

Peter Martyr Vermigli's *Common Places*:  
The Table of Contents

1583

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# Table of Contents

Editor's Introduction	2
A General Distribution of the Whole Work	4
First Part - The Knowledge of God by Nature and Scripture	5
Second Part - Christ, our Redeemer, under the Law and in the Gospel	9
Third Part - The Grace Offered us in Christ and its Fruits	15
Fourth Part - The Outward Means of Fellowship with Christ	19

Text in [brackets] is the editor's. Updated English, punctuation, capitalization, formatting and minimal stylistic changes have been made in order to make this work easier to read, while always seeking to preserve the original intent of the author. See footnote one of the Editor's Introduction for more details on the original text. This specific version of this work is licensed under the very sharing-friendly:

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## Editor's Introduction

Peter Martyr Vermigli's *Common Places* became a standard textbook of Reformed systematic theology for the second generation of the Reformation. This work translated into English, however, has remained buried in the archives of Europe... until now (2015). While the *Common Places* are still not fully available on the internet, this edited Table of Contents, it is hoped, will spur interest in, and give one a taste for, them.<sup>1</sup>

'Common places' were something of a genre of their own during the Reformation. One of the main methods of teaching by the reformers was by writing running commentaries on Scripture. Upon reaching a significant Biblical text, the author may divert into a short, or sometimes lengthy, diversion upon a hot topical issue of the day. Hence, these important Biblical verses, and the discourses founded upon them, became known as 'common places'. As these gems, revealing the mind of the esteemed author on important matters, were scattered all throughout their writings, later editors often collected them together to form something of a systematic manual of the Protestant faith.

Vermigli (1499-1562),<sup>2</sup> the Italian reformer who also greatly influenced the continued reformation in Strasburg, Germany and England, had, with a little prodding from Theodore Beza, expressed his desire for such a book of his to be published, though the first edition (in Latin) did not see the printing press until 1576, 14 years after his death.<sup>3</sup> Robert Masson, the editor and a Huguenot minister, arranged the common places

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<sup>1</sup> The complete work is available for those who have full access to Early English Books Online, which is usually only at select research universities. This Table of Contents was edited from inside [Marten's 1583 London edition](#) (not simply from EEBO's table of contents, which is not as accurate). The page numbers correspond to that edition. See there for any inquiries into the original text. EEBO's table of contents is very limited in its readability; hence the need for this contemporary edition. The addition of significant labor and value, the reworking of the text into a substantially new text, with introduction, new formatting, etc., makes this contemporary edition fully within copyright laws.

<sup>2</sup> See [Wikipedia](#) for a life.

<sup>3</sup> It is on Google Books [here](#).

following the pattern of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in four books.<sup>4</sup> In 1583 Anthony Marten translated the *Loci Communes* into English and greatly added to it from Vermigli's writings (from whence is this contemporary edition).<sup>5</sup> Fifteen editions in all spread throughout Europe.<sup>6</sup>

To feed more upon Vermigli's thoughtful and solid expositions of Biblical teaching, purchase a few (or more) of his ten volumes that currently comprise his (incomplete) works translated into English (which set does not include his *Common Places*, as they were compiled by another) at [Reformation Heritage Books](#) and [Amazon](#). Please enjoy the Table of Contents to Vermigli's *Common Places*!

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<sup>4</sup> Which work of Calvin's was arranged after the Apostles' Creed. This may be discerned in the *Common Places* below as well. Thus, it appears that the 'A General Distribution of the Whole Work' and the prefaces to each part, were by the pen of Masson and/or Marten.

<sup>5</sup> Some discourses, propositions and letters at the end of the original work have not been included in the Table of Contents here. See the [original](#) for them.

<sup>6</sup> A number of them can be found at [Post-Reformation Digital Library](#).

## A General Method and Distribution of the Whole Work<sup>7</sup>

Since all divinity (wherein man's chief good is expressed) is accomplished in the true knowledge of God and that we acknowledge God to be partly the Creator of the world and partly our Redeemer in Christ:

First those things which belong to the knowledge of God, either by the guiding of nature or by the doctrine of the Scriptures, are to be considered.

Secondly must be declared how God our Redeemer in Christ appeared to the fathers: first under the Law and afterward unto us in the Gospel.

Howbeit, since it is necessary that we receive the grace which is offered us in Christ, lest it be frustrated in us, it behooves us besides this to have a respect unto the fruits and effects [of grace in us].

And last of all we must consider the outward means or helps whereby God brings us to the fellowship of Christ, and after He has brought us, does retain us in the same.

Which method we having followed, have distributed all these places into four parts.

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<sup>7</sup> [This section and the prefaces to each of the four Parts, is by the pen of the editor, either Masson and/or Marten.]

## The First Part

Albeit that the knowledge of God is naturally engrafted in the minds of all men and is also made the more manifest by the things created, yet such is the corrupt nature of men as it shortly vanishes away, unless we acknowledge God such as He is in the holy Scriptures and do avoid all illusions and sleights of Satan.

And in the Scriptures, besides diverse praises of God, first, He must be considered in Trinity and unity; and secondly, as He created heaven and earth and moderates all things by his providence. Wherefore, in this first part we have set down those places which pertain to the setting forth of these principal points.

Ch. 1 - Of the ends of good and evil among the Christians	1
Ch. 2 - Of the natural knowledge of God by his creatures	10
Whether there be any yet that know not God, and after what sort they be inexcusable	13
Ch. 3 - Of prophesy, and of the name, causes, definition, and effects thereof	17
Of prophets, and the difference of them; and of the means to discern the true from the false; and whether and how far forth there be prophets at this day	19
Ch. 4 - Of visions, and how, and how much, God may be known of men as well in this life as in the life to come	24
What manner of visions the fathers had; and whether God or only angels appeared unto them	25

Ch. 5 - Of dreams, and of the causes and effects of them	32
Ch. 6 - Of the Holy Scriptures, and of the dignity and profit of them, and of the means how to understand them	39
An exhortation to the reading of the Holy Scriptures	44
Of history	48
Ch. 7 - Whether young and incontinent men, etc. should be excluded from hearing of the Word of God	52
Ch. 8 - Of lots, and of Urim and Thumim	58
Ch. 9 - Of miracles, and the definition and difference of them	62
Whether it be lawful for the godly to desire miracles, and why there be none in this our age	69
Ch. 10 - Whether it was Samuel or the devil that appeared unto Saul	72
Of the nature, knowledge, power, apparitions and answers of devils	77
Whether, and how far, devils do know things to come	81
Whether they know men's thoughts	83
Of the power of devils, and of their strength in doing of things	85
What bodies they assume to themselves	87
Of the illusions called Lamiae, Empusae, and such like	89
Whether it be lawful to take counsel of the devil, and to use his help	90
Whether we may use enchantments to take away mischiefs	91
Ch. 11 - Of a good intent, zeal, prescription, and custom	92

The means to know which is a good zeal, and which is a bad	94
Ch. 12 - Of the name of Jehovah, and of sundry attributes of God	99
Of the Holy Trinity	100
That Christ, being God, is eternal	101
That the Holy Ghost is one God with the Father and the Son	103
How much the remembrance of wrath, and the affect of repentance is attributed unto God	109
Ch. 13 - Of the creation of all things	110
Of the creation of angels, their sundry names, visions, assuming of bodies, office, dignity, order and degrees	111
Of man	121
Of the soul	121
Wherein consists the image of God	123
Of paradise	125
The long life of the fathers	126
Of giants	128
Ch. 14 - Of felicity in general	132
Of pleasure, and wherein it may concur with the chiefest good	134
Of honor	141
Of riches, beauty, nobility and such like	145
Of contemplation	149
That virtue is not the chief good	176

The causes of felicity	154
Whether any man can be counted happy while he lives here	158
Ch. 15 - Of the providence of God	167
Ch. 16 - Whether God be the author of sin	176
Of three sorts of Gods working about his creatures	181
Of the will signified, and the will effectual	201
Ch. 17 - How it may be said that God does repent, and does tempt	206
How it may be said that the kingdom of Saul should be established forever, the same being before appointed to the tribe of Judah	208

## The Second Part

The second part comprehends the common places which do express the natural corruption of all mankind by the Fall of Adam: the which corruption of human nature is the more clearly discerned by opposing it to the justice of God, which is expressed in the law. Yet so, nevertheless, as by the acknowledging of sins, we are brought to receive the grace of God, which was made manifest first to the fathers in the Old Testament, and then when the time was come, in the Gospel. Afterward is set forth unto us Christ the Messiah, who is the well-spring and substance of all good things, who all manner of ways fulfilled all the parts of our salvation.

Ch. 1 - Of sin, especially original, and of the depraving of the whole nature of man	213
By what means the corruption thereof is derived into the posterity	231, 239
That sin is the cause of death	243
That by sin all things are subject to vanity	247
Ch. 2 - Of free-will	252
Of voluntary, and not voluntary	280
Of man's election, or making of choice	293
Ch. 3 - Of the Law	297
Of philosophy, and the comparison thereof, especially moral, with divinity	300
Necessary rules for the interpretation and keeping of the law	304
Ch. 4 - The First Precept, where is entreated of idolatry, and sundry kinds of idols	307

Whether it be lawful for Christians to dwell among infidels	309
Whether it be lawful to have teachers, which believe not in Christ	311
Of the suffering of Jews and heretics	328
What is, to tempt God	331
Of curiosity	332
Ch. 5 - The Second Precept, which concerns images, their beginning, antiquity, and cause	333
Whether it be lawful to express Christ, the angels and other creatures in images	340
Whether it be lawful to place images in churches	351
Of Cherubim and Teraphim	356
Of human sacrifices	359
Of the establishing of the Second Commandment, whether the child shall bear the iniquity of the father	362
Ch. 6 - The Third Precept: of sanctification of the name of God and generally of oaths	368
Ch. 7 - The Fourth Precept: of sanctifying the Sabbath Day	374
Of other feast days of the Jews	376
Whether it be lawful to solemnize the birthday of any man	377
Ch. 8 - The Fifth Precept: of the honoring of superiors	377
A comparison between the duties of parents and magistrates	377
What dominion the husband has over the wife	379

Of ambition	381
Of the desire of praise	382
Of flattery	383
Ch. 9 - The Sixth Precept: of friendship	384
Of homicide	385
Whether Elias did well in killing of the Baalites	386
Of parricide	390
Of sword-play	390
Whether it be lawful for any man to kill himself	391
Of repelling of violence	397
Of cursings, imprecations, and bannings	397
How far it may be lawful to rejoice in our enemy's overthrow	400
Of a curse and shunning of revenge	403
Of the affects in general	405
Of shamefastness	411
Of temperance	412
Of mercy and nemesis	412
Of cruelty, envy, emulation and revenge	414
Ch. 10 - The Seventh Precept: of not committing adultery	418
Of matrimony and concubines	418
Of polygamy	420

Of barrenness	430
Whether it be lawful for children to marry without the consent of their parents	431
Of rapine, or violent taking away	437
Whether marriage be lawful in persons of sundry religions	442
Of degrees forbidden in marriage	447
Dispensation for marriage	453
Of dowries	454
Of divorcements	457
Whether matrimony be a sacrament	462
Ch. 11 - Of whoredom, fornication, and adultery	468
Of bastards	475
Of idleness	479
Of the punishments of adultery	482
Whether the man or woman do sin more grievously in adultery	489
Of reconciliation of man and wife	495
Of wine and drunkenness	497
Of dances	503
Of garments and apparel	506
Of counterfeit and false coloring	507
Ch. 12 - The Eight Precept: of not committing theft	517
Of beneficence and hospitality	518

Of benefiting and unthankfulness	523
Of plays and pastimes	524
Of gentleness and affability	528
Ch. 13 - The Ninth Precept: of not bearing false witness	528
Of contumely	528
Of suspicions	533
Of mocking and taunting	534
Of deceit or guile	534
Whether guile be lawful for the rooting out of idolatry and heresies	539
Of dissimulation	541
Of truth, and of a lie	542
Whether it be lawful to lie for preserving the life of our neighbor	546
Whether we may lie for modesty's sake	547
Whether faith against a promise breaker must be kept	548
Of a fable and apology	550
Ch. 14 - The Last Precept: against lusting	551
Of the comparison between sins	553
Of charity, which is the fulfilling of the law	556
Of salutations	560
Whether the commandment of loving God with all the heart, etc. may be kept in this life	562
Whether the first motions should be accounted sins	565

Whether by rewards we ought to be moved to the obedience of God	573
Ch. 15 - Of the use and abrogating of the law	575
Ch. 16 - Of the likeness and unlikeness of the old and new league or covenant	582
A comparison of the sacraments of the fathers with ours	586
Ch. 17 - Of Christ, and his manifestation in the flesh, and by what means He performed all the parts of our salvation	599
Ch. 18 - An exposition upon the twelve articles of the Christian Faith [The Apostles' Creed]	612

## The Third Part

After these things do follow the causes and the general means whereby we are both put and retained in the possession of Christ and salvation, and there be also showed the effects of Christ remaining in us. All which things the places following do plainly teach, to wit, the places of predestination and calling, of faith and hope, of adoption, justification, Christian liberty, of repentance, of Christian life, of patience in afflictions, of the prayers of good men, and finally, of eternal life.

Ch. 1 - Of the eternal predestination of God, wherein also are refelled <sup>8</sup> the arguments which the adversaries make against the same	1
Whether God would destroy any man	42
Ch. 2 - Of the calling of God	44
Of grace	47
How grace and works are unto eternal life	52
Ch. 3 - Of faith and the certainty thereof; and how faith may agree with fear	63
Of security	67
Whether true faith may be separated from charity	69
How faith excels charity, and the contrary	75
What union the godly have with Christ	77
Of the adoption of the sons of God	79

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<sup>8</sup> ['To fell' is to cut an argument down; to refell is to do it again]

The description of Christian hope	82
Ch. 4 - That justification is of faith only, not of works	89
Ch. 5 - Of peace, bondage, Christian liberty, of offense, of conscience, and of the choice of meats	161
Ch. 6 - Of vows in general	175
Of the vow of Nazareth	177
Of the vow of Jephtha	182
Of the Rechabites	188
Of peregrinations [journeys of pilgrims]	191
Ch. 7 - Of marriage, and the sole life, especially of ministers	192
That chastity is no common gift of God	198
Ch. 8 - Of repentance, of contrition, confession, and satisfaction	203
Ch. 9 - Of the works of supererogation, and imagined perfection of the Papists	227
Of purgatory and papistical indulgences	232
Ch. 10 - Of tears, fasting; and there also of Lent	245
Of watches	256
Ch. 11 - Of a Christian life, and there of sundry vocations	257
Of friendship	258
How we are to take counsel of God	260

The example of Naaman declared	263
That the possession of riches is lawful for godly men	267
Ch. 12 - Of liberality and magnificence	269
Of fortitude, mortification, enduring the cross and affliction	270
Of flight	287
Whether David did well in fleeing to the Philistines for fear of Saul	291
Whether the holy men were inferior to the ethnics in abiding adversities	296
Ch. 13 - Of holy prayers	300
Whether prayers be the causes of the benefits of God	310
How God says He will give that which He will not give, and contrariwise	310
Of the abuse of foreign language	309
Of music and meter	311
Ch. 14 - Of death, and of the consolation of the godly against the same	314
Of mourning for the dead	315
Of burial	319
That souls loosed from their bodies do not sleep	323
Of wandering spirits	326
Ch. 15 - Of the Resurrection	327
Ch. 16 - Of the taking up of Elijah and Enoch, and of their return	370

Ch. 17 - Of the end of the world	385
Of the Last Judgment	386
That all men's glory in heaven shall be alike	389
Of the change of all things	393

## The Fourth Part

Albeit that the Holy Ghost be the only bond that we have with Christ, the most assured pledge of our salvation and an undoubted Preserver of all things, yet uses He thereunto diverse, and those external, instruments, for into the church He gathers the elect by the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, and also by the bond and help of discipline He begets us unto Christ, and He feeds and preserves us unto eternal life. And herewithal He raises up and uses magistrates, as well for the preservation of man's society and public honesty as also for the maintenance of piety and service of God. So then this last part comprehends an explication of these places.

Ch. 1 - Of the catholic Church	1
Of sundry ministers of the church	3
Of calling to the ministry	9
Of the dignity and contempt of the ministers	15
Of the office of pastors	16
Of the efficacy of the ministry	21
Of the mighty simpleness of the ministry	25
Ch. 2 - Of receiving or refusing of rewards, gifts and offices, especially by ministers of the Church	28
Of the immunity of ecclesiastical men	32
Ch. 3 - Whether there may be two heads of the Church, one visible and another invisible	35

Ch. 4 - Of ecclesiastical laws	41
An exposition of the place, 'To obey is better than sacrifice,' expounded	44
Of traditions	45
Of discerning of spirits	45
Of the authority of the Councils, Fathers and Canons	46
Ch. 5 - Of ecclesiastical discipline	56
Of excommunication	57
Of order and comeliness in the church	65
Of temples and their ornaments	65
Ch. 6 - Of schism, and whether the professors of the Gospel be schismatics	68
What is become of them which in times past died in the Pope's religion	91
Ch. 7 - Of sacraments in general	96
Of circumcision	107
Ch. 8 - Of baptism, baptizing of infants and the holiness of them	120
Ch. 9 - Of the dedication of temples, the baptizing of bells, of oil, salt, spittle, wax and other papistical corruptions about baptism	123
Of papistical holy water	138
Ch. 10 - A treatise of the Lord's Supper, with a preface before the same	147
An epitome of the disputation of the Eucharist, against Steven Gardiner	198

Ch. 11 - Of the communion under one kind	204
Ch. 12 - Of the Mass	215
Of sacrifice	220
Another common place of sacrifice	223
Of altars	225
Ch. 13 - Of a magistrate, of the difference between civil and ecclesiastical power	226
Of tenths [tithes]	235
Ch. 14 - Of the office of magistrates, especially in exercising of judgment	245
That the charge of religion belongs to princes	246
Of the clemency of princes	248
Whether it be lawful for magistrates to let the guilty go unpunished	248
Whether the excuse of David in not punishing of Joab may be allowed	256
Whether it be lawful to release just punishments which are enjoined by laws	260
Of executions and hangmen	264
Of sanctuaries	265
Ch. 15 - Of exile or banishment	270
Ch. 16 - Whether it be lawful for a Christian man to go to law	275
Ch. 17 - Of war or battle	280
Whether unto a just war the authority of the magistrate be always required	284

Whether it be lawful for the godly to have peace with the ungodly	294
Of fences and of spies	296
Of treason	297
Ch. 18 - Whether captives ought to be put to death or saved	300
Of things which be taken by the right of war	303
Ch. 19 - Of a several combat hand to hand	308
Ch. 20 - Of nobility	311
Of bondage	313
Of debtors	315
Of occupying of merchandise	317
Ch. 21 - Of troubles and sedition	319
Whether it be lawful for subjects to rise against their prince	324
Whether Jehoiadah did right in putting Athalia from the kingdom	325
Of enduring of tyranny by godly men	328