and resurrection acted out (Romans 6:4)—and those who refused, "rejected the counsel of God" (Luke 7:30). Therefore, the fruit is twofold. Those who rested on infant baptism *without* faith remained dead—not for lack of water, but for lack of faith: "thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Revelation 3:1). And true believers were kept from the obedience Christ commanded—the presentation of the life they already possessed. Neither part is small.

And some will say: why contend—we want unity. But hear what unity *is*. Paul binds the "unity of the Spirit" to "one Lord, one faith, **one baptism**" (Ephesians 4:3-5)—unity rests on the one *true* baptism, not on silencing it. Jesus prayed: "Sanctify them through **thy truth**... that they all may be one" (John 17:17, 21)—unity *flows from* the truth, not past it; "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). A unity that requires Christ's command to be silenced is not the unity of the Spirit—it is the flesh pretending. And pretending regenerates no one: the flesh cannot be united in true joy while it has not yet been made new in God (2 Corinthians 5:17). The false peace only lasts until we stand before the judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10). Therefore, we call to the one true baptism—not *against* unity, but *to* it.

16.3 A Final Word: Hear, and Open Yourself

Finally, a word—not to Modersohn, but to you who are reading. There is one more church in Scripture that rested securely in what it *thought* it possessed: "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing"—and the Lord had to say: "thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). That is the danger of resting on a sign one received as an infant: to say "I am baptized, I lack nothing," and not know. But hear what Christ then does—he does not condemn you, he *knocks*:

Revelation 3:19-20 · As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

And note *who* is knocking, and to *what* meal. It is the **Bridegroom** (John 3:29), and the table he wants to enter is the wedding feast. For this is what baptism truly is: the **wedding day**. No *single* text calls baptism a wedding with that word—this is a picture, not an exposition of one verse; but the picture holds, for Scripture *collectively* points there, and the marriage text itself speaks of the bride who is cleansed “with the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:26). Faith is the love that is already burning; the Spirit is the ring, his earnest (Ephesians 1:14); the bride is betrothed “as a chaste virgin” (2 Corinthians 11:2); and baptism is the wedding itself—where she descends, says her “yes” before God and witnesses, puts on Christ (Galatians 3:27), and the two become one (Ephesians 5:31-32). The Bridegroom himself went down into the water first (Matthew 3:15); baptism is the day the bride answers yes in return. And see then why the child cannot be presented as a bride: **no one is wed unconscious**. A “yes” must be given by one who *can* give it—who hears the voice and opens the door himself. That is this whole book gathered into one picture, and that is the meaning of its title: the “yes” the Bridegroom is waiting for is the bride’s own. So say it, you too—hear his voice, open the door, and be baptized upon your faith.

17 • Summary: Where the book fails

Here is the case in its entirety. Modersohn’s book is warm and learned, but it rests more on pastoral sentiment and inherited tradition than on Scripture itself—and on the very point of contention, it fails through *circular reasoning*. The question to be settled is whether infant baptism *is* a valid, biblical baptism at all. Yet his core proof—“you already have your one baptism (Eph 4:5), do not be baptized again”—only works if infant baptism *already* counts as baptism. Thus, he embeds the answer into his premise: infant baptism *is* baptism because it is assumed to be so, not because he demonstrates it from Scripture. The very word “rebaptism” performs the same sleight of hand—something is only a *re*-baptism if the first event was already a baptism; if it was not, then believer’s baptism is the *first* and only, not a repetition. The proof, therefore, rests on the very thing that was to be proved. The remaining errors follow eight recognizable patterns.

17.1 The Eight Errors

1. Argument from silence (the four households). Cornelius, Lydia, the jailer, Crispus—he reads infants *into* passages where the text mentions none. And where the text *does* speak, it speaks against him: “the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word”

(Acts 10:44); "they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house" (Acts 16:32); "they hearing, believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8).

2. Eisegesis—reading into the text. Mark 10 ("suffer the little children to come") and 1 Cor 7:14 ("the children are holy") are not about baptism. He admits this himself regarding Mark 10—and uses it anyway. And 1 Cor 7:14 also "sanctifies" the *unbelieving spouse*; yet no one baptizes her.

3. The Greek misread. Matthew 28:19 has one imperative verb—*make disciples*—while *baptizing* and *teaching* are participles. There is no "baptize first, teach later." His counter-argument against Mark 16:16 rests on a syntactical error.

4. The broken bridge: circumcision → baptism. Two things are shared: circumcision was given *only to male children* (Gen 17:12)—so any baptism of girls admits that baptism ≠ circumcision; and his own key text says "risen with him *through the faith*" (Col 2:12), while Rom 4:11 makes the sign a *seal* of a faith that is already present.

5. The one real card—and why it falls. Acts 2:39 ("the promise is unto you, and to your children") is his only passage with real weight. But "children" is τέκνον τέκνον^{G5043} (descendants), not *brephos* (infants), and the sentence is closed by "as many as the Lord **shall call**"—a call that must be heard.

6. Correct, but beside the point. On the *mode*, he is right: βαπτίζω does not always mean immersion (1 Cor 10:2—a dry crossing is called a baptism). But the mode was never the dispute. The question is the *subject*—a believer or an infant—and the mode-argument does not touch that.

7. Right about legalism—wrong about "de-Christianizing." That baptism should not be made into a *work of the law* that earns salvation is true, and we take that to heart (Gal 5:4). But Modersohn clothes the objection in a loaded word: that anyone who calls an infant-baptized person to obey is "de-Christianizing" him. Scripture never does this. To follow Christ's clear command is not an attack on a brother's faith—it is the fruit of faith itself (John 14:15). But neither do we let "not de-Christianizing anyone" become a pretext for remaining silent about the commandment. Obedience de-Christianizes no one—it is pushing the commandment aside that is the danger.

8. Precedent is not prescription. His proof for "apostolic" infant baptism is not biblical, but from the church fathers of the 200s (Tertullian, Origen). Precedent is not prescription; a disputed custom is no apostolic command.

17.2 The positive, in one line

Every single baptism in the Acts of the Apostles where Scripture mentions the baptized person's *own* response follows the same order: preach → hear → believe → baptize. And

Jesus himself passed judgment on the opposite path: it was the Pharisees who "rejected the counsel of God against themselves" (Luke 7:30)—in Greek *atheteo* ἄθετέω^{G114}, to *nullify* God's purpose. It is exactly the same **action** as when He condemned tradition over the Word (Mark 7:13, Gr. *akyroo* ἀκυρόω^{G208}): to push aside what God has spoken.

And Scripture gives the picture in a single verse. Naaman the Syrian—a Gentile with no covenant claim—went *down* into the Jordan, *immersed* himself (*tabal*, the root behind the Greek *baptizō*), came up *again* "like a little child" (*na'ar*), and was made *clean* (*taher*—Ezekiel's own word for cleansing, Ezek 36:25). Descent, immersion, new birth, and cleansing in one sentence about a conscious, obedient convert—the very opposite of infant sprinkling, six hundred years before any rabbi. So the Old Testament pictures believer's baptism. And Jesus Himself lifted up this very man at His first revealing as Messiah: in the Nazareth synagogue He read from Isaiah, said "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears," and then pointed to the one leper cleansed in Elisha's day—"none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4:27). Out of all Israel's history He chose the obedient stranger who went down into the Jordan—and it so enraged them they tried to throw Him off the cliff (Luke 4:28-29). (Unfolded in «The Form of Baptism» and in the standalone book [Naaman](#).)

17.3 The Verdict

On the actual point of contention—the baptism of a non-believing infant—only one of about 26 cited scriptures carries a real claim (Acts 2:39), and it is undermined by its own wording.

Worst is the *method*. Modersohn writes a monologue disguised as a dialogue. The conversation partner yields on every single point—"You are right," "I must confess," "I never knew that before"—while counter-arguments are met with feeling and culture, not with Scripture. And when the demand for scriptural evidence arises, it is dismissed with a joke—"ask them if they use an umbrella"—as if the *subject* of baptism were an indifferent custom on par with a weather vane. The reader gets the *feeling* of having seen both sides, while Scripture was never allowed in.

When the text is silent, he fills the void with probability: Tertullian was *against* infant baptism—ergo it *existed*—ergo it is *apostolic*. He turns Tertullian's opposition into proof for what Tertullian was fighting. And where the text speaks against him, he uses it anyway: Mark 10 has "really nothing to do with baptism," he admits—only to then make the verse "a firm support for infant baptism." In "All Righteousness," he twists Jesus' words about obedience into an argument *against* obeying: "Yes, but friend, if obedience consists in our letting ourselves be immersed, then that would be easy." He makes the command too cheap—to make the reader feel ashamed away from it.

The book hits the mark where it defends peripheral points (love), but misses where it must prove its own case.

And here the book turns from Modersohn to you. Jesus made love and obedience one: "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings" (John 14:24). "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). And John cuts to the bone: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4). This is not our judgment on anyone—it is the Master's own test, and it tests each of us. Do you see that He is calling you to the water, yet you hold back? Then the question is not whether you *feel* that you love Him, but whether you *do* what He says.

Therefore, dear reader: if you call Him Lord, then do what He says. Believe—and *be baptized* (Mark 16:16). Not once more; but for the first time, in truth.

18 • To a Specific Reader

Now a word to a particular reader—you may already know it is you. Perhaps you are even someone who was *meant* to be close to God: raised at the altar, wrapped in tradition, holy in name since the cradle. You are kind on the surface, warm at times, quick to help; you give much—and yet, between the words, where your guard slips, your stinginess toward those closest to you shows, and inside, it is empty. You spend your strength holding up a beautiful façade, and it costs you everything—and more besides. You always have a reason—a good one, always a new one—for never joining a living fellowship of believers. You are the one who says within: *no—visions, dreams, signs and wonders, that is not for me*. The one who says *I believe, I believe*—and does not. The one who exalts himself, "holy, holy" on his own lips, while human customs are placed above the written Word. The one who clings to the letter and calls the letter love, but dispenses from an emptiness that is never filled; in the flesh, working out his own salvation, and always—always—falling short; weary in body, exhausted, life ebbing away, because there is no root. What follows is not said prettily, but neither is it harsh. It is said deliberately, as a surgeon cuts—faithful to the truth, for the truth is the only thing that can still reach you. And Scripture's sharpest word to those who hold the Scriptures yet seek human glory is not aimed at wild sinners; it was spoken face-to-face to the most religious men of Jesus' day—those who were all certain they stood close to God:

John 5:39-40, WEB · "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and these are they which testify about me. Yet you will not come to me, that you may have life.

John 5:44, WEB · How can you believe, who receive glory from one another, and you don't seek the glory that comes from the only God?

John 12:43, WEB · for they loved men's praise more than God's praise.

Titus 1:16, WEB · They profess that they know God, but by their works they deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work.

To the one who sets human statutes—a ritual performed on you before you could believe—above the clear command of the Word, the Lord speaks with terrible directness:

Mark 7:8-9, WEB · "For you set aside the commandment of God, and hold tightly to the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and you do many other such things." He said to them, "Full well do you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.

Mark 7:13, WEB · making void the word of God by your tradition, which you have handed down. You do many things like this."

Matthew 15:8-9, WEB · 'These people draw near to me with their mouth, And honor me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. And in vain do they worship me, Teaching as doctrine rules made by men.'

To the one who exalts himself—who thanks God that he is not like other men:

Luke 18:11-14, WEB · The Pharisee stood and prayed to himself like this: 'God, I thank you, that I am not like the rest of men, extortioners, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far away, wouldn't even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

To the life's work of keeping the outside beautiful—the entire exhausting discipline of a fair façade—the Lord speaks the hardest image He ever drew of religious people, and He drew it while weeping over their city:

Matthew 23:27-28, WEB · "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitened tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

Second Timothy 3:5, WEB · holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof. Turn away from these, also.

Revelation 3:1, WEB · "And to the angel of the assembly in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars says these things: "I know your works, that you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

To the one who gives much but dispenses from emptiness—outwardly good, like a cloud that promises rain but gives none:

First Corinthians 13:3, WEB · If I dole out all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but don't have love, it profits me nothing.

Proverbs 25:14, WEB · As clouds and wind without rain, So is he who boasts of gifts deceptively.

Jude 1:12, WEB · These are hidden rocky reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you, shepherds who without fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn leaves without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

To the one who leans on his own works—the flesh cannot finish what the Spirit begins, and no list of good deeds justifies:

Isaiah 64:5, WEB · You meet him who rejoices and works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways: behold, you were angry, and we sinned: in them [have we been] of long time; and shall we be saved?

Galatians 2:16, WEB · yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through the faith of Jesus Christ, even we believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law, because no flesh will be justified by the works of the law.

Galatians 3:3, WEB · Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now completed in the flesh?

And to the weary, the parched, who always falls short: Scripture even explains the exhaustion. The one who makes flesh his arm dwells in dry places and does not see when good comes; the one rooted by the stream does not even know the drought—and without Him, the vine says plainly, you can do *nothing*:

Jeremiah 17:5-8, WEB · Thus says Yahweh: Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from Yahweh. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man who trusts in Yahweh, and whose trust Yahweh is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, who spreads out its roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat comes, but its leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

John 15:5, WEB · I am the vine. You are the branches. He who remains in me, and I in him, the same bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

And to the standing excuse—always reasonable, always freshly renewed—for never joining a living assembly of believers: the Word heard it long ago and named it, without anger: *as the manner of some is*. A coal removed from the fire does not stay lit.

Hebrews 10:24-25, WEB · Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good works, not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as you see the Day approaching.

And to the outward heart: the difference between religion and life is the difference between the letter and the Spirit, between walking alongside Him and being united with Him—for two do not walk together unless they are agreed, and parallel lines never meet; but *he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit* (1 Corinthians 6:17):

Romans 2:28-29, WEB · For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter; whose praise is not from men, but from God.

Romans 8:9, WEB · But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if it is so that the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if any man doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his.

Amos 3:3, WEB · Do two walk together, Unless they have agreed?

And to the one who says *not for me*: the signs are not withheld from you on a whim, and the promise was never confined to another century or another people. The signs follow a chain whose first link is believe and be baptized—and the promise, spoken in the same breath as the command to be baptized, is addressed to *you* by name:

Mark 16:17-18, WEB · These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new languages; they will take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it will in no way hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

Acts 2:39, WEB · For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all who are far off, even as many as the Lord our God will call to himself.”

And understand why this chapter speaks so sharply—why it will not soften. We are commanded to speak this way. Watchmen are set on the walls and forbidden to be silent; the watchman who sees the sword coming and remains polite answers for the blood; and what was whispered in our ear, we are commanded to shout from the housetops. Noah was *a preacher of righteousness* before the flood came (2 Peter 2:5)—and here is the twist only God could write: when the water came, the same water that judged the world bore the ark—and Peter says that water is the antitype of baptism. The water you have avoided is the water that saves.

Isaiah 62:6, WEB · I have set watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day nor night: you who call on Yahweh, take no rest,

Ezekiel 33:6, WEB · But if the watchman sees the sword come, and doesn't blow the trumpet, and the people aren't warned, and the sword comes, and take any person from among them; he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

Matthew 10:27, WEB · What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in the ear, proclaim on the housetops.

First Peter 3:20-21, WEB · who before were disobedient, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, while the ark was being built. In it, few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. This is a symbol of baptism, which now saves you— not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

And hear what awaits on the other side of laying everything down—not another demand, but the rest you have never once known in all your religion:

Matthew 11:28-30, WEB · "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart; and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

The objections you carry are not dismissed—they are weighed in this book, one by one: the house of Cornelius, the house of Lydia, the jailer in Philippi, Abraham and the covenant, the church fathers, Modersohn's own words. Weigh them against the Word, just as you have weighed your own heart. And when you are finished weighing: come to the water. The one you have avoided is the one that saves. If you would then see how deep this pattern lies—eternity itself, placed in your heart and mirrored in the very letters of Scripture—then a journey of its own awaits you: [Olam — the fifth dimension, the way and the seal](#), and its chapter "The Way, simply told," which walks the rest of the Way with you.

19 • To the Shepherd

A final word, especially to you who teach others. This book has laid everything open—Modersohn quoted verbatim, every assertion tested against Scripture; nothing hidden. You are entrusted with much: set to be a shepherd "for the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28), to watch over souls and "give account" (Hebrews 13:17). And of him to whom much is entrusted, more is required: "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke 12:48), and "we shall receive the greater condemnation" (James 3:1). Not because the Master's yoke is heavy—no, "my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30)—but because you answer for what

you teach others. And if you lead them astray, so that they are not born again, it concerns more than yourself. And if you choose silence, that is not an escape either: the watchman who sees the danger and remains silent bears the guilt himself. "But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned... but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand" (Ezekiel 33:6). Silence on this issue does not mean an absence of responsibility if one is actually appointed to be a teacher or shepherd.

Listen then: a shepherd who sets aside one of Christ's clear commands does not fail only for himself—he shuts a door to others. Jesus said it to the teachers of that day with woes: "ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:13); "ye have taken away the key of knowledge" (Luke 11:52). And "if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15:14). Every soul answers for itself (Romans 14:12); but he who *teaches* a flock to regard the Master's command as optional answers for what he taught—for he led them away from the rest, not into it. But you do not stand there powerless, and there is still time: if you know this, then *deliver* them. "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain" (Proverbs 24:11). And the excuse "we knew it not" does not hold before Him "that pondereth the heart... and shall render to every man according to his works" (Proverbs 24:12).

And hear how that same speech ends. Having said "*ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men,*" Christ comes to the close of it, lifts His eyes over the city, and grieves:

Matthew 23:37, KJV · O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

One chapter, one breath: first the shutting-out, then the ungathered. **He would have covered them — and the men who held the keys stood in the way.** That is the whole tragedy of a shepherd who will not lead his people to what Christ commanded: the Lord's wing is spread, and a man in a pulpit is standing between it and the flock. And mark which bird He chose, for He could have chosen any. When the fire or the hawk comes, the hen does not fly. She spreads herself over the brood and takes it, and afterward the chicks are found alive beneath her. **The Hen gave her life to cover them.** That is the measure a shepherd is held to — so weigh what you are actually protecting when you will not say plainly what the water is for. Your standing? Your salary? Your peace with the board? "*He that is an hireling, and not the shepherd... seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth*" (John 10:12). A wing that will not be spread is the one thing a chick cannot survive.

And here is where a shepherd today must look hardest, because he will never recognise himself in a Pharisee. The Pharisee was **hard**. He bound heavy burdens and laid them on men's shoulders (*Matthew 23:4*); he condemned; he was feared. The shepherd of our day is his opposite in every visible way — warm, welcoming, endlessly affirming, a man nobody is afraid of — and so he assumes the woe cannot possibly be addressed to him. But read the charge once more. Christ did not say *you were too severe*. He said: *"ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."* The verdict falls on the **outcome** — people left standing outside the door — not on the tone of voice that left them there. The Pharisee shut the kingdom by making the door too narrow. The kind shepherd shuts it by letting his people believe there is no door at all. **The gentler method is not the smaller sin; it is the better-hidden one.** And Scripture named it long before it wore a lapel microphone:

Jeremiah 6:14, KJV · They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

Slightly. The wound is real, and it is treated on the surface. Nothing false is said — something necessary is simply left unsaid, and the patient goes home comforted and unhealed. Isaiah heard a congregation ask for it by name: *"Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things"* (*Isaiah 30:10*). Paul warned Timothy the day was coming when men *"will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears"* (*Second Timothy 4:3*). Mark who does the heaping. A pulpit that never names repentance and never names the water is not usually one man's cowardice; it is what a congregation has quietly commissioned, and what a man has quietly agreed to supply. That is the peril of a ministry measured by how well it is loved. **Nobody leaves offended, and nobody goes down into the water.** And the Lord did not soften His verdict on the pleasant prophets because they were pleasant: *"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets"* (*Luke 6:26*). Better to be the man who says the hard thing while there is still time, than the man everyone thanks at the door and nobody follows to the river.

If this applies to you, then repent while the door stands open: *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten"* (*Revelation 3:19*). So test this with all the diligence the office requires; search the Scriptures yourself, just as the Bereans tested even Paul (*Acts 17:11*), and weigh even the most difficult texts: *Hebrews 10:26-29*; *Hebrews 6:4-6*; *2 Peter 2:20-22*. Then lead the flock to the water the Master commanded. A faithful shepherd does not fear this test—he leads the way in it. And when *"the chief Shepherd shall appear,"* you shall receive *"a crown of glory that fadeth not away"* (*1 Peter 5:4*).

And Scripture makes the gravity even sharper. When Saul obeyed *halfway* and spared the best *"for sacrifice,"* Samuel answered: *"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offer-*

ings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice... For **rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry**" (1 Samuel 15:22-23). Hear it clearly: to hold *stubbornly* to an inherited custom against a clear command—even in the name of love or unity—is in God's sight akin to sorcery and idolatry. Not because the one who does it is a sorcerer, but because *the stubbornness itself* is what He weighs, not the sacrifice you bring instead. Obedience is better than the finest sacrifice.

And lest this remain abstract, weigh it against two of the most honored names in modern revival — for this failure wears a good man's face far more often than a wicked one's. The Great Commission is a single sentence with two verbs: "baptizing them... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). Strike out the baptizing and you have not streamlined the commission — you have cut it in half. And "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Ernst Modersohn — "the German Moody" — did more than neglect the command: he took up his pen to lead sincere souls *away* from the water, defending the font he was carried to as an infant. Yet the American Moody he was named for did not clear himself by praising it. Dwight Moody honored baptism with his lips — "Baptism is all right in its place; God forbid that I should say anything against it" — and in the same breath filed it beside going to church and turning over a new leaf, warning only that "you may be baptized into the visible church, and yet not be baptized into the Son of God" (*The Way to God* — «*The Gateway into the Kingdom*»; the same again in his *Wondrous Love* addresses). True, as far as it went; but in his great appeal he pressed men to the new birth and never to the water — naming baptism only to warn them off it, while the apostles never once let a believer leave without it (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:36-38; 10:48). The one led people away; the other would not lead them in. Neither did what the Master did and commanded — for the Lord Himself went down into the Jordan "to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15), and charged us to do the same (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16). "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Matthew 15:8). Hear it without softening: a shepherd who will not walk his flock to the water rejects the command in deed, however warmly he blesses it in word. Where either man now stands is God's to judge and not ours (2 Timothy 2:19; Romans 14:4) — but their pattern is a warning written large, and you who teach must not repeat it.

19.1 When opposition comes

A word also to you who read this and wish to follow the Master down into the water—for you may encounter three final objections, and it is good to recognize them before they arrive. The first is **unity**: "Do not contend; we want to be one." But listen to what Jesus actually prayed: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," *and then* "that

they all may be one" (John 17:17, 21). The unity He prays for springs *out of* the truth; it is never purchased by setting it aside. He who holds fast to a clear commandment does not divide—it is he who *reinterprets* the commandment who tears it apart. You are not breaking unity; you are holding fast to the one faith upon which it rests.

The second objection sounds unanswerable: "There is but *one* baptism (Eph 4:5)—you shall not be baptized again." But read the entire verse: "One Lord, **one faith**, one baptism." The one baptism is bound to the one *faith*, in the same breath. What was done to you as an infant, without faith, was not yet *that* baptism—it was an act without the one thing that makes a baptism a baptism. Therefore, you are not letting yourself be baptized "once more": you are receiving the one baptism for the *first* time. Modersohn's own question—"should I be baptized once more?"—has but one answer: no, *this* is the one time.

And a third objection, subtler and more respectable than either, is *works*: "Baptism is something you *do*, and we are saved by grace, not by works" (Ephesians 2:8-9). It wears the gospel's own armor — which is what makes it dangerous. But see where Scripture files the washing. In the very sentence where Paul says "*not by works*" alongside it, he sets baptism on the *opposite* side from works: "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done... but by the washing of regeneration*" (Titus 3:5). The washing is not among the excluded works; it *is* the mercy that saves. Nor *could* it be a work, for faith itself is none: "*to him that worketh not, but believeth ... his faith is counted for righteousness*" (Romans 4:4-5). Baptism is faith obeying — in it you *receive*, you do not *earn* — the twin of believing and repenting, which no one dares call a work. So the objection collapses on its own verse: whoever brands baptism a *work* to be waved aside by "*not by works*" has taken the one thing God set on the side of mercy and dragged it to the side of merit — and let his system overrule his Lord: "*Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition*" (Mark 7:9). Grace does not retire the command Christ gave. Grace is *why* He gave it.

And the objection fails before Scripture is even opened — it collapses on its own logic. Everything hangs on one slippery word: *work*. In Paul's mouth a "work" is a deed by which a man tries to put God in his debt — to *earn* (Romans 4:4). In this objection "work" quietly widens to mean *anything a person does at all*. Grant that, and watch what it burns down: **believing is something you do; repenting is something you do; coming to Christ is something you do** — so by the identical reasoning, "*not by works*" would forbid faith and repentance too, and no gospel is left to preach. A premise that deletes believing and repenting has refuted itself. So the objector cannot mean it — and he does not: he keeps faith and repentance as free *receiving* and brands *only baptism* a "work," with no principled line between them. That is not exegesis; it is **special pleading** — the word "work" bent to exclude the one command he had already resolved to avoid. And mark the irony: the man raising it *thinks he is defending Scripture* — "not by works!" — while he

is in fact following a human inference the text never makes and flatly contradicts (Titus 3:5). He has set his own reasoning above the Word he claims to obey. **On this point, the one most certain he is following the Bible is precisely the one who is not.**

And know this before you step down: the opposition to the water is not always in the mind — for some it is felt in the body. Scripture is not shy about it. Where Christ draws near to set a captive free, the unclean spirit *cries out* and resists: *"Let us alone... art thou come to destroy us?"* (Mark 1:24); and at the moment of release *"the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead ... But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose"* (Mark 9:26-27) — the very shape of baptism, down as one dead and up alive. This is why some, coming out of the occult or long bondage, testify to a fight at the water's edge — a choking, a dragging back, a strength not their own — and why the witnesses standing there see it too. We are not conjuring a drama; Scripture records such deliverances in exactly that form — the crowd *"hearing and seeing"* (Acts 8:6), *"unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many"* (Acts 8:7) — and the delivered still report it. The reason is plain: baptism joins you to the cross where Christ *"spoiled principalities and powers... triumphing over them"* (Colossians 2:15). The water is the eviction. So if something in you or around you fights to keep you from it, do not read that as a reason to wait — read it as a witness to what the water means. The victory is not yours to win at the river; it was won at the cross the river proclaims.

And here is why the enemy spends his fury at *this* threshold above all: it is the **death** that ends his hold — *"he that is dead is freed from sin"* (Romans 6:7) — the day a soul is *"delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son"* (Colossians 1:13); the water that saves is the very *"like figure"* of the flood that once drowned a violent world (1 Peter 3:20-21). It is the eviction, and it cannot be un-crossed. But mark *how* he fights it, for most will never feel it in the body — he fights it in the **mind**. He rarely needs a manifestation; a *reason* will do. Scripture shows him at work *"in the children of disobedience"* (Ephesians 2:2), snatching the word away *"lest they should believe and be saved"* (Luke 8:12), *corrupting the mind from the simplicity that is in Christ* (2 Corinthians 11:3) — so the plainest command in all Scripture comes to be buried under the most sophisticated objections. When the Master spread His table, the invited did not curse Him: *"they all with one consent began to make excuse"* — a field, some oxen, a wife (Luke 14:18-20). Reasonable, respectable, and fatal. This is why the resistance so often wears theology's robe — *"baptism is a work," "I was baptized as a child," "there is but one baptism," "do not divide"* — each feeling like the person's own careful reasoning, for a man is *"drawn away of his own lust"* (James 1:14) while another whispers the argument. And the witnesses agree: ask those who at last went down into the water, and many will tell the same story — a strange reluctance, a rising tide of reasons and delays right to the river's edge, *"not yet," "I must understand more," "it isn't needed"* — and then, on the far side, the reasons gone and a peace they cannot explain. That reluctance was never reasoning; it was resistance.

So *"the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God"* (2 Corinthians 10:4-5) — which is the whole labor of this book: to pull down the imaginations that stand between a soul and the water. So when the excuses rise in you, do not trust them; weigh them, as this book has, against the plain word.

But here the warning turns to good news, and the whole matter comes to rest. It is not enough for the house to be *emptied* — the enemy counts on that. Hear the Lord Himself: when the unclean spirit goes out and later returns, *"he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first"* (Matthew 12:43-45). A swept house is not a safe house; a cleaned life, a turned leaf, a rite performed on an empty soul — all are *swept and garnished*, and all are *empty*, and the empty house is retaken. This is the very reason baptism is joined, in the Lord's own ordering, to the gift of the Spirit: *"Repent, and be baptized... and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 2:38). The water does not merely evict the old tenant; it is the threshold at which the true Owner takes possession — a new heart given and *"I will put my Spirit within you"* (Ezekiel 36:26-27) — so the body becomes *"the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you"* (1 Corinthians 6:19), and the standing command is now *"be filled with the Spirit"* (Ephesians 5:18). This is the safeguard the seven cannot break: not an empty room swept for their return, but a house **occupied** by Another. So do not settle for being merely cleaned or merely convinced. Go down into the water, die to the old, and be filled — for the surest guard against every spirit that would return is the Spirit who has come to stay.

See it clearly, so that no one can take it from you: you are neither rebellious, proud, nor divisive. You are obeying. And if someone meets you with these three cards, they are not handing you the Scriptures, but the prevailing sentiment surrounding them. Weigh the *argument* against the Word, just as this book has done from the very first page—and then go down into the water.

20 • A Testimony

Here, Scripture has finished speaking. Everything preceding this stands upon the Word alone—and so it must be. Yet God encourages us to share what He has done: *"Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee"* (Mark 5:19); *"ye shall be witnesses unto me"* (Acts 1:8); and the believers *"overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony"* (Rev 12:11). This final chapter is therefore

not a proof; it is a *testimony*. A vision or a word from God never establishes a doctrine; nor do we interpret the Bible according to feelings or senses, but rather listen to it. It must always be tested *by* Scripture, never placed *above* it:

First Thessalonians 5:21 · Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

But when the Holy Spirit leads a person to the very thing the Word independently teaches—*before* the person even knows the passage—then that is a confirmation worth sharing. Here are two.

20.1 The New Birth — and the Three Eggs

When I accepted Jesus in 2008, I received a vision:

In a vision, I am standing at the bottom of a large white egg... In from the outside of the egg comes a soft light... and I felt that everything was as if clean, no mess, nothing, just me.

— *Born Again, "Salvation is knocking"*

A picture of my own spirit, reborn and cleansed in God. But I doubted the vision for seven years. Then, in 2015, God answered—in the Trondheim town square in Norway. We were sharing the gospel, and I was drawn toward a young man standing with three young women. His name was Azariah, a youth pastor, and for the first time in his life, he had heard the Holy Spirit speak to him *with an audible voice*—twice, with the same command to go to the city center:

Take three eggs with you and go down to the city center!

— *The Holy Spirit to Youth Pastor Azariah, Trondheim, 2015*

He went, but found nothing in the center, and took an unusual route back—straight into us. I told him that *"the eggs mean new life"*—and only on the train home that day did I understand that the Father, after seven years, had answered me that the vision in the egg was my own **new spirit, before I was baptized**—or "re-baptized," by some definitions. Yes, I was baptized as an infant, but to no difference in the spirit—this is my witness!

Three eggs, three young women, three men of God—a threefold testimony. For in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established (Deuteronomy 19:15).

— *Born Again, "Back to Norway"*

Notice the order: the vision *confirmed it before I had even read and understood the Bible*. And what the Word teaches, independent of me, is precisely this:

John 3:3 · Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

God thus sealed His own truth regarding the new birth according to His own rule of law—according to two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15). Not to provide a new doctrine, but to confirm that which is already written.

20.2 Ablution — the cleansing, and the children

The second word came to me around 2016, while I was pondering what happens to children who die before they are born again:

The Holy Spirit gave me the word *ablution*, a term I did not know the meaning of... Ablution means cleansing... and children are already in God's hands **independent of baptism**... This stands in contrast to when a child becomes an adult and is held responsible for their own relationship with God and for accepting Jesus. None of my children are actually infant-baptized.

— *Born Again, "Believer's Baptism"*

"Ablution"—from the Latin *ablutio*, washing away. Only *afterward* did I find it written: it is the Greek baptismός βαπτισμός^{G909}, "washings," in Hebrews 9:10. That led me to Leviticus 8, where Aaron was ordained as a priest—washed with **water**, anointed with **oil**, and **blood** offered. The same three witnesses:

First John 5:7-8 · For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

The Spirit gave me in 2016 one word that anticipated the entire case in this book—that baptism is the *cleansing*, the fulfillment of the Old Testament cleansings, where water, Spirit, and blood meet. And in the same moment, He showed me what we have seen throughout the entire answer: children are already in God's hands by grace, while the adult must choose for themselves.

And what the Spirit showed me about the children, the Master Himself had already said. Luke tells us that they brought *infants* to Him, and He took them to Himself: "Suffer

little children to come unto me... for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16). *Such*—Greek *toioútōn τοιοútων*^{G5108}, after their *kind*, not after their works. And He said it just as plainly: "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:14)—it is *not* the Father's will that one of them perishes.

And the law had already said it. When an entire generation fell in the wilderness for their unbelief, the children were spared—those "which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil" (Deuteronomy 1:39); they went into the land and inherited it. The threshold is *to know* (yada יָדָע^{H3045}) good and evil—the same word that carries the promise of the new covenant: "they shall all know (yada) me" (Jeremiah 31:34). He who does not yet know is carried by grace until he can choose for himself. Therefore, David could say of his dead infant, fully confident: "I shall go to him" (2 Samuel 12:23)—in Hebrew *I go to him* (halakh הָלַךְ^{H1980}): reunion, not loss.

Hebrews 10:22 · Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

And here everything He gave me meets in a single verse: "hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience"—that is *ablution*, the cleansing from within by faith; "bodies washed with pure water"—that is the baptism that followed. First the heart, then the water—exactly that order, and exactly how the egg cracked.

And let me say it plainly, for it belongs here: I was *born again almost against my own belief*. When I accepted Christ as Lord, I still had no faith in the Bible as the Word of God—but I had *sought* God for many years. And He who promised that those who seek Him with all their heart shall find Him (Jeremiah 29:13), answered. I understood later that even the seeking was His work—"no man can come to me, except the Father... draw him" (John 6:44); "we love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19)—and that faith was not my achievement, but "the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). The Spirit gives birth sovereignly, like the wind that "bloweth where it listeth" (John 3:8). Then came the vision, before I had read a word about it in Scripture. And baptism followed as a *consequence*—and it was *there* that the egg cracked: the old man was buried, the new raised (Romans 6:4).

The evangelist said that *the peace would go*—and the outward, felt peace went. But another peace remained, on the inside, where it cannot be taken from me: "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27); "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts" (Philippians 4:7). I still have that—not as the world gives, but from within. This, too, I only include as a testimony; the Word carries the doctrine alone.

20.3 A Witness in Our Own Time

While I was working on this very answer to Modersohn, I stumbled upon a testimony I was not looking for—and I do not believe it was by chance. A woman, LuAnn, tells how, at eighteen, she was struck by a vehicle and lay dying. She felt herself dragged toward perdition while she cried out that she was “a good person”—she who had even mocked the phrase “born again.” Then a voice broke in like a thunderclap, and spoke the very thing Jesus said to Nicodemus:

Except you are born again, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

— *The voice LuAnn heard at the edge of death*

She was brought back to life by God’s own breath, came to faith, and went down into the water. What this book says from its very first page, she saw at the brink of death: the new birth is no doctrine to be argued away—it is the entrance itself. That this came to light precisely while the answer was being written, I do not count as coincidence. Hear her tell it herself: [Watch LuAnn’s testimony](#).

20.4 In Conclusion

I do not base the doctrine on this—Scripture carries it alone. I include it as a testimony: the Word convinced me first; then God confirmed it in my life. The entire account—the vision, the three eggs, the baptism, and the word “ablution”—is in [Born Again](#).

And even the testimony points back to where it all began: to the Word. If you call Jesus Lord—then do what He says, and let your love show it. Believe, and be baptized.

How this was made

This is the author's own work. It was composed with [junifye](#) and an AI assistant, drawing its Scripture and original-language work (Greek, Hebrew, cross-references) from [Darash](#) (Hebrew *darash*, “to seek, inquire, study”), a tool and reference work for the Bible in its original languages.

Both are **MCP** tools you can use from Claude Desktop or any AI assistant. Study the Word in its original tongues with Darash, read the Scriptures in [Bibleread](#), and browse the [public library](#).

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