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

1583

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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.¹

‘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),² 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.³ Robert Masson, the editor and a Huguenot minister, arranged the common places

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¹ 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.
² See Wikipedia for a life.
³ It is on Google Books [here](#).
following the pattern of John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in four books. 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). Fifteen editions in all spread throughout Europe.

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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4 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.

5 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.

6 A number of them can be found at Post-Reformation Digital Library.
A General Method and Distribution of the Whole Work

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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7 [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

Ch. 2 - Of the natural knowledge of God by his creatures

Whether there be any yet that know not God, and after what sort they be inexcusable

Ch. 3 - Of prophesy, and of the name, causes, definition, and effects thereof

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

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

What manner of visions the fathers had; and whether God or only angels appeared unto them
Ch. 5 - Of dreams, and of the causes and effects of them

Ch. 6 - Of the Holy Scriptures, and of the dignity and profit of them, and of the means how to understand them

An exhortation to the reading of the Holy Scriptures

Of history

Ch. 7 - Whether young and incontinent men, etc. should be excluded from hearing of the Word of God

Ch. 8 - Of lots, and of Urim and Thumim

Ch. 9 - Of miracles, and the definition and difference of them

Whether it be lawful for the godly to desire miracles, and why there be none in this our age

Ch. 10 - Whether it was Samuel or the devil that appeared unto Saul

Of the nature, knowledge, power, apparitions and answers of devils

Whether, and how far, devils do know things to come

Whether they know men’s thoughts

Of the power of devils, and of their strength in doing of things

What bodies they assume to themselves

Of the illusions called Lamiae, Empusae, and such like

Whether it be lawful to take counsel of the devil, and to use his help

Whether we may use enchantments to take away mischiefs

Ch. 11 - Of a good intent, zeal, prescription, and custom
The means to know which is a good zeal, and which is a bad zeal

Ch. 12 - Of the name of Jehovah, and of sundry attributes of God

Of the Holy Trinity
That Christ, being God, is eternal
That the Holy Ghost is one God with the Father and the Son
How much the remembrance of wrath, and the affect of repentance is attributed unto God

Ch. 13 - Of the creation of all things

Of the creation of angels, their sundry names, visions, assuming of bodies, office, dignity, order and degrees
Of man
Of the soul
Wherein consists the image of God
Of paradise
The long life of the fathers
Of giants

Ch. 14 - Of felicity in general

Of pleasure, and wherein it may concur with the chiefest good
Of honor
Of riches, beauty, nobility and such like
Of contemplation
That virtue is not the chief good
The causes of felicity

Whether any man can be counted happy while he lives here

Ch. 15 - Of the providence of God

Ch. 16 - Whether God be the author of sin

Of three sorts of Gods working about his creatures

Of the will signified, and the will effectual

Ch. 17 - How it may be said that God does repent, and does tempt

How it may be said that the kingdom of Saul should be established forever, the same being before appointed to the tribe of Judah
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.

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  By what means the corruption thereof is derived into the posterity 231, 239
  
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Whether it be lawful to have teachers, which believe not in Christ

Of the suffering of Jews and heretics

What is, to tempt God

Of curiosity

Ch. 5 - The Second Precept, which concerns images, their beginning, antiquity, and cause

Whether it be lawful to express Christ, the angels and other creatures in images

Whether it be lawful to place images in churches

Of Cherubim and Teraphim

Of human sacrifices

Of the establishing of the Second Commandment, whether the child shall bear the iniquity of the father

Ch. 6 - The Third Precept: of sanctification of the name of God and generally of oaths

Ch. 7 - The Fourth Precept: of sanctifying the Sabbath Day

Of other feast days of the Jews

Whether it be lawful to solemnize the birthday of any man

Ch. 8 - The Fifth Precept: of the honoring of superiors

A comparison between the duties of parents and magistrates

What dominion the husband has over the wife
Of ambition
Of the desire of praise
Of flattery

Ch. 9 - The Sixth Precept: of friendship
Of homicide
Whether Elias did well in killing of the Baalites
Of parricide
Of sword-play
Whether it be lawful for any man to kill himself
Of repelling of violence
Of cursings, imprecations, and bannings
How far it may be lawful to rejoice in our enemy’s overthrow
Of a curse and shunning of revenge
Of the affects in general
Of shamefastness
Of temperance
Of mercy and nemesis
Of cruelty, envy, emulation and revenge

Ch. 10 - The Seventh Precept: of not committing adultery
Of matrimony and concubines
Of polygamy
Of barrenness

Whether it be lawful for children to marry without the consent of their parents

Of rapine, or violent taking away

Whether marriage be lawful in persons of sundry religions

Of degrees forbidden in marriage

Dispensation for marriage

Of dowries

Of divorcements

Whether matrimony be a sacrament

Ch. 11 - Of whoredom, fornication, and adultery

Of bastards

Of idleness

Of the punishments of adultery

Whether the man or woman do sin more grievously in adultery

Of reconciliation of man and wife

Of wine and drunkenness

Of dances

Of garments and apparel

Of counterfeit and false coloring

Ch. 12 - The Eight Precept: of not committing theft

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A comparison of the sacraments of the fathers with ours

Ch. 17 – Of Christ, and his manifestation in the flesh, and by what means He performed all the parts of our salvation

Ch. 18 - An exposition upon the twelve articles of the Christian Faith

[The Apostles’ Creed]
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\(^8\) the arguments which the adversaries make against the same

Whether God would destroy any man

Ch. 2 - Of the calling of God

Of grace

How grace and works are unto eternal life

Ch. 3 - Of faith and the certainty thereof; and how faith may agree with fear

Of security

Whether true faith may be separated from charity

How faith excels charity, and the contrary

What union the godly have with Christ

Of the adoption of the sons of God

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\(^8\) ['To fell’ is to cut an argument down; to refell is to do it again]
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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.

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Of excommunication

Of order and comeliness in the church

Of temples and their ornaments

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What is become of them which in times past died in the Pope’s religion

Ch. 7 - Of sacraments in general

Of circumcision

Ch. 8 - Of baptism, baptizing of infants and the holiness of them

Ch. 9 - Of the dedication of temples, the baptizing of bells, of oil, salt, spittle, wax and other papistical corruptions about baptism

Of papistical holy water

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    That the charge of religion belongs to princes

    Of the clemency of princes

    Whether it be lawful for magistrates to let the guilty go unpunished

    Whether the excuse of David in not punishing of Joab may be allowed

    Whether it be lawful to release just punishments which are enjoined by laws

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