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The Union Buildings: reflections on Herbert Baker's design intentions and unrealised designs

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When assessing the architectural merits of the Union Buildings the design thinking of Baker should be considered. He expressed himself on these matters in various texts throughout his productive years. Not all of these have been available to the critic. This article attempts to make his thinking available to the critic and researcher, especially in terms of applying the tenets of the Grand Manner, as well as operative aspects of the design, particularly as regards the proposed Temple of Peace and Via Sacra.

Die Uniegeboue: besprekings oor Herbert Baker se ontwerpbedoelings en onverwezenlike ontwerpe
As ons die ontwerpmeriete van die Uniegeboue wil waardeer, moet die ontwerpdenkwyse van Herbert Baker in ag geneem word. Tydens sy produktiewe jare het hy homself in verskeie tekste ten opsigte hiervan uitgedruk. Nie al hierdie tekste was vooreen tot die kritikus se beskikbaar nie. Hierdie artikel poeg om sy denkwyse aan die kritikus en researcher beskikbaar te stel, veral wat die toepassing van die Grand Manner betref, soos ook gebrekkige aspekte van die ontwerp soos dit op die voorgestelde Tempel van Vrede en die Via Sacra betrekking het.

The Union Buildings is the most public artistic endeavour in South Africa. For any assessment of its architectural merits it would be prudent to revisit Baker's own writings rather than later interpretations.¹ Many of these have previously not been available for review when making such assessments, leaving much to the interpretation of the critic. Therefore, some are offered here for the first time to researchers.

In Baker's essay in *The Stone of 1909* (p. 512), he states that the purpose of the paper:

... is to plead for the revival in the laying out of and designing of our cities and buildings on those principles of largeness of conception, restraint, and subordination of detail to a central idea which inspire what has sometimes been called 'the grand manner'.

His resorting to a style

which may perhaps suggest the affluence and stiffness into which architectural style crystallized at the end of the eighteenth century (Baker, 1909: 512)

was prompted by his reading of Reginald Blomfield's (1856-1942) *The Mistress Art* (1908), "one of the most useful books on architecture that has

been written for many years" (Baker, 1909: 516). It might thus prove fruitful to look at the examples covered by this book, since these are the same as those called upon by Baker in his article, other than those of which he himself had had first hand knowledge.

The first cited by Blomfield (1908: Chapter V) is the "Grand Manner" as expressed in Egypt and Greece. In the Egyptian examples cited, such as the Temple of Ammon (Aman) at Karnak (1520-323 BCE)² or the Temple of Hathor at Denderah (110 BCE-68 CE)³, Blomfield uses these as an almost terrifying persistence of tradition right through to the Ptolemaic Temple of Horus at Edfu (116 BCE)⁴ of a grand manner of symmetry and monumentality with sharply delineated light and shadow.

I call your attention to this tremendous architecture ... in order that you may learn the lesson it teaches of finely considered mass, and of the effect it got by the simplest forms of construction properly handled. Here then, in this monumental simplicity, in this reliance on grand scale and the cumulative effect of a series of buildings set out on an ordered plan, we find one of the elements of the 'grand manner.' The central idea is predominant everywhere, it is never sacrificed in detail, but severely maintains its

away, undisputed and irremissible. (Blomfield, 1908: 166-7)

In the examples of Pergamon and Hellenistic art (Blomfield, 1908: Chapter VI), he speaks of the Hellenic evolution of Greek art as a response to the site, the development of the picturesque in the assembling and composition of different elements, and the synthesis of sculptural embellishment, ritual and architecture.

The example of Rome (Blomfield, 1908: Chapter VII) provides lessons of architecture as "means to an end ... not in the least oppressed by the burden of styles" (Blomfield, 1908: 247) and a

certain largeness of conception as one of the principal elements ... a certain distinction of mind which rises clear of details to some predominant idea. (Blomfield, 1908: 250)

No obstacle seems to have daunted her [Rome's] architects; rocks were cut away, valleys raised, immense engineering works were carried out to form the substratum of their buildings. (Blomfield, 1908: 254)

Blomfield (1908: 256) finds sufficient evidence left of the Roman world to suggest the principles by which her architects worked:

(1) They attached vital importance to symmetrical planning. Hemicycle and scheda balanced each other on either side of the courts, stated angles necessitated by one side of the ground were reproduced on the other, whether necessitated or not.

(2) the planning proceeded on main axial lines.

In *The Grand Manner: France* (Blomfield, 1908: Chapter VIII) comes the remarkable passage:

... French architects had definite principles to guide them in dealing with the multitudinous problems in laying out a city. They were habituated by their training to consider the whole as greater than the part, [my emphasis] they had learnt from the first to consider buildings not as units, but as parts of a larger scheme, they were trained in the faculty of realising in imaginative vast perspectives, the blocking out of great masses of building and their linking up in consecutive designs. (Blomfield 1908: 278-9)

In conclusion Blomfield (1908: 294,295) summarises that what binds all these expressions of the grand manner:

... is to be found in a lofty ideal and a power of imagination that rises superior to the rearrangements of detail. Each of these works [of the examples cited] was the embodiment of an intellectual conception, far-reaching in its range and unflinching in its purpose. This I hold to be the true interpretation of the Grand Manner in Art ... Great architecture ... has been great in so far as it has set itself to realise noble aims, and to embody in concrete form noble thoughts, and aspirations which lie beyond the reach of fashion. It is for the artist to devote his life to this high and austere ideal. It is thus that he must justify his place in the splendid succession of art: Still nursing the unconquerable hope Still climbing the inviolable shade. [Sir Edwin Arnold (1832-1904) *The Scholar-Gipsy* 1.211]

Obviously this text both challenged and inspired Baker. Its publication was timely for he was about to receive the first large commission of the twentieth century anywhere in the world, then known as the New Government Offices. And the Colonial government (1906-1910) of the Transvaal Colony (1902-1910) was inspired to be extravagant in funding the project.

His paper submitted to The State in May of 1909 was either directed by prescience or inside knowledge of his appointment to the commission, since this was not formally made until the project had been given parliamentary sanction as last of the business of the Transvaal Colony (1909) but before the first sitting of the Parliament of Union in Cape Town (1910).

In this essay Baker refers to all the examples given by Blomfield but lays particular emphasis on the example of Pergamos, which informs us of his thinking when selecting Meintjeskop for the siting of what came to be known as the Union Buildings. In this he directly quotes Blomfield (Baker, 1909: 516):

The general result, as seen from the plain, was this: the Royal Palace and garden, the temple of Athens, and the immense altar of Zeus formed an immense composition on the segment of a curve, lining the ridge and encircling the theatre in the hollow of the breast of the hill below; and then, to form a line of access, to climb as it were the sense of slipping down the hill, the architect on this terrace along the face of the hollow.

He states provocatively that:

Table Mountain would dwarf any work of human hands which attempted to vie in scale with it. It would be easier to imagine Pergamos or Halicarnassus growing out of any semi-circle of cliffs that stretch from Maitzenberg to Simon's Town, or rising from any of the encircling hills of Pretoria or Bloemfontein. (Baker, 1909: 526)

Here he seems to be allying himself directly with the proponents of having Pretoria as a single capital, a position from which he later distanced himself (see later).⁶

In reference to the Romans, Baker (1909: 517) says that

... their vistas were not such as we are accustomed to in our pitiless colonial areas, with nothing at the end to see but a maze of wires and poles, but were a continual perspective of alternate light and shade, with contrasted features of beautiful architecture.

... Here [in South Africa] the landscape is as bare in detail, and so vast and grand in its general features; that the design and disposition of buildings and their surroundings must be conceived on a monumental scale to be in harmony with the work of nature. Our cities and buildings - like our constitution - should be conceived on a comprehensive scale as a whole.

We hear in this conception of wholes echoes of Blomfield's writing - "They were habituated by their training to consider the whole as greater than the part" (cited above) - and a resonance with the philosophy of "Holism" (1926) of Jan Christian Smuts (1870-1950).⁷ Baker, at that time had close dealings with Smuts, although he held that:

He has, it is true, little appreciation for the decorative qualities of art; he has given little thought to such delights. ... (Baker, 1944:191)

Smuts, through his duties as Minister of both Education and Finance, featured large in Baker's life at the time of the Transvaal Colony. Baker had been instrumental in advising Lord Alfred Milner (1854-1925) in the re-establishment of the Department of Public Works and the making of recommendations as to appointments in the architectural division.⁸ By the time the Transvaal Colony was granted Responsible Government (1906) Percy Eagle (1875-1932) was Superintending Government Architect.⁹ At this time those projects inaugurated by Smuts were royally funded.¹⁰ The last project of the period where Smuts' authority held sway was the Union Buildings.

Smuts himself was one of the architects of Union. He had too, in 1908, compiled his paper Suggested scheme for South African Union (Smuts, 1908). Smuts' scheme was probably more than that. He seems to have had a sense of systems within systems, and probably held political systems to be socially cohesive. His ambition for Pretoria as capital of a united South Africa was, at that time, already being concretised in the offices of Public Works. The young George Esselmont Gordon Leith (1886-1965)¹¹ was taken into the Department in 1906. He spent his energies and talent on the huge project for a civic center in preparation of a time soon, it was believed, that Pretoria would become capital of the united South Africa.¹² The Colony (under self government since the installation in Britain of the Liberal Party under Sir Lionel Bannermann), had purchased the extent of land where the Old Town Hall now lies at its centre.¹³ When Union came, Smuts and the Prime Minister, General Louis Botha (1862-1919), were persuaded to abandon the idea of Pretoria as sole capital. Instead Baker was asked to identify a site for a new administrative headquarters for Pretoria as Administrative Capital. Baker (1927:

63) later reminisced:

... the question of temperature came to the aid of those who advocated the rejection of a site in the centre of the town first chosen for the purpose - and the selection of a more ambitious position on the surrounding hills. A tempting site to the south, with a northerly or south aspect for the building, was rejected in favour of a ledge on the other side of the valley, facing south and nearer the centre of the city, on the other end of which, a mile or so away, Government houses had been already built.

We may ask as to why temperature should be the overriding concern. Baker does not make overt his considerations but it would appear that the prominent visual aspect of the site was in fact the determining factor so as to create the impact of the Grand Manner, and arguments as to the role of temperature and climate only used later.

A further justification (Baker, 1927: 63) was the pragmatics of locality in terms of the most recently constructed seat of authority in the Transvaal Colony, done to Baker's design, the then Governor General's House (later the Presidency, now the Presidential Guest House).¹⁴

He gives a further clue as to the arguments for the selection of the site that

appealed to the scholarship and imagination of General Smuts, and to the wisdom and will of the Prime Minister, General Botha. ... (Baker, 1927: 63),

which no doubt alludes to discussions he would have had as to classical antiquity as precedent, as it served Greek democracy and Roman republicanism.

An unpublished reminiscence, probably by Clelland,¹⁵ (s. n.; s. p.) recalls:

The Union Buildings was the next [after the Pretoria Station] work of magnitude and the names of those responsible for the conception of this magnificent building will go down to posterity, for their imagination and foresight in choosing a beautiful site. ... There was some criticism of the site, and in this connection it may not be amiss to quote

the words of the Earl of Selborne [William Palmer, 1859-1942]¹⁶:

"The site of the Union Buildings has been criticised, but I have no sympathy with the critics. I say that the people who chose this site have imagination and that they have chosen one of the finest sites in the world and when those buildings are erected - those most important buildings - of the new and greater Pretoria, people will come from all over the world to wander at the beauty of the site, and to admire the foresight and courage of the men who selected it."

As the project developed, Smuts was consulted and kept closely informed of developments¹⁷:

I showed some rough sketches to General Smuts, and then he went with me to the site. He, with his quick insight and imagination, at once visualized the idea and its power to give dignity and beauty to the instrument of Government and the symbol of Union. ... General Smuts told me there and then to go ahead with my sketch plans. (Baker, 1944:58)

Baker relieved Leith from Public Works and employed him to prepare many of the sketch plans for the project. Rees-Poole (see endnote 12), who had been one of Baker's first articulated pupils at the Cape during the South African War (1899-1902), was tasked with the construction drawings.

Baker (1927: 64), with possibly some sense of having trumped a nation, remembers:

... The engineering work and the foundations were, fortunately, well advanced before the first Union Parliament had assembled at Cape Town and the public quite knew what had happened. A scheme which, when it was known, was considered so extravagant and fanciful for Government offices, to be built, moreover, in the Transvaal of which the other poorer Provinces were a little jealous, might otherwise have had some difficulty, even under such a strong Government, of withstanding an attack of parliamentary and journalistic criticism.

The completed design had its critics, not least of whom was Sytse Wopkes Wierda (1839-1911), the ousted head of *Departement Publieke Werke* under the old *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (1856-1902).

Later, when presenting his scheme to an audience in Britain, Baker

(1927: 64) felt again the need to defend the amphitheatre:

The amphitheatre is formed for the main part on the natural levels inherent in the site and the design. Between the level of the ground floor terrace and that of the upper or back road, rising steps and platforms fit naturally into amphitheatre forms round the outer portion of the semi-circle under the colonnade. The inside portion of the semi-circle facing the central rostrum has been deliberately sunk as a little amphitheatre. ... All over the empire, where the climate can generally be depended upon, such open-air dancing places do and will, I believe, still more in the future, become of public and national importance. I have seen many such open-air dances, as they are called in India, and two Indian recently in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). The place is sometimes temporarily built, if built at all, and therefore lacks the dignity, which an ordered architectural form can give. Surely, too, with the advent of loud speakers, large stadia or amphitheatres may become in the future essential architectural necessities in all countries.

Then late in life, in his autobiography, Baker (1944:59) returns to the issue:

When the designs were made public the chief criticism ... concentrated round the 'amphitheatre' ... What was the use of this expensive and unobedient thing? It had been adopted on the authority of Botha and Smuts - backed by some influence from Milner's young men - and its value was easily proved when a large crowd gathered there to welcome Botha back from the conquest of South-west Africa¹⁵, and a second time when Smuts returned victorious from the long campaign in East Africa.¹⁶ He told me that from the tribune he spoke to 8,000 people there, all of whom could hear.

Baker found himself vindicated and although the Union Building was extravagantly expensive - some £1 500 000 (today estimated to be more than R300 000 000) - each contemporary presidential inauguration proves him even more so.

When it comes to stylistic influences Blomfield's injunction that this be subsumed in the greater vision should not be forgotten. Baker (1909: 522) had expressed his own opinions in *The State*:

We hear much nowadays of an original South African style, but it will never be achieved through copying and imitating borrowed detail, but only through impersonal subordination to the larger ideals and conceptions of architecture. We must choose the primitive and more external instruments of the art of building, either using the column and lined alone, as the Greeks did, or combining the column with the arch and the vault and the dome, as the Romans. Then we must use these frames, or whatever others we may choose, sparingly and only where necessary, without fear of repetition, which is often the best means of obtaining the most valuable quality of architecture, namely rhythm. We must welcome rather than shun bare wall-surfaces, which is a quality of all great architecture, though rare chances of it are given by the exigencies of modern buildings. 'Great spaces washed with sun' are a characteristic of our landscape. It is the south African architect's privilege ... to have always to hand the most valuable of all materials for his work... warm sun bathed wall surfaces contrasted with deep cool shadows.

And so we have it all in the Union Buildings as described later by Baker (1927, 66):

The southern, or northern in that hemisphere, aspect of the front facade, which are of great length as demanded by the steep contours, when seen from below and at a distance, does indeed tell against its beauty, especially at mid-day, when the side elevations are nearly vertical also on the other hand at the building itself the long shadows that never forsake the front terraces and the amphitheatres, afford coolness and absence of glare, so invaluable in a hot bright climate, and the beauty of contrast of light and shade. These are more than compensation for the loss of effect from the distant view.

The design of the building without continuous verandas, with only moderately thick walls, and rooms not very high, as rooms are wont to be in the tropics, its shutters and deep eaves, seems to suit the climate of Pretoria, where altitude counterbalances latitude.

Over and above the climatic response of the design, the other issue that required attention was the selection of materials for construction, and again Baker (1927: 66-67) was sensitive to the local needs:

The basement and ground floor of the buildings above the granite plinth are faced with a local light-coloured sandstone, which, when the work was some way advanced, was

found to contain nodules of iron pyrites. Fading, discoloration and possible decay from this cause, the stone was changed above the ground floor. But after the test of 18 years our fears have fortunately not been justified, as the iron has caused no decay and has dyed the stones with an infinite variety of light tints of yellow and red amid the natural green white of the stone, with only an occasional strong patch of brown green iron stain. This colour effect on the rounded pashed surfaces of the masonry is surprisingly beautiful. In some of the retaining walls only, not sufficiently protected from damp behind, there is some flaking of the stone due presumably to the crystallization of the earth salts and some excessive discoloration from the iron pyrites.

Inside, the main corridors, courts, and staircases, are faced with hard red sandstone. It is the best building stone perhaps in the Transvaal, but its red colour was not thought to be pleasant in a land where red is the prevailing colour of the earth and its dust.

The roofs are covered with cones concrete tiles made in the Transvaal.²⁴ The rainwater gutter is hidden by being sunk into the tiles, the under tiles being painted white; the over tiles contain the metal gutter from most points of view. The joinery is generally of Indian teak but some of the paneling and all the furniture are of South African woods.

An additional aspect that needs to be examined is that of the setting of the gardens. Here Baker's hand is lighter although his intentions are clear:

The slope of the hill below the tram road down to the level of the valley has been terraced with walls, steps, and paving built of the rough stone of the neighbouring kopjes, a coarse, iron-stained slate blue-grey and warm brown in colour. On the terraces are beautiful gardens well cared for by the botanists, foresters, and horticulturists of the Department of Agriculture and the Public Works.

The rich dark colour of the masonry of the terraces forms the background for the yellows, oranges, and scarlets, the prevailing colours of the aloes, *cordylines*, *mesembrianthemums*, and many other African sun-loving plants which thrive on the hot terrace walls. (Baker, 1897: 47)

As regards the gardens, the memories of Samuel Baikie Cunningham (18 [year of birth unknown]-1974)²⁵, writing much later, are worth repeating:

Baker's outstanding skill and knowledge of horticulture in landscape gardening as adding to the beauty and influence of a building to

form a great architectural conception, were given scope in the terraced gardens on the slope of the kopje below the tram road and in skimming the flat open lawns between the lines and clumps of trees.

Planting behind the buildings was arranged in conjunction with Mr Wickens (John Edward, 1867-1899)²⁶, an exceedingly energetic and capable gardener who had been trained at the famous Kew Gardens.

He was in touch with Baker in Cape Town and gained experience there before he came to Pretoria.

He collected truckloads of stones in the Barberton district and planted them along the roads along with bauhinnias ('Pride of the Kaap') and many other flowering shrubs.

After Baker left for India,²⁷ Wickens carried out the original planning in conjunction with Haghe.

At first Native prison labour only was used and later an semi- and unskilled assistance. Van Balem (Jan C. 1894-1965)²⁸ succeeded Wickens and incidentally planted the small 'wild kopje' with the indigenous flowering plants of South Africa adding their 'common' names in Afrikaans and English in addition to the Latin designations.

The gardens have already provided excellent sites for the two fine imaginative memorials to those South Africans who fell in World War I (one designed by Baker and the other by Gordon Lobb) and for the equestrian statue of General Botha. Many positions for sculpture have been provided in the amphitheatre and for busts of South Africa's famous men in the niches in the Buildings.

Baker (1911 in Greig, 1970: 175) had also made proposals for broader incorporation of his design into the city:

... I am bringing over to Pretoria a drawing ... showing a town planning scheme in relation to the Union Buildings.

If you go up to the site, and stand on what will be the West terrace, you will see that there is a magnificent view westward, over the town lands, across the river and up [Stratton Street].

A high road and the foreground trees, will hide most of the small villas below the building, and if you can keep open a broad road in a line with the spot where the deep quarry now is, and carry this through the town lands, where it can be brought to the river and connected with the street beyond, we shall have a most magnificent effect some day in the future. I will try and make a plan for a monument on the terrace in front of the building, on the axis of this vista. ...

It should also always be borne in mind that the buildings as they stand are an incomplete project, perhaps

thankfully so. Even in the rapid phase of its conceptualisation there were dramatic changes to the buildings that would comprise the complex and the handling of the building itself.

From a memorandum by Baker (undated)²¹ we have the following:

On some first ideas for the Union Buildings which I had sketched out, I showed a low dome on the ridge of Meirjes Kop over a hundred feet above them, and on their central axis between the two domed-towers. Some object I felt was wanted there to perfect the design of the whole as seen between the towers from below and across the valley.

Such a low dome might, in the designer's fancy, have been a *Minaret*²² or National Memorial, or a Temple of Peace dedicated to the ultimate consolidation and happy union of the two races²³ of South Africa. Some ardent Transvaalians like to think of it as a Parliament House if ever, as they then hoped, the Parliamentary Capital were removed from Cape Town where it was ordained as a compromise under the Act of Union. From the point on the ridge where this dome might have been, the idea was conceived of a Processional Way or Via Sacra up the narrow saddle-back of the ridge to the apex of the kopje where it sloped on three sides steeply down to the old City of Pretoria lying in the valley below. On this apex a little circular temple was planned.

He later reminisced

Smuts shared the idea with me of Temple of Peace on the apex of the kopje overlooking Pretoria ... (Baker, 1944:190)

He continues:

The fancy of the Via Sacra and a little Temple of Peace crowning it was revived by General Smuts as a National War Memorial to commemorate the sacrifice of the Great War (known now as the First World War, 1914-1919) in which the two main rival races [Those of Dutch and British European descent in South Africa] fought side by side. He asked me to make detail designs of it with steps and platforms, simple and massive for great sculpture, leading up to a small eight-columned temple.

John Tweed (1869-1933)²⁴, the sculptor chosen as a young man by Cecil [John] Rhodes (1853-1902) to make the landing of Van Riebeeck relief on the front of Groote Schuur and later those on the Matoppo Memorial, was commissioned to make studies and for the purpose it was arranged that he should go out to General Buller's

Army Headquarters at the front in the last year of the War.

There were to be groups of mounted Burgers, Gannets and Albatross upon the pedestals flanking the steps, and friezes of war scenes and types of those who fought, like those²⁵ he made so well on the podium of the Temple of Pergamos. These subjects were suggested to Tweed for study. His uncompromising independence, which carried too far, had caused his rift with Rhodes, made difficulties, which all General Smuts' reasonableness could not easily overcome. But at a long meeting at his Chelsea studio between the three of us, he consented to the ideas and to collaborate in the general character of the suggested architectural and sculptural design. Shortly afterwards, however, he wrote to say that he withdrew his consent.

In spite of this refusal Smuts sent him to the Army Headquarters at the front as he had arranged. But in six months he produced nothing, neither sketches nor designs, except a small scale slight model resembling the relief on Trajan's Column at Rome (112 CE), which was totally unsuitable for our site on the kopje top. This fluted column was in a coat surrounded by torrid ascades, from the different levels of which the relief as they rose spirally on the column could be seen. It reminded me of Rhodes' description of the model, like the Tower of Pisa as he said, made by Alfred Gilbert as his idea for the Matoppo Memorial, which Rhodes thought, so unsuited to the vast scale of the far stretching granite mountains. Tweed was chosen by Rhodes in place of Gilbert as the sculptor of the Memorial. Tweed seemed to repeat the great sculptor's misconception in his art of the scale of an African background. Tweed never developed his talent for creative composition in sculpture since the early promise of his Landing of Van Riebeeck at Groote Schuur and his groups on the Memorial on the Matoppo (1902). He was content with his well-deserved reputation for portrait sculpture; and like his friend and master, Rodin, rejected the dependence and collaboration necessary when sculpture in its noblest manifestation is allied to architecture.

Smuts was very disappointed, as he had expected much from this direct sculptural expression of the heroism of war. But my designs without a sculptor's help remained.

The details were beautifully drawn by Gordon Leith, a South African and a valued assistant of mine; himself a good soldier²⁶ and one of the best of the junior architects employed in the service of the War Games Commission. Perspectives were made and sent out to General Botha in South Africa. They were sunk, also in the topological Galloway Castle. Copies had been kept, however, and were sent out to him. But Smuts on his return to South Africa, disheartened by Botha's death (27 August 1919, shortly after the Convention at Versailles to which he was an active

participant) and by political hostility amongst his own people, the jealous reaction to his greatness, - had to abandon this noble conception of a South African War Memorial. Sadly he saw his 'solemn temples dissolve into thin air like the headless fabric of a vision [Source of citation unknown]. It might have been one of the greatest of War Memorials; the Via Sacra on the logic top, between the heroic sculpture leading to the circular temple enshrining a statue of Peace overlooking the hills and valleys round the Capital, and on all sides the receding wild and hazy vanishing in the blue distance. Senuts, like Rhodes, had a reverence for hill-tops and mountains. The slope of Table Mountain was Rhodes' 'church'; on its summit Senuts spoke his famous 'sermon' at the unveiling of the memorial to the mountaineers who fell in the War.²⁰

The vision of Matielas Kop was abandoned and its place taken by the South African War Memorial at Delville Wood, - to overcome perhaps the rivalry of Provinces in the Union, - so eloquently promoted and brought to its successful issue by Sir Percy FitzPatrick (1862-1931).

While Baker here seems dismissive of the idea of Pretoria as the national capital, it is more than likely that this is the wisdom of hindsight, considering his enthusiasm for the scheme and closeness to Serrats at the time of the creation of Union, he being an ardent advocate of this plan.

The "Two Nations" symbolism is also probably a later concoction, as noted by Cunningham:

Perhaps a somewhat fanciful idea of the general conception of the Union Buildings design might be interpreted as symbolizing the position at the time of Union.

The great twin rectangular blocks like the two great virile sections of the people, each standing square and strong, with the towers, as their aspirations, pointing up towards the skies - each supporting its "Atlas" with its load of this world's cares on its shoulders - both securely linked together with a strong bond.

We may be sceptical of certain later interpretations, yet the Union Buildings remains a significant piece of international architecture. While Baker's Pretoria Station may be seen as a flawed progenitor of the style to be termed "Empire", which should more rightly be known as "Commonwealth", the Union Buildings is the prototype

and exemplar of the style, equalled - perhaps bettered - by the Legislature and Secretariat complex of New Delhi.²¹

Since this text is mainly that of Baker himself, we permit him the courtesy of a last word:

The South African Dominion is yet young, and who knows what may yet come there? A capital expressing some great national, Greater-African, or Imperial ideal, or a Parliament House, when the centre of gravity moves northwards with the Union. (Baker, 1927: 67).

We now know that it is to serve the "Greater-African" ideal.

Notes

1 See, for example, Radford, 1968: 62-69; Christmann, 1996: 1-8.

2 See Fellows, 1996: 157-158.

3 See Maagren: 53, 63; 52, 54.

4 See Maagren: 63, 600.

5 See Maagren: 63, FIG. 6.1A,B.

6 In the settlement of the discussions of Union, one of the concessions was the agreement to the tripartite capitals - Cape Town as Legislative, Pretoria as Administrative, and Bloemfontein as Legislative, a situation which persists to this day.

7 He had conceived the philosophy of "Hollism" as a student at Cambridge (1891-1895), but persuaded not to publish by his mentor, H. J. Wolmerhouse, a relative Cambridge don of Senut's student years with whom he corresponded up to his death in 1917. He criticized Senut's quest of "Hollism" and expressed his own utopian, a belief in a lack of universal system of unity, reason or purpose. (See Cameron, 1994: 46).

8 Baker, H. 1901. (In Minnaar, 2000: Dylung B).

9 See, Walker, [2004]: Eagle, Percy-Jones.

10 These include what is now the Pretoria High School for Boys (1902) and the University of Pretoria (1918).

11 Walker, (ongoing): *Leith, George Eccleston Gordon*.

12 see, Howie, 1977: 307.

13 Remnants of the schemes survive. It is possible that the new Pretoria Station building (Baker, 1903)

was envisaged as part of this. The Transvaal Museum was initiated at this time (created jointly by Vivian Sydney Ross-Poole (1883-1963) (Walker) and Leith Greig, 1871: 197-188).

14 Commissioned in 1902 and completed in 1904. See Vincy, 1987: 242-235.

15 See Walker (ongoing): John Stockbrins (1879 - 1938).

16 Successor of Milner as British High Commissioner to the Transvaal Colony in 1906 and author of the *Selborne Memorandum* (1907) which help pave the way to Union.

17 The depiction held in Museum Africa is thought to have provenance from the Senate Collection (Kennedy, 1966: B448:111)

18 In 1915, after commanding 368 south African troops in the South West African Campaign of the First World War.

19 1916-1918, as Commander of 20 000 British troops in the East African Campaign in the First World War.

20 When the Pretoria Station was commissioned Baker required Roman-type pan tiles. A factory in Yarronging was especially commissioned to start manufacture. The same was used again for the Union Buildings, and the venture aiding a gaining of independence by the South African construction industry from foreign suppliers.

21 Was working as an architect in the Public Works Department in Pretoria from about 1908 and was part of the FWD team, with George Sydney Herbert Bradford (1881-1933) and Hendrik Smeetsink (18__ [year of birth unknown]-1944), working on the Union Buildings (Walker, [ongoing]: *Cunningham, Samuel Beilik*).

22 See Gunn & Coold, 1981: 376.

23 Baker was officially appointed on 22 January 1913, with Sir Edwin Lutyens as principal architect, to the Secretariate of the New Delhi administrative complex in India.

24 See Gunn & Coold, 1981: 354.

25 Probably prepared for Pease (Geoffrey Eastcott, 1882 - 1968), East Head of School of the Department (1923-1948) of Architecture and Planning, at the University of the Witwatersrand, for a proposed biography, not published (Unfinished draft manuscript in the archives of the Department of Architecture, University of Pretoria).

26 These were ancient Saxonary monuments of a millennium BCE, also termed a *Acrasus*.

27 By this is meant to be understood those of Anglo Saxon and Germanic Dutch descent respectively.

28 See Stocker, 1986: 488.

29 He served with the Royal Artillery as Captain and was awarded the Military Cross. After the War he was employed by the Imperial War Graves Commission to lay out cemeteries and design war memorials in France (Howie, 1877: 507).

30 See Smuts (in Blomfield), 1951: 222-225

31 Irving, 1981.

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