

**NEW IDEAS ON
POPULATION: WITH
REMARKS ON THE THEORIES
OF MALTHUS AND GODWIN**

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New Ideas on Population: with Remarks on the Theories of Malthus and Godwin by Alexander H. Everett

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ALEXANDER H. EVERETT

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BY

ALEXANDER H. EVERETT,

CHARGE D'AFFAIRES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AT THE COURT OF
THE NETHERLANDS.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following tract was prepared for publication upon the Continent during the last winter. A reperusal of the Essay of Mr. Malthus on Population, and some conversations which I held at the time with a friend upon the subject of it, suggested to me certain views which I thought new, and which are quite at variance with the conclusions of that eminent philosopher. Without feeling any extraordinary confidence in my own ideas—especially where they differ from those of an author of great and just celebrity, whose theories have been sanctioned by the favorable opinion of many competent judges—I have nevertheless concluded to submit these views to the Public. I shall certainly be highly gratified if they are found to throw any new light upon the interesting question to which they

relate, not only because it is always agreeable and honorable ^{to} aid in the discovery of truth, but because the views which I have taken appear to me ^{to} be in themselves more consonant to the best affections of our nature, than the system which is now so generally received. I should not certainly go the length of saying—as Cicero did of Epicurus and Plato—that I would rather be in the wrong upon my own principles than in the right upon those of Mr. Malthus:—but I have no hesitation in admitting, that it would give me pain, independently of any personal considerations, ^{to} be convinced of the error of my opinions, and of the truth of a theory which tends so strongly as his ^{to} embitter the ‘cordial drop of life.’ However the Public may decide upon the substance of this little tract, I venture ^{to} hope that it will be recognised, in its form and spirit, as the production of a friend of truth and human happiness. In digesting the materials, I have principally aimed at brevity: and shall be quite satisfied if it shall be found that the higher and

more essential merit of perspicuity has been no where sacrificed to this consideration.

Upon my arrival in town a few weeks since for the purpose of superintending the impression of the work, I took an opportunity of mentioning the subject to my illustrious friend Sir James Mackintosh, and of explaining to him the general scope of the argument. This great statesman and philosopher—whose name I feel it a high honor to be able to mention in connexion with my own—upon learning that the Essay which I had prepared was intended in part to correct the theory of Mr. Malthus, kindly invited me to go down with him to the East India College, and converse with that gentleman upon the subject. I accepted this proposal with much pleasure, as well from a natural desire to make the acquaintance of so eminent a writer, as from the reflection, that if I had accidentally taken up any misconception of his views, I should probably be able to rectify it by a free communication with him upon the points in controversy. Had I found this to be the case,

I was fully prepared to sacrifice my own ideas and suppress the work.

I had always been highly gratified with the candid and temperate tone that distinguishes the writings of Mr. Malthus, although I have not been so fortunate as to agree with him in his leading principles,—and I hope that I shall not be thought to pass the bounds of delicacy in adding, that I found his conversation the perfect counterpart, in this respect, of his works. I have rarely met with a finer specimen of the true philosophic temper, graced and set off by the urbanity of a finished gentleman, than is seen in his person. I feel myself greatly indebted to him for the very hospitable reception which he was pleased to give me; and for the kindness and courtesy with which he entered into all the explanations that I requested in regard to his opinions. I should pay him a very poor compliment, if I were to suppose it possible that he could be offended by a free expression of opinions different from his own: and I trust that there is nothing in the tone and manner of

the following tract, that will tend in the slightest degree to wound his feelings. If, however, I should have been led unconsciously, by the warmth of composition and argument, to make use of any language that would naturally produce this effect, I beg leave here to disavow most explicitly any such intention, and to assure Mr. Malthus of the high respect and esteem that I feel for his character. Such indeed is my estimation of the intellectual and moral qualities of this gentleman, that I believe he would not only adopt without reluctance a different opinion from that which he has hitherto held, if he were satisfied of its truth; but that he would do this with real pleasure, if the new opinion were in its nature more agreeable and social than the other.

It would be an unbecoming violation of the confidence of private intercourse to detail particularly the conversations which I held with Mr. Malthus upon the subject of the Essay; and it would also be useless for the present purpose, as very little, if any thing, was said on