

## A CHRONICLE OF THE REVIVAL OF MOLEHILL

by Gibbin Nash

### Chapter Eight

#### IN THE TEMPLE OF ART, DON'T SAY AHM, BROTHER.

The marital state: What queer wonders are wrought when two people, both of different backgrounds, with varied talents and peculiar habits, are by some orchestration of accidents suddenly linked in perpetual political alliance: that is to say, teamed against the world to make their new, fictionalized backgrounds, talents and habits predominate to their joint benefit. The couple then is that combination of tendencies which temporarily accommodates what is most tolerable in both to effect what is most favorable to the pair — and in many cases what is least acceptable to the world they set upon. For example, today, Sunday, I was round the corner at the One & Only Conglomerated Church for the dedication of a new sanctuary; while there I encountered the Reverend Titcomb Butley and his wife Ophelia in sermon and reception.

The One & Only Conglomerated Church is a splinter religion from the Semi-Christian Unity Church of Churches. It is, in the words of one of its principal founders, 'an agreeable religion which derives its creed from the popular beliefs of its worshippers: a faith of compromise, allowance and the strict adherence to the current theme'. In Molehill, where one selects a church as one does a school — based on the social and business possibilities inherent in the choice — the study of theology and the development of virtues are hardly considerations in the marketing of a faith. This is most obvious in the practice of founding new religions by the eclectic, tossed-salad method witnessed today: whatever is in season is tasteful — and therefore sacred.

The new sanctuary is truly reflective of the congregational makeup of the One & Only and its pick-and-choose menu of beliefs. It was designed and built by the many professional engineers and architects, mechanics, carpenters and masons, sculptors and painters that compose the One & Only and its conglomerated credo. The building itself is difficult to describe for its very lack of definition: that is other than to remark that it consists of every architectural component inherited from religious houses throughout history, cemented, so to speak, by modern structural technology and tastes. The veneer utilizes two tones of stained cedar in a pattern resembling the exterior of the famous Florentine Duomo. Reinforced concrete is much visible in the form of eight huge buttresses on each corner of the octagonal structure. The ceiling is of steel space trusses with stained plastic interspaces. Immediately behind the pulpit, which shares one of the eight faces with

the choir and orchestra on either side, is a huge glass and steel wall with clear and ochre colored glass arranged in one large abstract design. This window opens out onto a lushly landscaped cloister, enclosed by vaulted A-shaped arches, which perfectly matches in size and shape the octagonal sanctuary within.

So, should one tire, as one did, of the preachings of Titcomb Butley, there is still something for the spirit in the building itself, and plenty of consolation in the anticipation of a solitary walk in the cloister yard when dictums are distant murmurs.

On this day of dedication I met Titcomb Butley for the first time, as did most of his congregation, while performing his official duties, for he confines his public appearances to small selected gatherings, and the residue of his time is spent either with his wife at meals and other comforts or, in the words of Ophelia paraphrasing the Reverend Butley, 'in a bout with creativity'. Not once during his sermon on 'The Creative Man and His Stewards' did I hear the name of a single god invoked; however, that statement is true only if one exempts the name of his favorite idol, 'holy art'. The portly reverend shuffled to the pulpit and cleared his throat in a subdued growl. In a resonant voice (incidentally, nothing like his conversational voice) he commenced his address like this: 'I won't detract from this joyous moment by denouncing our rivals in faith. Today we solemnly celebrate creation, our own creation of ourselves: how our ideas, our plans, our skills and our money have been imbued with a unique significance: have resulted in a new faith and a model structure for the worship of works well done and for the shelter of the body of man in our many endeavors to come.' He then elaborated on the importance of every function in the hierarchy of creativity: 'Production is the essential unit of work by which creation is brought before the eye whole and intact. Nevertheless, this sanctuary was not just conceived and put to paper by its planners; nor was it built solely by the labor of its craftsmen. This sanctuary was created too, so to speak, by the stewardship of its congregation; and you, dear friends, will be contributing to this edifice for many years to come.'

Concluding, after numerous parables which extolled the merits of using talents early and urged stewardship on their behalf, he pleaded, 'Now we've contracted a percentage of our money and time to the creation of the conglomerate; we should make that portion ever larger until it consumes our lives in the heat of building.'

Afterward there was a reception which all of the church's distinguished devotees attended, including the grave philanthropist Judge Thudd and the acclaimed painter Fuloney Aktinschplash. There too was the omnipresent Ophelia Butley. Like her husband, she is on the well fed end of the flesh spectrum. If her talk on this occasion is a reliable gauge, she has an eye and ear on everyone's affairs and a mouth

accustomed and suited to providing her friends with the finds of her surveillance. She spent most of her time next to a table of sweet delicacies, swaying slowly in her watchful stance beneath her chartreuse muumuu and white shawl. She was heard to be particularly enthusiastic about the chocolate-covered strawberries and the hot honey punch. After making all the necessary stops to the 'lucrative supporters' of her husband's religion, she gravitated to a largish cane-seated chair in the shade of the cloister walk-way to sit surrounded by a group of confidantes. Once, while nodding good-day to the group, I overheard her say something about what pyramid power had done for her waterbed; then they all began to cackle at her mention of the phrase 'primal donut'.

As afternoon ensued, Titcomb Butley left his post at the cloister gate and came over to a small conference of which I was a participant. He asked several of us about the sound of some of the phrases used in his sermon. He then began to recite some verse that he said he started composing while working as a province tax collector during his days of seminary studies and had but lately finished while receiving people in the reception line.

Before terminating the gathering, members of the congregation performed two chants accompanied by the Butleys' daughter on flute. Then Titcomb and Ophelia Butley strolled together, as near arm-in-arm as matter would allow, bestowing as sincere an interest in each of the one hundred or so people remaining as is humanly possible for two people to do in unison in thirty minutes. They displayed an air of relieved control as they paraded by, looking like two self-satisfied partners who had just successfully concluded a risky but profitable venture.

The concluding chant, composed by Titcomb for the mass departure of all in attendance, emphasized the combination of Molehilians for purely creative ends and voiced the hope that all would soon abandon fractionalism for its own sake and 'direct the concentration of self on the One & Only'.

A COMMENT FROM CHRONICLE DISCOVERER & EDITOR,  
HASTINGS MERTHMILL EATON

Due to the skittishness of the editor of this publication, who undoubtedly mistakes good eager readers for worthless boobs, the sunlight and blue skies won't find this chronicle on these pages ever again.

I will not continue to allow the editor to string the Nash history along in slivers and chunks at random for no other reason than his being hard pressed for copy. I believe this man would unashamedly offer the evening news as an annual at a weekly subscription or be so callous as to publish a chronicle comparable to that of the great Suetonius in one-page installments over several decades. (Abuse continued on back.)

This being the deplorable state of the case, perhaps you'll be content to know that the prospects are favorable that you'll be able to obtain a complete edition of *The Revival of Molehill*. But until that day rest assured that Molehill will not budge.

## **IN DEFENSE OF FAILURE**

by Aaron Bullerd

Our culture, dominated as it is by idolatry for the successful, has virtually smothered the dignity of failure and misunderstood its utility to society. Far from simple historical neglect, failure to succeed has been maligned to such an extent that now those who are labeled such are seen as droppings in the great march of mankind, persons deserving of some kind of special missionary-like aid or rehabilitation. I want to set this confusion straight.

Failures are the very stepping stones of success: without the multitudes of suckers and foolhardy there would be no incentive for industry, no motive for philanthropy, in short, no success. Without the failures — those small folks who leap into small and big ventures and lose their shirts — there would be no competition: the successful would one day languish around their swimming pools if there were no failures, no one to win control over or to beat out. Without failures there would be nothing in life to evoke those charming characteristics we call success. Then where would be the glamour of it, the contrasts.

To truly qualify as a failure one must not be weak but resilient, coming back again and again for a licking: one must have attempted to succeed at something at least once in one's life. Of course, some Far Eastern mystic might be quoted in order to argue that to do absolutely nothing is success, but how many could even succeed in doing that. Falling short with some amount of prescience and grace, I contend, is by far the product of more lasting worth in this world of ours.

Success is an empty feeling, I hear tell: that stunning moment when one discovers that one has struggled hard to get something or some honor which no longer has the merit it once was presumed to carry. Consequently, success fails to satisfy so one must resort to new adventures. Perhaps, then, the only sure way to conserve one's values is to constantly fail to live up to them — some Western religions condone this resolution to the problem on grounds of the human condition.

But I am forgetting my point and overrunning my argument. All that precedes is but to say: here's to failure, may you never make a go.

Published monthly by

*g.d. murley publishing*

357 N. Main St. Memphis, TN 38103 Telephone 523-2622

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