

John Locke, Writings on the New Method (1686): A New Method of a Common-Place-Book
in J. R. Milton, Brandon Chua, Geoff Kemp, David McInnis, John Spurr, and Richard Yeo (eds), The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke
Published in print: 2019 Published online: March 2020

Main Text

[320] 30 pg 279

A NEW METHOD OF A COMMON-PLACE-BOOK

pg 280

Sigla

F The French version in the *Bibliothèque universelle et historique*.
P *Posthumous Works of Mr. John Locke* (London, 1706).
W *The Works of John Locke, Esq.* (London, 1714).

pg 281

[311]

A NEW
METHOD
OF A
Common-Place-Book.

Translated out of *French* from the Second
Volume of the *Bibliothèque Universelle*.

pg 282

[312]

	a		a
	e 4		e
A	i	F	i
	o		o
	u		u
	a		a
	e		e
B	i	G	i
	o		o
	u		u
	a		a 16. 20.
	e		e
C	i	H	i
	o 18. 24.		o
	u		u
	a		a
	e		e
D	i	I	i
	o		o
	u		u
	a		a
	e		e
E	i. 2. 14.	L	i
	o		o
	u		u

pg 283

	a		a
	e		e
M	i	S	i
	o		o
	u		u
	a		a
	e		e
N	i	T	i
	o		o
	u		u
	a		a
	e		e
O	i	V	i
	o		o
	u		u
	a		a
	e		e
P	i	X	i
	o		o
	u		u
	a		a
	e		e
R	i	Z	i
	o		o
	u	Q	u

EPISTOLA.] *A Letter from Mr. Locke to Mr. Toignard, containing a New and 2. Easie Method of a Common-Place-Book, to which an Index of two Pages is sufficient.*

At length, Sir, in obedience to you, I publish my *Method of a Common-Place-Book*. I am asham'd that I deferr'd so long complying with your Request, but I esteem'd it so mean a thing as not to deserve publishing in an Age so full of useful Inventions as ours is. You may remember that I freely communicated it to you, and several others, to whom I imagin'd it would not be unacceptable. So that it was not to reserve the sole use of it to my self, that I declin'd publishing it. But the regard I had to the Publick discourag'd me from presenting it with such a

Trifle. Yet my Obligations to you, and the Friendship between us, compel me now to follow your Advice. Your last Letter has perfectly determin'd me to it, and I am convinc'd that I ought not to delay publishing it, when you tell me that an Experience of several

3. Years has shew'd its Usefulness to you and several of your Friends to whom you have communicated it. There is no need I should tell you how useful it has been to me after five and twenty Years Experience, as I told you eight Years since, when I had the honour to wait on you at *Paris*, and when I might have been instructed by your learned and agreeable Discourse. What I aim at now by this Letter, is to testifie publicly the Esteem and Respect I have for you, and to convince you how much I am, Sir, your, &c.

Before I enter on my Subject, it is fit to acquaint the Reader, that this Tract is disposed in the same manner that the Common-Place-Book ought to be disposed. It will be understood by reading what follows, what is the meaning of the Latin Titles on the top of the backside of each Leaf, and at the bottom of this Page.

EBIONITÆ.] *In eorum Evangelio, quod secundum Hebræos dicebatur; historia quæ habetur Matth. xix. 16. & seqq. ut alia quædam, erat interpolata in hunc Modum: Dixit ad eum alter divitum Magister quid bonum faciens vivam? Dixit ei Homo legem & Prophetas fac. Respondit ad 14. eum, feci. Dixit ei: vade,*

ADVERSARIORUM METHODUS.] I take a Paper Book of what size I please. 4. I divide the two first Pages that face one another by parallel Lines into five and twenty equal parts, every fifth Line black, the other red. I then cut them perpendicularly by other Lines that I draw from the top to the bottom of the Page, as you may see in the Table prefixed. I put about the middle of each five spaces one of the twenty Letters I design to make use of, and a little forward in each space the five Vowels one below another in their natural Order. This is the *Index* to the whole Volume how big soever it may be.

The *Index* being made after this manner, I leave a Margin in all the other Pages of the Book, of about the largeness of an Inch in a Volume in Folio, or a little larger, and in a less Volume, smaller in proportion.

If I would put any thing in my COMMON-PLACE-BOOK, I find out a Head to which I may refer it.

pg 287

5. Each Head ought to be some important and essential Word to the matter in hand, and in that Word regard is to be had to the first Letter, and the Vowel that follows it; for upon these two Letters depend all the use of the *Index*.

I omit three Letters of the Alphabet as of no use to me, viz. K. Y. W. which are supplied by C. I. U. that are equivalent to them. I put the letter Q. that is always followed with an U. in the fifth space of Z. By throwing Q. last in my *Index*, I preserve the regularity of my *Index*, and diminish not in the least its extent; for it seldom happens that there is any Head begins with Z. U. I have found none in the five and twenty Years I have used this Method. If nevertheless it be necessary, nothing hinders but that one may make a Reference after Q. U. provided it be done with any kind of distinction; but for more exactness a place may be assign'd for Q. U. below the Index, as I have formerly done. When I meet with any thing that I think fit to put into my *Common-Place-Book*, I first find a proper Head. Suppose, for example, that the V Head be EPISTOLA, I look into the *Index*

pg 288

ADVERSARIORUM METHODUS.] for the first Letter and the following V Vowel which in this instance are E. I. If in the space mark'd E. I. there 6. is any number, That directs me to the Page design'd for words that begin with an E. and whose first Vowel, after the initial Letter, is I. I must then write under the word *Epistola* in that Page what I have to remark. I write the Head in large Letters, and begin a little way out into the Margin, and I continue on the Line in writing what I have to say. I observe constantly this Rule, that only the Head appears in the Margin, and that it be continued on without ever doubling the Line in the Margin, by which means the Heads will be obvious at first sight. If I find no number in the *Index* in the space E. I. I look into my Book for the first backside of a Leaf that is not written in, which in a Book where there is yet nothing but the *Index* must be p. 2. I write then in my *Index* after E. I. the number 2. and the Head *Epistola* at the top of the Margin of the second Page, and all that I put under that Head in the same Page, as you see I have done in the second Page of this *Method*. From that time the Class E, I, is wholly in possession

pg 289

7. of the second and third Pages. They are to be employ'd only on words that begin with an E. and whose nearest Vowel is an I, as *Ebionitæ* (see the bottom of the third Page) *Episcopus*, *Echinus*, *Edictum Efficacia*, &c. The reason why I begin always at the top of the back-side of a Leaf, and assign to one Class two Pages that face one another, rather than an entire Leaf, is, because the Heads of the Class appear all at once, without the trouble of turning over a Leaf.

Every time that I would write a new Head, I look first in my *Index* for the Characteristick Letters of the word, and I see by the number that follows, what the Page is that is assigned to the Class of that Head. If there is no number, I must look for the first back-side of a Page that is blank. I then set down the number in the *Index*, and design that Page with that of the right side of the following Leaf to this new Class. Let it be, for example, the word *Adversaria*; if I see no number in the space A. E. I seek for the first back-side of a Leaf, which being at p. 4. I set down in the space A. E. the number 4. and in the fourth Page, the Head ADVERSARIA with all that I write under it, as I have already V informed you. From this time the fourth Page

pg 290

ADVERSARIORUM METHODUS.] with the fifth that follows is reserved for

V the Class A. E. that is to say for the Heads that begin with an A, and
8. whose next Vowel is an E; as for instance *Aer, Aera, Agesilaus, Acheron*, &c.

When the two Pages designed for one Class are full, I look forwards for the next back-side of a Leaf that is blank. If it be that which immediately follows, I write at the bottom of the Margin in the Page that I have filled the Letter V, that is to say, *Verte, turn over*; as likewise the same at the top of the next Page. If the Pages that immediately follow are already filled by other Classes, I write at the bottom of the Page last filled, the number of the next empty back-side of a Page. At the beginning of that Page I write down the Head, under which I go on with what I had to put in my *Common-Place-Book*, as if it had been in the same Page. At the top of this new back-side of a Leaf I set down the number of the Page I filled last. By these Numbers which refer to one another, the first whereof is at the bottom of one Page, and the second is at the beginning of another, one joyns Matter that is separated as if there was nothing between them. For by this reciprocal reference of Numbers one may turn as one Leaf all those that are between the two even as if they were pasted together. You have

pg 291

an example of this in the third and fourteenth Pages.
9. Every time I put a number at the bottom of a Page, I put it also into the *Index*; but when I put only an V, I make no addition in the *Index*; the reason whereof is plain.
If the Head is a Monosyllable and begins with a Vowel, that Vowel is at the same time both the first Letter of the word, and the Characteristick Vowel. Therefore I write the words *Ars* in A a and *Os* in O o.

You may see by what I have said, that one is to begin to write each Class of words on the back-side of a Page. It may happen upon that account, that the back-side of all the Pages may be full, and yet there may remain several Pages on the right Hand which are empty. Now if you have a mind to fill your Book, you may assign these right sides which are wholly blank, to new Classes.

If any one imagins that these hundred Classes are not sufficient to comprehend all sorts of Subjects without confusion, he may follow the same Method, and yet augment the number to five hundred, in adding a Vowel. But having experienc'd both the one and the other

Method, I prefer the first; and usage will convince those who shall try it how well it will serve the purpose aim'd at, especially if one has a Book V. for each Science

pg 292

ADVERSARIORUM METHODUS.] upon which one makes Collections, or at V least two for the two Heads, to which one may refer all our Knowledge, 10. viz. Moral Philosophy and Natural.

You may add a third, which may be called the *Knowledge of Signs*, which relates to the use of words, and is of much more extent than meer Criticism.

As to the Language in which one ought to express the *Heads*, I esteem the Latin Tongue most commodious, provided the Nominative Case be always kept to, for fear lest in words of two Syllables, or in Monosyllables that begin with a Vowel, the change which happens in oblique Cases should occasion Confusion. But it is not of much Consequence what Language is made use of, provided there be no mixture in the Heads of different Languages.

To take notice of a place in an Author from whom I quote something, I make use of this Method: Before I write any thing, I put the Name of the Author in my *Common-Place-Book*, and under that Name the Title of the Treatise, the size of the Volume, the Time and Place of its Edition, and (what ought never to be omitted) the number of Pages that the whole Book contains. For example, I put into the Class

pg 293

11. M. A. *Marshami, Canon Chronicus Ægyptiacus, Græcus, & Disquisitiones fol.* Lond. 1672. p. 626. This number of Pages serves me for the future to mark the particular Treatise of this Author, and the Edition I make use of. I have no need to mark the place, otherwise than in setting down the number of the Page from whence I have drawn what I have wrote, just above the number of Pages contained in the whole Volume. You will see an example in *Acherusia*, where the number 259 is just above the number 626, that is to say, the number of the Page where I take my Matter, is just above the number of Pages of the whole Volume. By this means I not only save my self the trouble of writing *Canon Chronicus, Ægyptiacus*, &c. but am able by the Rule of Three to find out the same Passage in any other Edition, by looking for the number of its Pages; since the Edition I have used, which contains 626, gives

me 259. You will not indeed always light on the very Page you want, because of the breaches that are made in different Editions of Books, and that are not always equal in proportion; but you are never very far from the place you want, and it is better to be able to find a Passage in turning over a few Pages, than to be oblig'd to turn over a whole Book V to find

pg 294

ADVERSARIORUM METHODUS.] it, as it happens when the Book has no V12. *Index*, or when the *Index* is not exact.

ACHERON.] *Pratum, ficta mortuorum habitatio, est locus prope Memphin, juxta paludem quam vocant Acherusiam, &c.* This is a Passage taken out of *D. Siculus*, the Sense whereof is this: The Fields where they feign that the Dead inhabit, are only a place near *Memphis* near a Marsh call'd *Acherusia*, about which is a most delightful Country, where one may behold Lakes and Forests of *Lotus* and *Calamus*. It is with reason that *Orpheus* said, the Dead inhabit these places, because there the *Ægyptians* celebrate the greatest part and the most august of their Funeral Solemnities. They carry the Dead over the *Nile*, and through the Marsh of *Acherusia*, and there put them into subterraneous Vaults. There are a great many other Fables among the *Greeks* touching the state of the Dead, which very well agree with what is at this day practised in *Egypt*. For they call the Boat in which the Dead are transported, *Baris*; and a certain piece of Money is given to the Ferry-man for a Passage, who, in their Language, is called *Charon*. Near this place is a Temple of *Hecate* in the Shades, &c. and the Gates of *Cocytus* and *Lethe*

pg 295

13. shut up with Bars of Brass. There are other Gates which are call'd the Gates of *Truth*, with the Statue of Justice before them, which has no Head. *Marshall* $\frac{259}{626}$.

* *
*

pg 296

EBIONITÆ.] vende omnia quæ possides, & divide pauperibus, & veni,

14. sequere me. Cœpit autem Dives scalpere caput suum, & non placuit ei. Et dixit ad eum Dominus: quomodo dicis Legem feci & Prophetas? cùm scriptum sit in lege, diliges proximum tuum sicut teipsum: & ecce multi fratres tui filii Abrahæ amicti sunt stercore, morientes præ fame, & domus tua plena est bonis multis, & non egreditur omnino aliquid ex ea ad eos. Et conversus dixit Simoni Discipulo suo sedenti apud se: Simon, fili Johannæ, facilius est camelum intrare per foramen acûs quam divitem in regnum cœlorum. *Nimirum hæc ideo immutavit Ebion quia Christum nec Dei Filium, nec νομοθέτωι, sed nudum interpretem Legis per Mosem datæ agnoscebat.*

In the Gospel of the *Ebionites*, which they called the Gospel according to the *Hebrews*, the Story that is in the XIXth of St. *Matt.* and in the 16th and following Verses, was changed after this manner: *One of the rich Men said to him: Master, what shall I do that I may have life? Jesus said to him: Obey the Law and the Prophets. He answer'd, I have done so. Jesus said unto him, go, sell what thou hast, divide it among the Poor; and then come and follow me. Upon which the rich Man began to scratch his head, and to dislike the advice of Jesus. And the Lord said unto him, how can you say you have done*

pg 297

15. as the Law and the Prophets directs you, since it is written in the Law, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self, and there are many of thy brethren, Children of Abraham, who are almost naked, and who are ready to dye with hunger, while thy house is full of good things, and yet thou givest them no help nor assistance. And turning himself towards Simon his Disciple who sat near him: Simon, Son of Johanna, said he, it is easier for a Camel to go through the eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Ebion chang'd this Passage, because he did not believe *Jesus Christ* to be the Son of God, nor a Law-giver, but a meer interpreter of the Law of *Moses*. *Grotius* $\frac{336}{1060}$

* *
*

pg 298

HÆRETICI] *Nostrum igitur fuit eligere & optare meliora, ut ad vestram correctionem aditum haberemus, non in contentione & æmulatione* 16. & persecutionibus, sed mansuetè consolando, benevolè hortando, leniter disputando, sicut scriptum est, servum autem Domini non oportet litigare,

sed Mitem esse ad omnes, docibilem, patientem, in modestia corripientem diversa sentientes. Nostrum ergo fuit velle has partes expetere: Dei est volentibus & petentibus donare quod bonum est. Illi in vos sæviant, qui nesciunt cum quo labore verum inveniatur; & quam difficile caveantur errores. Illi in vos sæviant, qui nesciunt quam rarum & arduum sit carnalia phantasmata piæ mentis serenitate superare. Illi in vos sæviant, qui nesciunt cum quanta difficultate sanetur oculus interioris hominis ut possit intueri solem suum..... Illi in vos sæviant qui nesciunt quibus suspiriis & gemitibus fiat ut ex quantulacunque parte possit intelligi Deus. Postremo illi in vos sæviant qui nullo tali errore decepti sunt, quali vos deceptos vident. In Catholicâ enim Ecclesiâ, ut omittam sincerissimam sapientiam, ad cujus cognitionem pauci spiritalis in hac vitâ perveniunt, ut eam ex minimâ quidem parte quia homines sunt, sed tamen sine dubitatione cognoscant: cæteram quippe turbam non intelligendi vivacitas, sed credendi simplicitas tutissimam facit. Augustinus. Tom.

pg 299

17. vi. Col. 116. Fol. Basilæ. 1542. contra Epist. Manichæi, quam vocant Fundamenti. "We were of Opinion, that other Methods were to be made choice of, and that to recover you from your Errors, we ought not to persecute you with Injuries and Invectives, or any ill Treatment, but endeavour to procure your attention by soft Words and Exhortations, which would shew the tenderness we have for you: according to that Passage of Holy Writ, The Servant of the Lord ought not to love Strife and Quarrels, but to be gentle, affable, and patient towards all Mankind, and to reprove with modesty those who differ from him in Opinion.....Let them only treat you with rigour who know not how difficult it is to find out the Truth, and avoid Error. Let those treat you with rigor who are ignorant how rare and painful a Work it is calmly to dissipate the Carnal Phantoms that disturb even a Pious Mind. Let those treat you with rigor, who are ignorant of the extream difficulty that there is to purifie the Eye of the Inward Man, to render him capable of seeing the Truth, which is the Sun or Light of the Soul. Let those V treat you with rigor, who have never felt the Sighs and Groans that a 20. Soul must have before

pg 300

CONFESSIO FIDEI] *Periculosum nobis admodum atque etiam miserabile est, 18. tot nunc fides existere, quot voluntates: & tot nobis doctrinas esse quot Mores: & tot causas blasphemiarum pullulare quot vitia sunt: dum aut ita*

fides scribuntur ut volumus, aut ita ut volumus intelliguntur. Et cum secundum unum Deum & unum Dominum, & unam baptismam etiam fides una sit, excidimus ab eâ fide quæ sola est: & dum plures fiant, id esse cæperunt ne ulla sit; Conscii enim nobis invicem sumus post Nicæni conventus Synodum nihil aliud quam fidem scribi. Dum in verbis pugna est, dum de novitatibus quæstio est, dum de ambiguis occasio est, dum de Autoribus querela est, dum de studiis certamen est, dum in consensu difficultas est, dum alter alteri anathema esse cæpit, prope jam nemo est Christi, &c. Jam vero proximi anni fides, quid jam de immutatione in se habet? Primum quæ Homousion decernit taceri: sequens rursum quæ Homousion decernit & prædicat. Tertium deinceps quæ Usiam simpliciter a patribus præsumptam, per indulgentiam excusat. Postremum quartum, quæ non excusat, sed condemnat, &c. De similitudine autem filii Dei ad Deum Patrem, quod miserabilis nostri temporis est fides, ne non ex toto, sed tantum ex portione sit similis? Egregii scilicet arbitri cælestium sacramentorum conquisitores, invisibilium mysteriorum professio-

pg 301

19. *nibus de fide Dei calumniamur, annuas atque Menstruas de Deo fides decernimus, decretis pœnitemus, pœnitentes defendimus, defensos anathematizamus, aut in nostri aliena, aut in alienis nostra damnamus & mordentes invicem jam absumpti sumus invicem.* Hilarius p. 211, in lib. ad Constantium Augustum. Basil. 1550. fol. "It is a thing equally deplorable and dangerous, that there are at present as many Creeds as there are Opinions among Men, as many Doctrines as Inclinations, and as many sources of Blasphemy, as there are Faults among us, because we make Creeds arbitrarily, and explain them as arbitrarily. And as there is but *one Faith*, so there is but one only God, one Lord, and one Baptism. We renounce this *one Faith* when we make so many different Creeds, and that diversity is the reason why we have no true Faith among us. We cannot be ignorant, that since the Council of Nice, we have done nothing but make Creeds. And while we fight against Words, litigate about new Questions, dispute about Equivocal Terms, V complain of Authors, that every one may make his own Party triumph, 24. while we cannot agree

pg 302

HÆRETICI.] it can attain any knowledge of the Divine Being. To conclude, 20. let those treat you with rigor, who never have been seduced into Errors, near a kin to those you are engaged in. I pass over in silence

that pure Wisdom, which but a few Spiritual Men attain to in this Life; so that though they know but in part, because they are Men, yet nevertheless they know what they do know with certainty: For in the Catholick Church, it is not penetration of Mind, nor profound Knowledge, but simplicity of Faith, which puts Men in a state of safety."

Barbari quippe homines Romanæ imo potius Humanæ eruditionis expertes, qui nihil omnino sciunt nisi quod a Doctoribus suis audiunt: quod audiunt hoc sequuntur, ac sic necesse est eos, qui totius literaturæ ac scientiæ ignari, sacramentum divinæ legis doctrina magis quam lectione cognoscunt, doctrinam potius retinere quam legem. Itaque eis traditio magistrorum suorum & doctrina inveterata, quasi lex est, qui hoc sciunt quod docentur. Heretici ergo sunt, sed non scientes. Denique apud nos sunt Hæretici, apud se non sunt. Nam in tantum se Catholicos esse judicant ut nos ipsos titulo Hæreticæ appellationis infament. Quod ergo illi nobis sunt & hoc nos illis.

pg 303

Nos eos injuriam, divinæ generationi facere certi sumus, quod minorem Patre 21. Filium dicant. Illi nos injuriosos Patri existimant, quia æquales esse credamus. Veritas apud nos est; sed illi apud se esse præsumunt. Honor Dei apud nos est: sed illi hoc arbitrantur, honorem divinitatis esse quod credunt. Inofficiosi sunt, sed illis hoc est summum Religionis officium. Impii sunt, sed hoc putant esse veram pietatem. Errant ergo, sed bono animo errant, non odio sed affectu Dei, honorare se Dominum atque amare credentes. Quamvis non habeant rectam fidem, illi tamen hoc perfectam Dei æstimant caritatem. Qualiter pro hoc ipso falsæ opinionis errore in die Judicii puniendi sunt, nullus scire potest nisi Judex. Interim idcirco eis, ut reor, patientiam Deus commodat, quia videt eos, etsi non recte credere, affectu tamen pie opinionis errare. Salvianus. ¹⁶²/₃₃₉

This Bishop speaks here of the *Arian Goths* and *Vandals*. "They are, says he, *Barbarians*, who have no tincture of the *Roman* Politeness, and who are ignorant of what is very commonly known among other Men, and only know what their Doctors have taught them, and follow what they have heard them say. Men so ignorant as these, find themselves under a necessity of learning the Mysteries of the Gospel rather by V the instructions that are given them, than by Books.

pg 304

HÆRETICI] The Tradition of their Doctors, and the received Doctrines 22. are the only Rule they follow, because they know nothing but what they have taught them. They are then Hereticks, but they know it not.

They are so in our account, but they believe it not; and think themselves so good Catholicks, that they treat us as Hereticks, judging of us as we do of them. We are persuaded that they believe amiss concerning the Divine Generation, when they maintain the Son is inferiour to the Father; and they imagine that we rob the Father of his Glory who believe them both to be equal. We have the Truth on our side, and they pretend it is on theirs. We give to God his due Honour, and they think they honour him better. They fail in their Duty, but they imagine they perform perfectly well; and they make true Piety to consist in what we call Impious. They are in a Mistake, but with a great deal of Sincerity; and it is so far from being an effect of their Hatred, that it is a mark of their Love of God, since by what they do they imagine they shew the greatest Respect for the Lord, and Zeal for his Glory. Therefore tho' they have not true Faith, they nevertheless look upon that

pg 305

23. which they have, as a perfect Love of God. It belongs only to the Judge of the Universe to know how these Men will be punished for their Errors at the last Day. Yet I believe God will shew Compassion towards them, because he sees their Heart is more right than their Belief, and that if they are mistaken, it is their Piety made them err."

* *
*

pg 306

CONFESSIO FIDEI.] while we anathematize one another, there is hardly 24. one that adheres to *Jesus Christ*. What change was there not in the Creed last Year! The first Council ordained a silence upon the *Homousion*; the second establish'd it and would have us speak; the third excuses the Fathers of the Council, and pretends they took the word *Ousia* simply; the fourth condemns them instead of excusing them. With respect to the likeness of the Son of God to the Father, which is the Faith of our deplorable Times, they dispute whether he is like in whole or in part. These are rare Folks to unravel the secrets of Heaven. Nevertheless it is for these Creeds about invisible Mysteries that we calumniate one another, and for our Belief in God. We make Creeds every Year, nay every Moon, we repent of what we have done, we defend those that repent, we anathematize those we defended. So we condemn either the Doctrine of others in our selves, or our own in that of others, and

reciprocally tearing one another to pieces, we have been the cause of
each others ruine."

FINIS.

10 νομοθέτω] P, W | νομοθέτην F

16 *perveniant*] F, W | *perveniunt* P

17 *FINIS.*] P | *The END of the Common-Place-Book* W
