

Command Z. Not the villain in an obscure 1950s science fiction movie, not the code name of the Thunderbirds controller on Tracy Island, not even an implausibly sinister operative of military intelligence or the order to press the button and launch nuclear armageddon. That's been changed to something about Peppa Pig & the Lion King. No, 'Command Z' is the secret chord of computing, a two-fingered combination of keystrokes on a computer keyboard that when pressed by the initiated does nothing less than make miracles happen.

Command Z is the closest thing any of us will ever get to a time machine, it is the combination of keys that calls up the function 'Undo,' and what *this* allows you to do, in the digital world at least, is to take one or sometimes several steps back, to eat your own words, to turn back the clock and painlessly take it all back. Routinely used millions of millions of times every day, pretty much unnoticed by global armies of word-processing troll-tweeting facebooking emailing drones, familiarity has definitely led to contempt

for one of the great unsung innovations of computing. The internet, desktop publishing, MP3s, plug and play and the graphical user interface are all great things, but as nothing compared to the ability to take one step back and undo the mistake we've just made. So easy is it on a computer we almost never notice the miracles happening every time they blithely press those keys, but those old enough to remember typewriters or, God help us, pens, will know what a pain it used to be to correct an error. With computers the pain is soothed away. Ouch! Command Z. Ah, that's better. Command Z. Tippex- for everything;

I first acquired a computer back in the prehistoric days when I was scraping a living of sorts writing acerbic music reviews and dense medical prose on a typewriter and apart from the lingering pain caused by spending a good 3 months wages to buy the box of tricks, as soon it was up and running I was instantly and permanently hooked. A computer is of course not just a glorified typewriter- you can play games on one too- but it is a glorious typewriter.

Choice of typefaces, cut and paste, diacriticals at your fingertips, subscript and superscript, strikethrough, underline, bold and italic and, most amazingly of all, near on instantaneous no need to roll out the paper find the tippex what ? I'm going to have to retype the whole damned thing- near on instantaneous undo. Undo. Undo. Great stuff.

So enamoured was I with this novelty and so quickly and thoroughly did it become part of my workaday toolkit, that months after acquiring my first Mac I found myself , when I did something really stupid, unconsciously trying to press the key for 'undo'-in real life. Drop your keys down the grate? Command Z. Swear like a fishwife in front of the whole church? Command Z. Realise your date is a closet Tory? Command Z. Thought you were buying a cinema ticket to see Terminator only for it to turn out to be a rerun of Summer Holiday. Command Z. Or for that last one, just give up and pull the plug.

How handy it would be. You haven't read the small print at the bottom of the contract giving British Gas the ability to clear your bank account each month for life? Oops. Command Z.

Feeling smug in church listening to one of St Paul's lists of things that make you a very naughty boy

*Licentiousness, drunkenness, idolatry,*

Yep, yep. Bring it on.

*sorcery, carousing,*

Yawn.

enmities, playing the ukulele

Oops. Command Z. And actually if it's St Paul, can we add the delete key as well?

Anyway. Command Z in real life. How great that would be. I bet David Cameron's spent a lot of time really, really wishing it worked. Alas, I've tried it, and it doesn't.

But the more I've thought about it- which is not very much, but enough to write this sermon- even if life could have an 'undo' button, we would soon tire of it. It would, like all such novelty objects of desire and longing, soon prove itself to be not quite the game-changer we thought it would be.

Even if you've never pondered the possibilities of a real life 'undo' button, I'm sure at some point you must have told yourself that if you could have your time again, you would make damned sure you didn't make the mistakes you made first time around again. And you know, you probably wouldn't take that job or trust that man or go to that parish. You would not make the same mistakes twice. However stupid humans are- very, most of the time- we're not that stupid. Alas our life would be unlikely to be any happier or better. We are, after all, all human. I think. So although we would make sure we didn't make the same mistakes again, we would make a whole new crop of *different* mistakes instead. We would all be suffering from

lifelong RSI from pressing command Z. You know that's true. The day we stop making mistakes is the day we die.

Now believe it or not, a recognition of this propensity- to mess up time and time again no matter how forewarned or forearmed we are- is hardwired into the Christian faith. It's one of it's great selling points. It's not a creed where all the ladders are short and somebody's sawn the rungs and the snakes are long and slippery and take you back every time to square one. It's not a creed of perfection where only the best will do and only the purest of the pure get to sit in the winner's chair. It's a faith that knows that we will never stop messing up- atrociously; and that God will never stop forgiving us; unconditionally.

Through two millennia countless people have heard that exposition of Christian faith, paused a moment the thought whoopee! This means that if I believe in the Christian God, I get to do whatever I want and then God presses 'Undo'.

Party time! Or as they used to say in Corinth, 'All things are lawful.'

Sounds good, but if you *did* believe that, you probably do not believe in the Christian God at all.

'All things are lawful'

Yes.

*But not all things are beneficial.*

'All things are lawful,'

Yes.

*but not all things build up.*

If we truly believe in the Christian God, we should want to strive to do the right things- those things which are beneficial, those things which build us up, those things which take us closer to God; knowing all the time that we

*will* make mistake after mistake after mistake; and when we do, Jesus will be there, not pressing some cosmic undo button, but holding out his hands, lifting us back onto our feet.

And when you're back up, look again at those hands.

The marks of the nails are still there. That has not been undone. God does not press the undo button. Things cannot be undone. But they can be transformed.

In life unlike in computing, nothing can be undone. Ever. But in God's love, everything is transformed.