

Gelassenheit—Purp

Overview of a tract by Andreas Rudolff
An explanation of the concept of

One who lets go of or leaves something is a “detached” person. Although one who has been abandoned may be called a detached person, the difference is that “abandoned” is passive (the action has been done to him) and “detached” is active (or reflexive, meaning the person does it to himself). If you wish a Latin term for this, I can think of no better one than the word of Christ, who said, “Whoever leaves father and mother, etc.” The Latin uses *relinquo* (relinquish). However, there are other Latin terms, such as *deserere* (desert) or *renunciare* (renounce) or *dimittere* (dismiss), which describe Gelassenheit.

Take note how that the love to a wife surpasses and cuts out the love to father and mother, where it is written, “A man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife.” In the same way, the love of God ought to displace all love and delight which we naturally have toward created things. Yes, we must dismiss all created things if we want to have God as our Protector and Indweller or Lord.

From the Gelassenheit that married couples experience (letting go of father and mother to adhere to a spouse), we can learn how we are to divest ourselves of all things and rise above the created, for the uncreated and higher things.

What we must let go of

Note, then, that I am not in any way to seek my own. The word “mine” includes my honor, my advantage, my hurt, my desire, my displeasure, my reward, my suffering, my life, my death, my sadness, my joy, and everything that might affect a person—be it in material goods, or in things that affect the body or inner being, such as intellect, willpower, and desires. Everything to which the ego and “I-ness” may cling must leave and fall off, if I am to be “detached.”

We must continue in this path, not just start in it. I must be so fully immersed in God’s will as to have truly died to self. I should desire therefore to be nailed to a cruel, shameful cross and have a holy dread of “myself” and to become wholly ashamed of “my” thoughts, desires, and “my” self-centered deeds, as if they were a horrible vice that should be avoided, just like one avoids a yellow, pussy boil. I should see my inability to do the good and, on the other hand, my capacity for and inclination toward everything evil, punishable, and shameful.

Seek only the necessary

I should seek nothing from created things but what is necessary for survival. We must seek God, but we must not

seek the created unless it is to serve, just as a sick person eats his food with great trepidation, from sheer necessity or as a medicine for survival, but not for mere pleasure. Yes, eating and drinking is the body’s necessity, but a God-fearing person does so with great fear, being ever mindful not to forget that the One who gave him food and drink is God alone.

Christ says in clear words: “Unless a person leaves all he possesses, he cannot be my disciple.” Note how bitter and harsh the school of Christ is, and what a frightful, pitiable thing it is to our intellect, will, and nature. Note also that Christ was right in saying, “Whoever does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” Lk. 14:27 Christ teaches that the kind of Gelassenheit (detachment) which surrenders everything is a daily cross that we must carry without standing still. Rather, we must *follow* Christ and be where Christ is in will, thought, love, and desire, suffering at the right hand of God. Everything that is ours must be fused into God’s eternal will and become nothing.

Christ did not speak of this virtue only one time or in a farewell speech. Rather, He said many times—and in one epilogue frequently—that an apprentice had to do the same as the person who is considering building a house or tower: he would have to check his pouch or bag and count his wealth to see whether he could finish such a building. When he finds himself sufficiently capable, he then begins building.

All Christians must do the same. Those who intend to become students of Christ must first consider and mull over everything. Yes, in the end, they must bid them farewell and yield them in a way and with the intention of one who finally lets go of something he hates and no longer wants to take to himself. This is called *renunciare* (renounce)—to completely let go of a thing and drive it away from oneself.

Gelas

Bind the gift u
Break the ala
Lay Thy hands u
Hold me unde
I would not be
When my Master
Though I struggle
In the Potter’s
Take my dearest
If they tend aw
Lift my eyes from
So that Thou
Joy is here up
Pain and tears m
But I will not,
That which is

—Clau

Useful Detachment

F-Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1486-1541)
of the German word *Gelassenheit*.

Anyone who thus surrenders all things can become a disciple and apprentice of Christ. The soul must be “without form”, i.e. naked and deserted of all created things, if it is to receive God and let God possess, rule, and adorn it, just like the first creation (of heaven and earth). Until we can divest ourselves of everything created, we should not dream of becoming a disciple of Christ. Let no one think that God enters, as long as creatures fill, comfort, or please the soul, as it says in Jeremiah 7:24, “They departed from me in their desires and the wickedness of their hearts and refused to hear me.” If we turn our backs on such a Lord and repudiate Him, should He then turn His face toward us and be well-disposed? No, these “two-timers” have turned Christ’s forgiveness into a lottery.

Gelassenheit

upon the altar,
abaster bowl,
upon my spirit—
r Thy control.
found unwilling
gives commands;
, keep me, Savior
tender hands.
t heart’s desires,
way from Thee;
m fleshly baubles
art all I see.
on Thy altar—
ay be the price—
cannot, offer
s no sacrifice.

dia Esh

Spiritual circumcision

Were I to love something besides God, I should not love God with my whole heart. For that place in my heart which loves something else is taken away from God; hence, I cannot love God with all my heart. This love is spiritual circumcision, i.e., a cutting away from the heart of all created things. As long as not all of the created things are separated from the heart, the heart is not able to love God fully. When help, comfort, and trust are sought in a thing which is not God, the heart is uncircumcised. For this reason it is said that faith circumcises the heart, because it lifts up the heart to trust God, robbing it of comfort in everything else.

Attached to God

It must be noted, moreover, that God attaches and affixes us with that glue called love. A truly believing heart clings to nothing other than God, and since the love of God is the glue that binds us to God, it follows that a circumcised and loving heart has abandoned all created things and in love clings to nothing other than God. Further, it is impossible for God’s love to enter a heart unless love, desire, comfort, and trust in anything created have gone

from the heart. Circumcision and expulsion of the created happens so that we might love God with *all* our hearts, saying, “God shall circumcise your heart that you might love him with all your heart.” De. 30:6

Gelassenheit and circumcision of the heart are the same thing

Consider whether it is not the same to say, “No one can love God unless his heart is circumcised of all desires, trust, comfort, and fear of created things,” and what Moses and Christ say, “Unless we let go of all we have (i.e., the things in which we find comfort, pleasure, and trust, or which we fear), we cannot be His disciple.” We read that Christ called numerous people to His supper, none of whom came, since each of them had an excuse. One had bought land, another had bought some oxen, the third had entered into marriage, etc. Lu. 14:18-21 All of them discovered their clogged and unyielded hearts in that they could not or would not hear God’s voice and accept the invitation to a good meal.

In this parable, Christ also names the created things we must abandon if we wish to hear and obey His voice and teaching and truly know and love God. Christ names land, oxen, and a wife. Although these point to all other creatures which we are to let go of, I will name a few other things Christ also mentioned: houses and fields; brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers, children, and wife; and further, our own soul.

ness and self-ness

If we wish to be yielded persons and to become disciples of Christ, we must let go of everything and surrender all that might affect us in any way. For example, nothing good must be appropriated to ourselves. Neither must we covet anything natural. It is certainly true that if you reach the point at which you have divested yourself of your own person, you are free of everything.

I do think it necessary to say again that such *Gelassenheit* is not the same releasing as one might drop a nickel out of his hand. We must not, of course, kill either father or mother, or commit suicide. Hence, this *Gelassenheit* is a cutting off of love, pleasure, worry, trust, and fear that we may have in and for ourselves and the things that are ours. In short, such letting go is to destroy all that we are and a turning away from everything that we might covet, so that God alone is our love, pleasure, worry, trust, help, fear, and everything. To Him we must cling!

Letting go and letting God provide

In common with animals, we seek food and drink. And, we relate with our relatives. But as a Christian, we do not have it in common with unbelievers to be full of care about these things. We must be free of care, like animals, and enjoy our food only as a necessity—as cattle do.

Yet, we are worse than horses and mules, for we eat and drink more than is necessary and what is good for our health. We anger God by setting up our belly as our god. We ought to open our eyes and look to the lilies and trees and to birds and learn from these creatures just who it is that clothes and feeds them, and whether they worry or not. But because we worry about clothing, a place to rest, and food and drink, we must needs cling to these created things. But Christ has this to say about that: “O ye of little faith.”

Anyone who is burdened by confidence, comfort, desire, care, and fear with regard to money or food sins against faith by as much as he has cares about money and food. Why? Because Christ says that we always show little trust and confidence in His heavenly Father when we worry excessively about food, drink, and clothing.

Note that this sin (unyieldedness in trusting God) indicates or reveals an uncircumcised heart, and that with such a sin a person must hate or at least neglect God and count Him for naught or little. You may conclude from all this that we must cling to God, and His kingdom alone, in sure confidence, with fervent love, and in certain fear ... and all necessities will be added unto us. Mt. 6:33

No looking back

Yes, we must firmly and with steadfast eyes seek God alone so that we would rather die than look back. Similarly, we should prefer to die a thousand times rather than willingly step away from God even once. Whenever we fix our eyes on temporal goods, it means stepping away from God. Christ says it like this, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” Lu. 9:62

Hear then, my brothers, that we are unfit to enter the school of Christ when we look back. And understand how you must cut away everything or sever everything from

your heart and you must sweep your house clean, if you wish to be an apprentice of Christ. Place Luke 9 and Luke 14 side by side and compare them by combining their meaning, and you will undoubtedly get a shock and cry out! What poor people we are! O, how we are in need of the suffering of Christ at all times.

Remember Lot's wife

Lot's wife was probably looking back on her goods, income, or friends when God had sulphur and fire rain down on Sodom and Gomorrah, destroying everything that was blooming. Now, the same thing that will happen when Christ shall appear, must also take place within a person when Christ secretly lets His light shine in the heart. If we wish to be yielded Christians, we must not be anxious to acquire goods and preserve wagonloads full of food. Neither must we be shocked when the goods we now have already acquired vanish in an instant. Neither should the goods we now have either comfort or console us. Instead, we ought to accept the kingdom of God, that is, His eternal will, with love and delight.

Pride not yourself of your Gelassenheit

Note that when you recognize, confess, and shun the above-named things that we must detach ourselves from, do not let your knowledge, confession, and letting go become your love and joy, lest you perish for loving your Gelassenheit. It often happens that a person is slapped in the face for God's sake, and he decides not to take revenge or offense. Yet, he would very much like to have his patience praised, or to be taken for a Christian on account of his patience! Or, he might be secretly irked for having allowed himself to be hit without hitting back, although he was strong enough to have defended himself, or allowed himself to be called a donkey, partier, or peasant, without retorting. Nonetheless, he has an eye on his suffering and stands there, enjoying and loving it when he should have fled this love also, for God's sake, to serve God alone and focus his eyes on God only.

It all boils down to this: all who wish to serve God ought not to serve Him halfheartedly, but with all their soul and will.



We must let go of earth so that
we can grasp heaven.
This "letting go" is "Gelassenheit."

Self

From all this you may learn the meaning of self and also how a true and detached service of God uplifts the eyes of the soul toward the unfathomable will of God, creeping into the fathomless good which is God himself, where there can be no *ego* or self. For as long as the soul looks upon nothing other than God's will and the eternally good which is God, the heart, too, will not be grounded in any created thing.

In short, anyone who wishes to be totally yielded and be the one who detaches himself must irrevocably divest himself of self and freely give up his I-ness or self-centeredness. Then the yielded self must become one with the divine will, so that he does not see, hear, taste, desire, understand, or will anything other than God's will. Whatever prevents or diverts a person from accepting God's will must become a place of martyrdom.

This is the cross which we must carry daily!

The new life in Christ

Then the despised, surrendered, and forsaken ego, selfhood, or I-ness becomes a Christ-like, Christian life. And one discovers that his life is no more human life, but divine life, and that it is not I, but Christ in me. Ga. 2:20 Whether or not we have thus yielded our ego or self can be determined and decided when nothing pleases us except what pleases God, and when we desire nothing of any created thing except what God wills. Then we are detached, because we no longer love what *we* will, but only that which *God* wills. And, we desire everything to will what God wills. In this, i.e., in God's will, our love, desire, joy, glory, life, and salvation are rooted. We therefore pray sincerely, "Lord, your will be done on earth as in heaven! Let your will work mightily in all earthly creatures!"

Christ—the way, the truth, the life

God sent us Christ His Son (who led such a yielded life in the highest and best manner), to be the way, the truth, and the life. We will not be deceived as long as we follow in His steps and walk as He walked. That is why we must see what Christ and the immovable truth teach.

Two kinds of seeds

Christ told a parable in which a seed that had not died bears no fruit and remains alone. To such a seed, Christ compares the person who loves his natural life, but ends up destroying it. He destroys it by keeping it alive, in the same way that a grain cannot bear any fruit as long as it is alive.

According to this, we cannot have new life or good works as long as we love ourselves. Everything is lost and worthless and not of God, no matter how much we make a show of it, as long as we remain in self-love. God curses such a tree and its leaves, and consigns it to the fire because it bears no fruit. We may run, work, sing, fast, pray, suffer tribulation ...but it is all in vain in God's eyes if we continue to love the natural life.

Hatred of the soulish life

It is not sufficient simply not to love one's soulish life. A strong salt must be added; a supernatural hatred and envy must replace our love for created things. There, the grain must die and bear fruit. There, love, desire, partiality, and all lusts of the soul must die. There, the soul irrevocably turns away from the natural desires. This is baptism in the death of Christ—the old, natural life is being attached to the cross



When the soul irrevocably turns away from the natural desires, it is a baptism in the death of Christ.

of Christ; pierced, killed, and buried with Christ in baptism, to rise again. Not in the old, natural life, but in the new, unnatural life. Ro. 6:4-11 One is then able to say truthfully, "It is not I who live, but Christ in me." Ga. 2:20

There are two lives which are opposed to each other and in tension: the old and natural, and the new or supernatural; the life of the old Adam and that of the new Christ; the earthly and the heavenly life. The love of and inclination to the old life comes from below, from the earth and the flesh, and it is earthly and carnal. For that which is born of flesh is flesh. But the new life, the new love, the new inclination,

God gave things to man to be used, not to be loved.

Origen - Commentary on Song of Songs

and the new fear come from above, from heaven where re-birth takes place. Jn. 3:6

The old life consists of disobedience and self-will and loves itself in everything it does; it complains and groans when someone gets too close. The new life is the pure will and obedience of God and hates the soulishness of a person in all its active and affective aspects; it kisses the father's rod, however hard and long he may be hit.

The dangers of our life

You can see what great danger our life is in and how quickly an unyielded person destroys his soul. For as soon as we love ourselves and not purely for the sake of God's will, we are corrupted. I suppose that Gelassenheit may be seen in the words of Moses, "You must not till or plow the land with firstborn oxen. You must not shear firstborn sheep. They are holy to God." De. 15:19 What else is tilling and plowing to indicate to us, than that we must not serve ourselves with God's gifts? Firstborn oxen belong to God, therefore no one was allowed to till with firstborn oxen.

All good gifts and everything God wants, He creates in His servants; and all that is good belongs to God, not to us. For this reason, we must not serve ourselves, but God, with good things. And what does "You must not shear firstborn sheep" mean, other than that you must not seek your own advantage, honor, glory, or any other thing for your own benefit, in all the things God consecrated unto Himself—which is everything God created?

Faith

Christ does not conceal who is able to believe. "Seek God's honor, which comes from God alone, if you wish to believe," says Christ. When God's glory, honor, praise, will, and love rule in us with power, then ego, I-ness, and self-absorption must wither and become nothing. This is the very characteristic and nature of faith—to see God's glory and our

shame, God's virtue and strength and our wickedness and weakness, God's something and being and our nothingness.

Therefore, it is impossible to have faith and remain outside of Gelassenheit, because God's honor must be directed to God and not to ourselves. Where there is no Gelassenheit, there is no faith.

Pure love

Christ says also, "I know that you do not have God's love in you, for you seek your own honor." Jn. 5:44 God's love and the love of our soulishness cannot stand together. Now, it might happen that we abandon lands, parents, children, and wife, and yet be unyielded in our soul. This happens when we love and enjoy the surrender and yielding in and of themselves.

Whatever I am to love, I must love it for God's sake and because it pleases God. If I love a person for the joy of it or for my sake, I must relinquish love when such a person is against God.

The reason for our creation

God created us for good works, which He made so that we might walk in them. Ep. 2:10 If there is a good thought, a good will, a good existence, or a good work in us, it is God alone who is the Creator of them. We have no right to claim them or fancy ourselves to be the originator of them. If we attribute something to ourselves which we have no right to claim, we steal and rob God of what is His.

Unyieldedness is a thieving robber, claiming good that is not its own. If God moves a person to do good, it is like a stick that is being moved. We cannot appropriate to ourselves that which happens through Christ's power in us, any more than we can attribute power to a dead stick that is moved.

I will soon write more on this subject. Meanwhile, be manly and strong in your desire toward God! Amen. ~

How to Fill a Cup with Pure Water

Step number one in filling a cup with pure water is surprisingly simple ... yet so often overlooked.

Thoroughly clean all the original contents out of the cup!

Yet, how often in the Christian life we try to get our life filled with Christ and His kingdom, all the while tenaciously hanging on to parts of our old life.

Sure, we dump the "ugly" out, or try to. But for us to pick out the bad and leave the good (especially if we are a new believer who does not have his senses exercised to discern both good and evil) can be compared to trying to pick the dirt particles out of a cup of muddy water.

Would it not be best to simply empty *all* the contents of the cup first, and then refill it with pure water?

Many people fear Jesus' teaching to "forsake all." It seems overboard, if not despotic. Or at least undoable. Most say, "But Jesus really didn't mean that ..."

But Jesus did mean just what He said! He is not trying to make life miserable for us. He is simply trying to tell us that we should let go of everything in our life—detach ourselves from it—and let *Him* decide what to put back in.

Otherwise, it is a case of either trying to fill a dirty cup with pure water, or *us* trying to pick the dirt out of a cup of muddy water.

Jesus will not force us to empty our life. He calls us to that, but He will wait until we respond willfully ... so that He can then fill our life with what He has chosen for us! ~