

CURRENT POINTS AT ISSUE :

AGNOSTICISM.

EVERY parent is in honour bound to safeguard the reputation of his own offspring ; it is, therefore, only natural that Professor Huxley should be at all times ready to ward off attacks on his beloved "Agnosticism"—the "invention" of his intellectual maturity, and the solace of his later years. His latest rush to the rescue is found in the current number of *The Nineteenth Century*, where he runs a tilt against the utterances of Dr. Wace at the late Church Congress, and at the paper of Mr. Harrison in the January number of *The Fortnightly Review*. With the Positivist we are not here concerned ; nor are we anxious to assist Dr. Wace to defend himself, as no man requires such assistance less than he ; but we wish in all courtesy to examine very slightly a few of the positions of both combatants, in so far as they bear on the general controversy, as both seem right, and both seem wrong.

The chief objections of the Professor are based on the following quotation from Dr. Wace :—"But if this be so, for a man to urge, as an escape from this article of belief, that he has no means of a scientific knowledge of the unseen world, or of the future, is irrelevant. His difference from us lies not in the fact that he has no knowledge of these things, but that he does not believe the authority on which they are stated. He may prefer to call himself an Agnostic, but his real name is an older one—he is an Infidel ; that is to say, an unbeliever. The word infidel, perhaps, carries an unpleasant significance. Perhaps it is right that it should. It is, and it ought to be, an unpleasant thing for a man to have to say plainly that he does not believe in Jesus Christ."

Dr. Wace here defines with great precision the position of the agnostic, which Professor Huxley seems strangely to mis-