

# Introduction

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## INTRODUCTION to the first edition

To the judicious and honourable reader:

I have been reluctant, knowing my own weakness, to publish anything in the press, despite those that know me best having often pressed me to do so, but they have never prevailed on me so far. Now a twofold necessity is imposed upon me to do something about it. This is partly from the urging of many religious and judicious Christian friends who have either heard about it while partaking of my public ministry or they have heard reports by others; there have been some who have requested to see some part of this weak work. All have continued to solicit the publishing of it. It is also partly and more especially by the iniquity of some others, who being of contrary judgement in some of the disputed particulars herein, and being intolerant of anything that seems to go against their judgement, have been more forward than was fit with unchristian slanders and uncharitable censures to tax and defame both me and it. It is as if, as *Augustine*\* puts it, “their private opinion is their public standard and the model by which every man was bound to mould his affections”. There seemed to me no better and readier way to clear these unjust and undeserved aspersions, than by offering to open view of all what I had delivered before to but a few in an obscure auditorium.

So with this, good Reader, you have the same effect and substance that was then and there delivered, enlarged only with matters of history and humanity that would not have been fitting to pester the pulpit with, or encumber the auditorium either. How I first entering into this discourse and my motives for wading into it so far, I am unwilling to spend longer here than needs be, so I leave that to Chapter 9, §10 where I render an account of it.

If any shall surmise that writings of this kind may encourage too much liberty to be taken (a thing that needs little encouragement in this over-licentious age), I answer briefly. It is unfair that because of the looseness of some who are dissolute, that the consciences of those who are of a godly disposition should be entangled and ensnared. Also, if anyone should take more liberty than is given here by me, they must remain certain to keep within the bounds of piety, sobriety, equity

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\* *Names* in italics are references used by Gataker. For more details about these *names* see the Bibliographical Notes at the end of this book.

and charity. More than this I know not what can be required. I had no sinister purpose in view when I undertook this task (and I protest this before God's face and in his fear). I have not claimed or defended anything in this book, but what I am truly persuaded is agreeable to God's word. If any man can better inform me in this, I shall be right ready to listen to him. I have not neglected any means either by writing or in conference with others, as well as my own private labours that might further me in this.

There cannot, I know, but be many defects in this work. Whose work is completely free from them? For mine there are many, much more; too many I myself see and many more I am sure a curious eye may soon spot. If any, let them be shown to me in a friendly and loving manner (as some have already been by some; to whom I rest beholden for and I count that a special kindness). Where defects shall appear, first consider whether they are vital and fundamental, such as touch the very heart and life of the main matter, or minor so that the frame or foundation at least may stand firm. Remember too, that I deal in an argument that has been handled in a very confused way by most, and often not very soundly by the best, as any unbiased observer of this present discourse may very evidently see.

From you, (whoever you may be), I desire only to find an impartial reader, a judicious discussor and a charitable censurer. Do not condemn out of prejudice unheard what I propose, nor should what I prove be rejected because it is inconceivable or what I offer with the right hand should be not put down. In charity, may you continue with diversity of judgment even if you are still not satisfied (something that is lacking in this uncharitable age). The favourable acceptance of these my sorry first-fruits may encourage a weak beginner to attempt something further afterwards which may prove to be of better use. I commend both you and the others to Him who is the author of all truth, the clarifying whereof has been my main aim in this work. He vouchsafes a blessing and through His blessing of the labour (I hope) it shall not prove unfruitful.

Thine in Christ

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### **An Advertisement to the reader concerning this second edition**

"Nothing", as *Cicero* said, "is begun and finished at once". Nor is any creature made by its first conception, as it is at birth, nor in birth is it near the extent of growth and strength that it is likely to attain in process of time. "One day teaches another", as the *Psalms 19* says, though in another sense. And more daylight is daily discovered by the diligent. In this regard, I am not ashamed to profess myself at one with worthy ancients such as *Augustine* who are said to "profit as they write and write as they profit". I have received some opposition on some of the points discussed in this treatise which caused me to think further. On reviewing it,

in the second chapter especially, I have endeavoured to clarify some things and altered some others. I do not consider it any blemish on my first book if this edition comes forth somewhat better than the first. For myself, I now see things more clearly than before and have not altered anything in my judgement for the better. I have ever and shall always consider it an honour for a man to acknowledge his own error, rather than to discover the errors of others.

There are some things where I cannot yet satisfy myself, but neither these nor the former now altered are of any such weight as to alter the main matter which has been subject of so much controversy concerning the use of a lottery or a chance event\* in deciding any non-weighty business. (Not all authors are agreed on their meaning when they mention ‘lottery’.) I am not at all altered in my judgement in this point so far; rather I am much more confirmed in it because I see the prime defenders of the case against it have now wholly relinquished and given up the sole grounds on which all the main arguments produced by them and others were formerly established. They are wrong when they say: “In every lottery (or in every mere chance event) which is applied to decide any difference, there is an extraordinary and immediate hand and providence of God present”. If this point is denied or not defended, then neither can that reference to it in *Proverbs 16:33* be explained, from which so much is urged in this argument. Nor can those positions be maintained from which is wrongly deduced that: “All lotteries are divine oracles, God’s sentences, works of God’s special providence etcetera and that in them God sits as a judge and gives His immediate decision. And that to use them is to appeal to His sentence”. Since all of this is the sole medium of the principal arguments used against lotteries being used in this way, so if their ground-work fails them in this, it all falls to the ground. What new arguments have since been produced, instead of those where the weaknesses have been discovered, are answered sufficiently in Chapter 4, §1<sup>^</sup>, though briefly, for fear of over-burdening this book.

And this is all for the present I would with thee.

**Farewell.**

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\* The words Gataker uses here are ‘lots’ and ‘casual event’, which I have generally changed to ‘lottery’ and ‘chance event’, as explained in my Preface.

<sup>^</sup> I have consigned this new section to an Appendix at the end of Chapter 4.