

14th March 2023

Errors

**"Behold the truth whenever heart may ache
There is a glory in a great mistake."**

Nathalia Crane, *Imperfection (From "Swear by night", and other poems"* – 1936)

I'm not sure I agree with Nathalia Crane's analysis of "the great mistake". While there may be "glory" when an error makes people smile or creates a good story to tell, errors, great or small, are surely not always glorious. We all make mistakes, so we need to acknowledge our errors when they occur, always seeking to learn from things that we do wrong. And it's also clear that "if confession is good for the soul", so Christian teaching informs us that the penitent sinner always has access to forgiveness. We are constantly offered the opportunity to begin again. So far, so good ...

But if we see errors in what other people do, what then? Of course, we would be expected to point them out if their actions are likely to cause people harm or distress. If someone is about to strike a match in a gas-filled room, would you not instantly point out their error? And if you were ready to put salt rather than sugar into your baking, would you not expect someone to draw attention to your mistake and so avert a disaster?

I had a friend point out an error in a recent "Thought for the Day", for which I was very grateful indeed. I had written "Ezekiel's waste" and not "Ezekiel's *waist* ..." It wasn't a disaster, but a helpful reminder to be more careful with proof-reading in the future. I was reminded of J B Boothroyd's poem, *Please Excuse Typing*, from the 1965 publication, *The Fireside Book of Humorous Poetry*.

*If you have ever, like me,
Missed the "r" and hit the "t",
Addressing some fat blister
As "Mt." instead of "Mr.",
I trust you left it unamended?*

Splendid!

To help me, I'm happy to have people point out my errors. If errors are helpfully highlighted in order to improve what I do, I need to know what they are. Maybe *that's* the "glory in a great mistake", when I've learned from my error and resolved to do better today than I did yesterday.

A prayer for today

Yes, Lord, I've slipped up – again; it's forgiveness – again; a new beginning – again! Phew!

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>