

## Practical Papers.

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### STAGNATION IN THE CHURCH.

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THE apostle poetically calls the Church of Christ a building, borrowing no doubt the poetic license from the prophet who pointed to Christ as "the chief corner-stone." To continue the use of this figure in the consideration of the state of the Church, it may be said truthfully there is less cause for congratulation than humiliation in the progress this building has made in a period extending over nearly nineteen centuries.

Notwithstanding it stands upon a foundation divinely solid, foreshadowed by plans and specifications the most minute and faultless; but a tithe of its material is in shape to-day. Admitting the contingency there was in the finite capacity of the agencies chosen in its erection, it is equally true that every security was given that both wisdom and power from the Master-builder would be furnished. And when we know that not only was the inspiration of the presence of the Master-builder vouchsafed, but that the workmen themselves are professedly consecrated to work in harmony with his designs, is it not natural to expect that the walls should to-day be higher than they are?

We cannot suppose it is of necessity that but a portion of the habitable globe is blessed with Gospel light, or that a mere fraction of the Christendom of to-day should be all that a loving God designed should share at this period the blessing of salvation. If, therefore, this spiritual building is not intentionally delayed, may we not suppose it in agreement with so condescending a plan of redemption that at this period, or long ere this, the top stone might be laid on with rejoicing?

But to judge of the future by the past, how long must it be before that gracious consummation is effected? And certainly the history of the progress of this building from year to year bears little encouragement that the strides of advancement will be so rapid as to effect the completion in any startling or surprising manner. For if we take the annual census of that branch of the Church best known to us, there is such vacillation between increase and decrease in numerical strength, as to practically determine the Methu-<sup>en</sup> wing of this building at a comparative standstill. Nor are we the more hopeful for the future, when the limited increase now and then cause of congratulation almost amounting to a satisfac-