

## **"Religious Neutrality" in Godless Gower Street: A Contested Appointment at University College London, 1866**

This paper examines the controversy over the appointment of a successor to John Hoppus as Professor of Logic and Mental Philosophy, and particularly the role of J. S. Mill in the selection process. The leading candidate, the Unitarian theologian James Martineau, was endorsed by the Senate, but vigorously opposed by George Grote, who sat on the Universitys Council, which made all academic appointments. Grote was determined that no minister should hold the professorship, as this would violate UCLs commitment to "religious neutrality." That very commitment, Martineaus supporters argued, meant that Martineaus religious beliefs were irrelevant.

John Mill was asked by Martineau for a recommendation. Mill had been sympathetic to Martineau when both were struggling in the 1830s with the "awful shadow" of "Necessity." But by the 1860s, Mills flirtation with "mysticism" (as represented by Coleridge and Carlyle) was a distant memory. He had recently reissued his fathers *Analysis*, eviscerated Sir William Hamilton, and had renewed his friendship with the Grotes. George Croom Robertson, a Bain protege and Martineaus chief rival, was a far more attractive candidate, though unpublished and inexperienced. Mills correspondence with Martineau sheds additional light on the much-debated question of his motives in writing "On Liberty," and illuminates the trajectory of his career as public intellectual.

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