

JOHN CALVIN.

For the Review.

In connection with this article, we give a portrait of the subject of it—a photogravure of a medallion carved in wood several years ago, by Rev. T. Fenwick, of Woodbridge, Ont. The famous Swiss Reformer above named, was born at Noyon, in Picardy, France, July 10, 1509, and died at Geneva, Switzerland, May 27, 1564. With almost equal truth, what the sacred writer says of Moses, can be said of Calvin: "No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."



In the cemetery of Plainpalais, Geneva, there is a grave, at the head of which is a very small stone pillar, whereon are carved merely these letters "J. C." but it is very doubtful that the dust of that eminent servant of Christ sleeps there. In the pavement near

St. Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh, there is a small brass plate, the only inscription on which is "I. K., 1572," but that it marks the last resting place of Calvin's brother Reformer, John Knox, is equally doubtful.

Pastor Choisy who represented the Reform Church of Switzerland at the Presbyterian Council which met in Toronto, in 1892, says: "Calvin has no monument at Geneva, for he desired no other grave than that of the poor man. In the cemetery at Plainpalais, where he was buried, nothing can mark the place where he rests. He had the only monument befitting that great and humble Christian—the gratitude of the people of whom he was the guide and the oracle, that of the Churches of which he was the master and the light, of which he is to-day the glory."

Instead of a sketch of the life of Calvin, we shall give simply two extracts from "*Pasteurs et Predicateurs de l'Eglise Genevoise de puis Calvin jusqu'à nos jours*," by Pastor Alexandre Guillot. The writer says: "The genius of Calvin made of Geneva a fortress of the evangelical faith to propagate that faith and to defend it from the attacks of the enemy—a city of refuge to give an asylum to the outlaws of all countries where persecution raged against the adherents of the Reformed religion—finally, a model church destined, in the opinion of its organizer, to serve as a type to other churches. The Reformer thus secured to the city which was to him a training field, and became the intrenched camp of the Protestantism of the French language, the glorious titles of Protestant Rome, Modern Jerusalem, the Metropolis of Presbyterianism."

#### A PLEA FOR UNITY.

A sect is a body of persons distinguished, by certain peculiarities of belief or practice, from other bodies adhering to the same general system; and sectarianism is an excessive zeal for a particular sect, zeal overshadows the devotion due to the interests of the whole body of which the sect is a part.

Denominationalism may be perfectly justifiable, and often is, when the members of a denomination acknowledge that their denomination is but a part of the greater whole, and not the whole itself, and when it places the interests of the church catholic above those of any part, making its own life and work a means for the advancement of the great body of which Christ is the head. This kind of denominationalism can be justified before God, in most cases, but sectarianism never. Sectarianism is one of the greatest disappointments of Christian history, and is productive of very great injury to the progress and spiritual power as well as influence of the church of God.

The spectacle afforded by the sectarianism of Christians is one which must gratify the church's enemies, and be most humiliating to the church itself. We see sects claiming to be the whole church of Christ, unchurching all other sects, denying communion to their members, and refusing to acknowledge the validity of their sacraments and ordination.

The cause of this is the elevation of non-essentials to the high position of essentials in belief or practice, and making non-essentials tests of churchship. Many non-essentials are important to the most symmetrical development of the church and of individual character, but they are not necessary to the existence of the church, or any part of it. For example, some sects believe in divine predestination, and some deny it; but both classes are parts of the church of God, owned and blessed with the presence and power of His Spirit by the great Head of the church. Others differ as to the nature of the Lord's supper, a part holding that in the elements we have but symbols of the body and blood of Christ; another part, that they are this, and also seals of divine grace; another, that with the bread and wine is actually present the body of Christ. Some claim that water baptism can be only performed by immersion of the whole body in water, and others, that it is rightly done by affusion or sprinkling. A few hold that the praise of God may be sung only in the use of certain translations or paraphrases of the inspired psalms. There is a great denomination of Christians who stand for apostolical succession, teaching that a body can be a church only by actual succession of bishops running from apostolic hands, in unbroken line, to the present time.

These dogmas belong to the class of beliefs and practices called "non-essentials," and the acceptance of them is not claimed to be essential to the salvation of the soul. Now, if they be not necessary for admittance into the favor of God, and to heaven, why should they be made essential to membership or communion in the Church of God on earth? Shall the visible church, imperfect by its own admission, set up a higher standard of membership than Christ has established for membership in the invisible church? Is it reasonable? Is it scriptural?

It is not reasonable, because it is manifestly impossible, with the diversities of human disposition and environment, to have absolute uniformity of belief or practice, in all particulars, in any organization of human beings. There are no two persons in the same sect who agree on everything. Men's minds are constituted differently, as are the trees of the wood, the flowers of the field, and the birds of the air. They must differ, because they are different. The attempt to establish uniformity in social customs, in business methods, in civic matters, in literature or art has always failed; and now, after two thousands of years, Christianity has also failed to secure uniformity. It is impossible; it is undesirable. God did not make the world that way, and we cannot make it over again.

Nor is uniformity scriptural. The apostles differed about many things, as we know by the inspired record of their lives; and yet they acknowledged one another's apostleship. The teachings of the inspired record show most plainly that non-essentials cannot properly be made tests of membership in the church. Christ said, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son of God cannot see life"; and on the cross He acknowledged as saved a poor malefactor, who had not been baptized, could not be, had not even seen the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and who was doubtless absolutely ignorant of