

2ndly.—I am to consider the arguments which they have adduced in support of this, their schismatic view of the subject.

One of the arguments urged, in the Tract, against the “observance of times and seasons” for fasting or abstinence, is the danger of its being mistaken “for vital godliness.” Indeed, it is assumed that most persons who observe those times and seasons, do so that “they may appear unto men to fast.” This argument proves too much—because it must be equally good against all forms of public worship, however simple they may be—nay, even against the whole visible Church. Therefore, according to the Tract, these must also be repudiated.

The Tract asserts there is no Scripture *command* to fast at all; but that Christians are left free to fast or not, as they please. “It is not (it is asserted) an absolute, not an essential duty; there is not a single injunction in the New Testament to that effect: we are nowhere *bidden* to fast. We are instructed how to act when we do fast; but whether we are to fast or not, is left to be determined by every man’s experience of its results.” This is truly a most notable interpretation of Our Saviour’s injunction: “*When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites,*” &c. According to the same mode of interpretation, the injunctions: “*When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven,*” &c. and “*When thou dost thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee,*” are mere instructions how we are to act *when* we pray and *when* we give alms—but whether we are to pray at all or give alms at all, is “left to be determined by every man’s experience of their results,”—