

## PRESENT OUTLOOK OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY.

BY J. F. HURST, D.D.

It is now forty-two years since the obscure Strauss, of Tübingen, sent forth his *Life of Jesus* on its destructive mission throughout the Christian world. He aimed to settle forever the mission and character of Christ by ascribing to him only a vague and mythical existence, which took its colouring in the Gospels from the Oriental hopes, excitements, and superstitions of his inexperienced and uncultivated disciples. This theory, propounded with great array of learning, fortified by such magnificent foot-notes as only German patience can produce, brought about the most important theological crisis of the century; and there were timid souls enough to prophesy the universal reign of negative criticism, the arrest of evangelistic labour, the cessation of attendance at public worship, the disruption of the serious study of orthodox theology, and the general loosing of ecclesiastical restraints. But the sky never fell, after all. Many of these prophecies are on record, though there are few who are willing to acknowledge their paternity. But what is the present condition of the Church and her great golden creeds and iron instrumentalities? Strauss has passed out of the world without its turning aside to note it, while his theory preceded him to the grave by at least a score of years. But the Church is moving on with its "army of banners," and was never so vigorous or so ready to take the initiative, at home or abroad, as at the present moment.

We instance Strauss and the speedy and hopeless antiquity of his celebrated negation, as a certain test of the recent improvement in the evangelical outlook. Infidelity never adheres long to its maxims. Its positions of one hour are forsaken the next, and all that is left to denote a hot engagement is the broken weapons, some slain defenders, and the forsaken *impedimenta* of the force which had invited fight with bold word, and poised lance, and shining plume. It is but just to say that the enemies of evangelical Christianity have never, from Porphyry