

joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Eph. iv. 15, 16. The figure of the human body, by which the church is here represented, is a figure equally simple, familiar and expressive. In deed, a careful examination of this, and the other figures employed by the inspired writers to illustrate and enforce this duty, will abundantly convince every unprejudiced inquirer, of the imperative necessity of every member of a church contributing according to his ability to promote its edification. What language we ask could the Apostle have chosen, more appropriately to show that every member of a church had certain functions to perform, to promote the general growth and stability of the body? He describes the Ephesian church as "A BODY EDIFYING ITSELF IN LOVE." A church edifying itself, by every member according to the grace given, "*speaking the truth in love.*" He describes the exercise of these gifts doctrines and deceptions practised by the sleight, the cunning, and the as the means of preserving them from being imposed upon with the false craftiness of men. These means always have, and always will, appear very weak and inefficient to mere worldly professors, for "perfecting the saints." But, in this, as in every other instance, the means for accomplishing the divine purpose are such as prostrate all fleshly glory and human wisdom in the dust. "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." I Cor. iii. 19. Again, the same Apostle, in allusion to the same figure, when writing to the Romans, says, "having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering, or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth on exhortation." Rom. xii. Language, we conceive, could not be more explicit, to show how a church is to be a "body edifying itself in love," or to show the imperative duty of every member contributing to the edification thereof, according to his ability. Every gift is not bestowed upon *any one* member of the church of Christ, but, by this infinitely wise distribution of gifts; their mutual exercise is admirably adapted for supplying the various wants of the spiritual body; "for to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge," &c. I Cor. xii. 8. This wise distribution, and diligent application of spiritual gifts, is beautifully illustrated by the Saviour, when instructing his disciples regarding the nature of his kingdom, by the parable of the talents, and, which the studious reader will perceive, developes the principle upon which the Apostles acted, in appointing the means of the church's edification, and which sanctions and enforces the practice for which we are con ending. Again, Paul enjoins the Corinthians to "covet earnestly the best gifts," to seek that they might "excel to the edifying of the church." Indeed, the whole of the 14th chapter of his first Epistle, is devoted to illustrate the proper use, and application of these gifts. "I would," says he, "that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied." Prophecy, in which he was so anxious they should abound, he explains in the third verse, to be "speaking to men, to edification, exhortation, and comfort."—"he that prophesiech edifieth the church." And at the 31st verse, he lays down a standing