

THE GILCHRIST SCHOLARSHIP AND THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON IN THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE CAPE COLONY

In November, 1872 the Superintendent General of Education for the Cape Colony, Langham Dale, received “. . . the gratifying intelligence of Mr. Kolbe's success . . .” in the matriculation examination of the University of London held in Cape Town the previous June.¹ Placed sixth in the honours division, Frederick Charles Kolbe, son of a German Protestant missionary, student at the South African College and future distinguished convert to the Catholic Church, was awarded the Gilchrist Scholarship for graduate study in the United Kingdom.²

The Gilchrist award of £100 (R200) per annum for three years³ was not the only scholarship available to colonial youth in the years immediately preceding the establishment of the University of the Cape of Good Hope in 1873. William Porter, on his retirement as Attorney General in 1865, his successor in that office, W. D. Griffith in 1871 and Mrs. Jamison the following year also provided funds which permitted the Board of Public Examiners of the day to institute bursaries for the encouragement of further intellectual efforts.⁴ With the transformation of the examining board into an examining university, the Porter studentship and the Jamison scholarship were attached to the Bachelor of Arts examination which replaced the former second-class certificate of the board⁵ and efforts were made to retain the Gilchrist award by associating it with the examinations of the new university. The generosity of public-spirited citizens was of more than immediate value. As the writer of an article in a Cape Town periodical on the University of the Cape of Good Hope put it: “Gifts like these do far more than perpetuate the names of the donors. They set in motion an endless succession of waves of intellectual influence, and

1. Cape Archives, S.G.E. 1/1848: Papers rec. from Col. Office, 1871-73, no. 147, (Col. Sec.) to Dale, (Cape Town), Nov. 27, 1872. Univ. of London exam, results were transmitted in govt. despatches (G.H. 1/68: Desp. rec. from Sec. State, gen., 1872, no. 265, Kimberley to Barkly, Downing St., Oct. 14, 1872). H. G. Murcott is incorrect in assigning the year of this examination to 1871, when Kolbe passed the third-class cert. of the Board of Public Examiners. (*The History and development of the matriculation examination in South Africa to 1900*, unpub. M.Ed. thesis, Univ. Stell., 1938, p. 27).
2. Kolbe's candidature and eligibility for the Gilchrist award had earlier been confirmed (S.G.E. 12/1: Letter book re exams of the London Univ., 1871-74, p. 12, Dale to Carpenter, (Cape Town), July 10, 1872).
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10, Dale to Col. Sec., (Cape Town), Nov. 17, 1871.
4. Kidd, A. S., *The Origins of the South African university system, 1850-1873, containing an examination record of many distinguished South Africans*, (Grahamstown, 1923), pp. 34-37. Porter generously allocated part of his retirement pension for the purpose (Putzel, J. R., *William Porter and constitutional issues at the Cape, 1839-1873*, unpub. M.A. thesis, U.C.T., 1942, p. 7).
5. *University of the Cape of Good Hope. The Calendar for the year 1875*, pp. 61-63. The Griffith scholarship expired with the Board of Public Examiners.

carry down to the remote future, with unimpaired vitality and freshness, the kindly spirit and the intelligent liberality of the past".⁶

The influence of the Gilchrist scholarship was felt throughout the British Empire. John Borthwick Gilchrist was born in Edinburgh on June 19, 1759. As a youth he spent some years in the West Indies, returning to Scotland to study medicine in his native city. In 1782 he went to Bengal as an assistant surgeon with the East India Company and soon discovered the need for a systematic study of Indian languages. After publishing the first Hindustani dictionary and grammar, he was appointed head and professor of Oriental languages at the college in Calcutta established by the Marquis of Wellesley. Compelled for reasons of health to retire to Britain in 1804, he interested himself in various banking, insurance and educational projects. A friend and admirer of Jeremy Bentham, Gilchrist was associated with the founding of University College, London as a proposed teaching university in 1826 and occupied the chair of Hindī at that institution. He was also a keen supporter of Dr. Birkbeck's schemes for popular education and was active in the anti-slavery movement. His death took place in Paris on January 8, 1841.⁷

Dr. Gilchrist's will was the subject of prolonged litigation and it was not until 1865 that the educational trust which he envisaged could begin operations. The delay proved a fortunate one, for the estate greatly appreciated in value during this period. Two early investments formed the basis of the considerable fortune which the trust ultimately enjoyed. Gilchrist had bought shares in the Commercial Bank of Scotland which he had been unable to dispose of in his lifetime but which eventually brought in over £38,000 (R76,000) and had purchased a barren tract of land near Sydney, New South Wales in 1801 for the sum of £17.10/- (R35) which at length provided the trust with a capital of approximately £70,000 (R140,000).⁸

The educational trust, which continues to fulfil its original object of advancing education in a variety of fields,⁹ established in the first instance grants for Indian students to visit Britain for the purpose of studying for the degree examinations of the University of London. To these were added scholarships to assist students in other British colonies, among them the Cape Colony, which shared with Tasmania a biennial award.¹⁰ With the exception of scholarships offered in alternate years to graduates of

6. Anon., The University, *The Cape Monthly Magazine*, new series, VIII, Feb., 1874, p. 77.

7. Information concerning Gilchrist derived from Shuttleworth, U. J. Kay-Shuttleworth, Lord and D. H. S. Cranage, *Gilchrist Educational Trust. Pioneering work in education; an address delivered before the Bolton Education Society . . . 14 October 1910 with a postscript . . .* (Cambridge, 1930), pp. 4-6 and Falconer, R., *The Gilchrist scholarships — an episode in the higher education of Canada, Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, (Ottawa), XXVII, sect. II, 1933, pp. 6-7.

8. Shuttleworth and Cranage, *op. cit.*, p. 7; Falconer, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

9. Shuttleworth and Cranage, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-29.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9; Falconer, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

the Australian universities in Sydney and Melbourne,¹¹ the wards were made on the results obtained in the matriculation examination of the University of London, an examining institution which, since 1858, had permitted candidates to sit for any of its examinations at centres established in Britain and overseas.¹² Although the University of London did not insist upon attendance at a teaching college for those wishing to take its examinations, holders of the Gilchrist scholarship were compelled to prosecute their studies for a London degree either at University College in that city or at the University of Edinburgh.¹³ There was some dissatisfaction on the part of scholarship holders with the regulation which insisted upon the passing of a London University degree examination after a period of study in Edinburgh; the trustees too were not altogether satisfied with the results of the scholarship, since several scholars failed to complete their courses. However, the gradual withdrawal of the awards offered to colonial candidates seems to have been largely due to the pioneering and experimental policy favoured by the trustees and to the growth of higher educational facilities in the colonies themselves.¹⁴

The Gilchrist scholarship attracted the attention of a number of prospective candidates at the Cape in 1871.¹⁵ While the award was in the first instance attached to the London matriculation examination of January, 1872,¹⁶ the papers failed to arrive on this occasion¹⁷ and the scholarship was awarded on the results of the June examination of that year, when F. C. Kolbe was the only competitor.¹⁸ His success, which earned the boys of the South African College a half-holiday,¹⁹ led him to consider taking the London B.A. examination at the Cape in June, 1873, but his request was received too late to be considered.²⁰

At the time of Kolbe's application the commission under the presidency of Langham Dale was already deliberating upon the question of establishing a colonial university.²¹ Its report, issued the following month,²² led to the passing of Act 12 of 1873, incorporating the University of the Cape of Good Hope.²³ Enquiries concerning the Gilchrist scholarship

11. Falconer, *loc. cit.*

12. From this date, "... the University of London ... existed as an Examining Board, urbi et orbi, ... divorced both in principle and practice from teaching and from teachers." (Allchin, W. H. (comp.), *An Account of the reconstruction of the University of London, I, From the foundation ... to 1888*, (London, 1905), p. 18.

13. Falconer, *op. cit.*, p. 5; p. 8.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 5; pp. 8-10; Shuttleworth and Cranage, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

15. S.G.E. 12/1: Letter book, pp. 9-10, Dale to Col. Sec., (Cape Town), Nov. 17, 1871.

16. *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.* and p. 5, Dale to Brebner, (Cape Town), Sept. 9, 1871.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 13, Dale to Swiney, (Cape Town), July 23, 1872.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 12, Dale to Reg., London Univ., (Cape Town), July 15, 1872.

19. Ritchie, W. (assisted T. P. Kent *et al.*), *The History of the South African College 1829-1918*, (Cape Town, 1918), I, p. 212.

20. S.G.E. 12/1: Letter book, p. 19, Dale to Kolbe, (Cape Town), April 5 and 9, 1873. Such a step would not have been in accordance with the Gilchrist regulations.

21. Cape Archives. Accession 49: I.M.S. proceedings of the University Commission, 1873.

22. A.7-73. *Report of the University Commissioners, 7th May, 1873*, ...

23. *University Calendar* (1875), *op. cit.*, pp. 17-25.

continued to reach the office of the Superintendent General of Education²⁴ and Dale was evidently anxious not to lose this valuable incentive to further educational advancement while at the same time wishing to curtail the activities of the English examining university in the interests of its newly created Cape offspring. As the Cape could now offer its own degrees, there seemed “. . . to be no reason for continuing these Ex^{ns} in connection with the Univ^v of London”.²⁵ Moreover, it was hardly to be expected that the Cape institution would, “. . . even if it had the power . . . put itself in connection with the London University, respecting Ex^{ns}, in which it can have no voice or interest”.²⁶ The London “. . . system has been vexatious & unsatisfactory”, Dale contended, for “. . . after all the trouble & delay entailed by the last Matriculation Exⁿ, no Candidate in the Colony passed”.²⁷ However, it would have been unfortunate had the benefits of the Gilchrist scholarship been lost to Cape students and the Superintendent General of Education suggested to the Colonial Secretary that a request be made to the trustees for a change in the regulations which would permit the scholarship, as was the case at Sydney and Melbourne, to be attached to the matriculation or degree examinations of the University of the Cape of Good Hope.²⁸

The views expressed to the Colonial Secretary were communicated by the Governor to W. B. Carpenter, at that time both Registrar of the University of London and secretary of the trust.²⁹ Barkly pointed out that the establishment of a university in the colony would probably obviate the need to hold London University examinations at the Cape and in a separate letter to the trust, requested that the Gilchrist award be henceforth associated with the examinations of the Cape institution.³⁰ The trustees do not appear to have reacted favourably to the suggestion, for early in 1874, matriculation papers of the University of London were again sent to the Cape Colony in connection with the Gilchrist scholarship.³¹ It would seem that a prospective candidate for the award had appeared at the South African College, but Dale declined to entertain the idea of an examination at short notice and expressed the opinion that London University should now give way to the University of the Cape of Good Hope.³²

24. S.G.E. 12/1: Letter book, n. 20, Dale to Byrne, (Cape Town), May 30, 1873; p. 24, report Dale, Aug. 5, 1873, on desp. Sec. State, July 3, 1873.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 24, Dale's report of Aug. 5, 1873.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 30, Dale to Slater, (Cape Town), Nov. 21, 1873.

27. *Loc. cit.*

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25, Dale's report of Aug. 5, 1873.

29. Carpenter was Registrar of the Univ. London from 1856-79 and secretary of the trust from 1865-85 (*University of London. The Historical record* (1836-1926), (2nd issue, London, 1927), p. 58; Shuttleworth and Cranage, *op. cit.*, p. 31).

30. G.H. 23/32: Desp. to Sec. State, gen., 1872, pp. 212-3, no. 94, encl. to Barkly to Kimberley, Cape Town, Sept. 4, 1873.

31. S.G.E. 12/1: Letter book, pp. 32-33, report Dale, July 2, 1874 on letter Carpenter to Sec. State, June 2, 1874.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 34, report Dale, July 6, 1874, on letter Senate, S.A.C. of same date.

The Gilchrist scholarship appears to have fallen in abeyance for several years.³³ Kolbe took the first B.A. examinations of the new Cape University in 1873, obtaining honours in literature and science and the Jamison scholarship of £200 (R400) per annum for four years to supplement the value of his Gilchrist award.³⁴ He left for England to study at University College, London, where he passed, without distinction, his B.A. and obtained an LL.B with honours. His disappointing showing in the B.A. examination in London was attributed by the Cape University to the fact that he was already reading in law, but the reason lay rather in the religious doubts he was experiencing which led him to become a convert to Catholicism in 1876.³⁵ His decision to enter the priesthood and study in Rome necessitated obtaining the approval of the University Council for the continuance of his Jamison scholarship under the changed circumstances, and after some delay, a motion by the Rev. David Smith, acceding to his request, was carried by the governing body.³⁶ Kolbe's conversion and the attitude of the University Council aroused considerable discussion in the Cape press, the *Argus* supporting the Council and seeing in Kolbe's change of heart a "perversion", while its rival, the *Times*, wondered how any opposition to the request could possibly have arisen in the deliberations of the governing body.³⁷ Kolbe obtained a doctorate in divinity at the Gregorian College and returned to the Cape to begin an honoured career in church and education, playing a leading part in university affairs as examiner and member of Council.³⁸

While Langham Dale was in England in 1878 he had discussed the question of the Gilchrist scholarship with the secretary of the trust,³⁹ and on his return had successfully approached the University Council, of which he had from the start been an influential member, with a request that the Cape body undertake the future supervision of the required examination.⁴⁰ The reluctance of the University of London to risk a possible lowering of standards by delegating examinations to colonial institutions,

33. Cape Archives. C.O. 1079: Colonial Office, education, etc., 1879, no. 3, Dale to Col. Sec., (Cape Town), Jan. 10, 1879.
34. Unisa Archives. Minutes of Council, Cape Univ., 1873-91: minutes of Oct. 30, 1874, p. 42.
35. See Kolbe, F. C., *Up the slopes of Mount Zion or, a progress from Puritanism to Catholicism*, (Cape Town, 1924), pp. 63-64; pp. 126-7; Lowry, C., Frederick Charles Kolbe (4), *The Southern Cross*, (Cape Town), Oct. 27, 1954.
36. Minutes of Council, Cape Univ., 1873-91: minutes of Dec. 13, 1877, p. 150 and Mar. 13, 1878, pp. 152-3.
37. *The Cape Argus*, (Cape Town), Mar. 14, 1878; *Cape Times*, (Cape Town), Mar. 15, 1878.
38. He was a member of the Cape Univ. Council from 1885 until the move to Pretoria as the Univ. of Sth. Africa in 1918 (*University of the Cape of Good Hope. The Calendar*, 1917-1918, part II, pp. 4-10).
39. C.O. 5110: Letters desp., eccles. and schools, 1879-82, p. 18, 5/39, Mills to Reg., London Univ., (Cape Town), Mar. 17, 1879.
40. Minutes of Council, Cape Univ., 1873-91: minutes of Dec. 11, 1878, p. 175; C.O. 1088: Commissions sundry, 1879, no. 82 and no. 102, Cameron to Col. Sec., (Cape Town), Mar. 1 and 20, 1879 (Cameron was Registrar of the Cape Univ.). Dale was a member of the Univ. Council from 1873 until 1892, Vice-Chancellor, 1873-77, 1879-82 and 1884-89 and Chancellor, 1890 until his death in 1898 (*University Calendar* (1917-18), *op. cit.*, part II, pp. 2-5).

first made clear in 1866 by Carpenter in a letter to the Rev. Henry A. Douglas, Anglican Dean of Cape Town and member of the Board of Public Examiners, came again under discussion.⁴¹ No change in the Gilchrist regulations was contemplated and a candidate for the award, John P. F. Watermeyer, who had obtained a Cape matriculation certificate in 1877 and was destined, after graduating through the University of the Cape of Good Hope, to reach high legal office in Rhodesia, would have to sit the usual London matriculation examination in January, 1880.⁴² However, before he could make the attempt, word came that the Gilchrist scholarship, for Cape aspirants at least, had been withdrawn as a result of certain financial difficulties facing the trustees.⁴³

The Gilchrist scholarship, forerunner of the 1851 Exhibition and Rhodes scholarships, thus passed from South African educational history. The name of Frederick Charles Kolbe, the Cape's sole success in the competition,⁴⁴ is linked with those of such other distinguished winners of the award as Sir Robert Falconer, who gained his scholarship while attending a West Indian academy and was subsequently President of the University of Toronto, Walter C. Murray, who became the first President of the University of Saskatchewan and J. Gould Schurman, long President of Cornell University and a United States ambassador to Germany.⁴⁵

Opposition to London University examinations at the Cape continued, as did London's reluctance to accept the degrees conferred by the colonial institution. Langham Dale felt in 1881 that restrictions should be placed upon entries for the examinations of the English institution. Many applicants were not colonial students, but had begun a course of study before coming to the Cape. He deplored ". . . repeated failure" which "brings discredit upon the Colony, . . .".⁴⁶ The Premier, Scanlen, agreed.⁴⁷ The Cape's own degrees failed to find favour with London University's governing Senate. A request from Dr. C. W. Kitching that the University Council ascertain whether the London authorities would accept the matriculation, or failing that, a degree examination of the University of the Cape of Good Hope as the equivalent of a London matriculation pass was answered by A. Milman, Carpenter's successor as Registrar of the University of London. He informed the Cape University in 1881 that there was no possibility that Senate would accept any certificates awarded

41. G. 7-'67. *Report of Board of Public Examiners*, 1867, app. XIII, pp. 104-5, Carpenter to Douglas, London, Dec. 6, 1866; Kidd, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39; C.O. 1079: no. 3, Elliott to Mills, (Cape Town), Feb. 21, 1879, with Dale to Col. Sec., (Cape Town), Jan. 10, 1879.
42. C.O. 5110: p. 48, 5/113, Mills to Scty, Gilchrist Educ. Fund, (Cape Town), Aug. 15, 1879.
43. *The Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, (Cape Town), Sept. 16, 1879; Dale, Cape Town, Sept. 12, 1879 with letter Carpenter, Aug. 10, 1879; C.O. 1088: no. 243, Milman to Mills, London, Oct. 8, 1879.
44. Kolbe mentions the fact in his autobiographical fragment, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.
45. Falconer, *op. cit.*, p. 5; pp. 12-13.
46. C.O. 1151: Deeds; eccles; educ., 1881, no. 23, memo. Dale, Aug. 5, 1881 in Dale to Col. Sec., (Cape Town), July 2, 1881.
47. *Ibid.*, minute of F.S.M., private scty to P.M., Aug. 18, 1881.

by the institution in Cape Town in the place of a London matriculation.⁴⁸ Before 1885, when the Cape intermediate examination with Latin and Greek was recognised as an entrance qualification to universities in the Netherlands, only Edinburgh among overseas universities had given limited recognition to a certificate issued by the Cape University by exempting prospective medical students with a Cape matriculation pass from certain qualifying examinations.⁴⁹ Higher educational qualifications obtained in the Cape Colony had long to wait before they would gain wider acceptance.

Falconer has suggested that the termination of the Gilchrist scholarships for Canadian students after 1887 may be attributed to the rising standards obtaining in Canadian universities.⁵⁰ There was however still room for incentives to further study in the Cape Colony of the period, where teaching universities were yet a dream of the future, research facilities extremely limited and collegiate institutions part university, part high school. For advanced scientific work, for qualifications in medicine, music or theology at university level, the Cape student found no facilities at home until the 20th century. The degree examinations of the University of London continued to be taken, albeit on a small scale, and were of particular value to the divinity students at the theological seminary at Stellenbosch in the early years of the present century, before the University of the Cape of Good Hope instituted degrees in divinity in imitation of London's action in 1903.⁵¹ The history of the Gilchrist scholarship and of the early relations of the Cape authorities with the University of London reflect facets of the long struggle to raise educational standards in the Cape Colony and to satisfy the growing demand for post-matriculation study facilities which led to the foundation of the first university institution in South Africa and the development of collegiate courses of instruction in connection with its higher examinations.

M. Boucher.

48. Minutes of Council, Cape Univ., 1873-91: minutes of May 15, 1881, p. 265 and Sept. 28, 1881, p. 277. See also Murcott, *op. cit.*, p. 107. London degrees were accepted by the Cape Univ., but not matriculation until a later date (Murcott, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-4; Ruperti, R. M., *Die Suid-Afrikaanse skoleindeksamen in die algemeen-vormende sekondêre onderwys (1850-1952)*, (Pretoria, 1963), p. 17).
49. *University of the Cape of Good Hope. The Calendar for the year 1877*, pp. clxxx-clxxxi; Minutes of Council, Cape Univ., 1873-91: minutes of Aug. 1, 1885, p. 442 and pp. 442-3, Van Oordt to Dale, Cape Town, July 30, 1885. For the gradual extension of recognition see Murcott, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-9 and Ruperti, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
50. Falconer, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.
51. Venter, G. S., *Hoër onderwys op Stellenbosch 1859-1918*, unpubl. D.Ed. thesis, Univ. Stell., 1967, pp. 116-8; *University of London. The Historical record (1836-1912); being a supplement to the calendar . . .* (1st issue, London, 1912), p. 15n; G. 27-1910. *Report of the Council of the University . . .*, 1909, 17, p. 7.