

has been the affectation not only of logical definitions, but of deductive proofs. Paley's system of morals is included in this remark. The subject has been hinted at above, and is so important that I may be permitted to return to it again\*. There is in the human mind a passion for general truths, and a restless desire of deducing conclusions from first principles. This passion, while under control, is a most valuable attribute of our intellectual nature: but it has sometimes done much mischief. In physical questions it has led men to grasp at generalizations beyond their reach, and to entrench themselves among hypotheses, while they ought to have been moving onwards among the foundations of knowledge, by the light of experiment. In moral questions, this passion has led men to false definitions and false opinions on the nature of virtue. An excellent but most paradoxical writer—not excluding (as Paley does) the moral sense in his estimate of right and wrong, but seeking for a definition to comprehend every act of moral obligation—ended by regarding virtue as a mere passion for the general good; or, in his own language, as, *benevolence to being in general* †. But what, on such a definition as this, is to become of the private affections? They lead us to seek the happiness of certain individuals far more than that of other men; and therefore they militate against this rule of virtue. In severe science a rule which is found not to comprehend every particular case, is at once either limited or rejected. In like manner, unless we wish to surrender all the social af-

\* See above p. 79: and the end of Note (A), p. 104.

† See *A Dissertation on the Nature of true Virtue*, in the works of President Edwards, Vol. II.