

William Tyler | Queen Elizabeth II: A Reflection

Shall I then begin and say welcome to everyone. I must admit this has been an extremely difficult talk to prepare. And you will have seen that I called it a reflection. It doesn't mean that anybody has to agree with my reflections, it's simply as I've seen it. I want to begin by just saying something straightforward. This has been a week or 10 days for historians, for lovers of tradition and for folklores. For historians, we've seen the end of the longest reign in British history. We've also seen the ascension of the throne, the accession to the throne of the oldest monarch to ascend a throne. And we've seen the use of a regal name of Charles, which hasn't been used for nearly 350 years. The present King had said as Prince of Wales that he might well take the title King George VII, following his grandfather, King George VI title. And we don't know why he changed his mind. Probably because his grandson and in line to succession is Prince George. So perhaps he felt that was not appropriate, but he chose Charles III and I think most people in Britain are happy about that.

It's been 10 days for lovers of tradition. Some of you will have been able to see pictures even if you aren't in Britain, of sailors hauling the coffin on the gun carriage and not using horses on the gun carriage. This was first used in 1901 at Queen Victoria's funeral because the horses broke the traces of the carriage and they didn't have any spare horses. And so a member of the royal family said, well, we can use sailors. So since 1901, sailors have been used at royal funerals. In fact, many of our funeral customs for the monarchy date only from the beginning of the 20th century. It was much more of a muddled sort of thing in the 19th, early 19th century and 18th century. Tradition and ceremonial has really come in during the 20th century, and we enjoy the results of that in the 21st. And as for folklore amongst other things, I am a folklorist. And I was amazed that people didn't know, and there was a lot of comment in the British press, that the Queen's beekeeper went down to the hives, put black crepe on the hives, and told the bees that the Queen was dead. It's a very old country tradition to tell the bees when their owner dies. So from telling the bees that the Queen was dead, through to the sailors pulling the gun carriage, through the oldest monarch to ascend the throne in King Charles, we've seen lots and lots of things to comment on.

And today, we've had the funeral of our late Queen. A very moving ceremony for those that watched it on television. Full of history and tradition and folklore. And I was reminded as I watched it of the coronation in 1953, which I can remember too as a small child. Family and friends gathered in our house around our recently purchased black and white television set. We drew the curtains in order to be able to see the television more clearly. We ate coronation chicken sandwiches and we stood up when the national anthem was played. We stood up in

our own lounge when the national anthem was played. It seems a long, long time ago, and of course it is a long time ago, nearly 70 years ago, but it seems longer than that because that was a different England, a different Britain, and a different world.

It's been an odd time, to be honest, over here in the last 10 days for those of you listening to me talking from the other side of the Atlantic or wherever and not in Britain, it has been an odd time. Politics, which had gripped us over the summer as the two candidates for leadership of our conservative party and thereby Prime Minister, slogged it out to win. On the last Tuesday of her life, the Queen held two audiences, as was her constitutional duty, to see out one Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, and to see in a new Prime Minister, Liz Truss. The Queen died two days later on the Thursday. Although we have been told she did her papers, those are the government papers sent daily in red boxes to her, on the Wednesday. I was reminded of no historical parallel other than that of Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria and Hungary, a very elderly and not particularly fit man during the First World War who continued to work at his equivalent of boxes. And the Queen doing that does seem to have come from a different era to the one that we now live in. Hard work to the very last was the Queen doing, and if any of us are fortunate enough to live to her age of 96, we're almost certain to be retired.

What drove the Queen on? The media in Britain had fallen back on two words. Duty drove her on. Service drew her on. But a more nuanced answer is the earthquake in the House of Windsor back in 1936 when her uncle David, King Edward VIII, abdicated and the Queen felt that the monarchy could not stand an abdication. It's strange, really, because now we have situations where a pope has abdicated, retired, and the current holder of the office is intimated he might retire, but the Queen had always maintained that she would not retire or abdicate. And another answer is in some circles is that she, or at least her husband, Prince Phillip, had doubts about their eldest son Charles. He was of course very different from his father. You couldn't think of two men, father and son, more different than Philip and Charles.

I've written on my notes here, it's been difficult, metaphorically, to breathe, let alone make rational comments on the Queen's reign after this extraordinary week. We're going to have to wait some time before we have academic commentators writing definitive histories of the Queen's reign spanning as it does for 70 years between 1952 and 2022. Praising her late majesty, the positive comments in our media relate less to what she did as to who she was and what she represented. The sorts of phrases used were "iconic", "the glue that held the nation together", the moral example she set for people, "the nation's favourite grandmother", references to her deep faith, and perhaps less grandly to her love of dogs and horses. At the time of her silver jubilee in 1977, the northern poet Phillip Larkin wrote lines which encapsulate our view perhaps in these this week of her late majesty.

Larkin wrote, in the poetry of course, "In times when nothing stood but worsened or grew strange, there was one constant good, she did not change. In times when nothing stood but worsened or grew strange, there was one constant good, she did not change". And I think many people in Britain today would echo that thought.

One commentator in the press wrote, "Throughout her 70 years on the throne, her majesty stood as a beacon of hope, constancy and stability in a rapidly changing world. Inspired by a sense of duty to God and to her country, she bore the responsibility of monarchy with style and grace. A beacon of hope in a rapidly changing world." And other world leaders like President Biden of the States and President Macron of France have said similar things. Another writer in the press this week wrote, "Our monarch's true gift was to stand firm as a queen of stability." As the then Prince of Wales said in a tribute to his mother in June, during the celebrations of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, Charles said, "You laugh and cry with us, and most importantly have been there for us for these 70 years." I said earlier, you find few people in Britain today to question that, very few. That's what we feel about this extraordinary woman that ruled over us for 70 years. I say that's how the media, and I think history will judge her, as an icon, as a symbol.

She made very few memorable speeches. You could count them on the fingers of one hand, the last being during the COVID epidemic. But her first speech she made at the age of 14 during the war, and on children's hour on the radio in October, 1940, she said, "Thousands of you in this country have had to leave your homes. My sister Margaret Rose and I feel so much for you as we know what it means to be away from those we love most of all." But of course she didn't write those lines. Those lines were written for her to deliver. And at the time, there was a view that they were rather, well, I don't know quite how you put it. This is how one commentator at the time put it and he said, this is Churchill's own secretary, the very great Jack Colville, and Colville cringed as he listened. He was quote, "embarrassed by the sloppy sentiment she was made to express." Now no one would use those sorts of words about the Queen today. And she was only a 14 year old girl. But someone as important as Colville could make those suggestions. I find that quite strange.

Perhaps her most famous speech of all she made a long time ago when she was 21. On her 21st birthday, she made a radio broadcast from Cape Town in South Africa and she made a vow to the commonwealth, the commonwealth was always central to her view of her role. And she said, "I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong." And that sounds of course extraordinarily dated 70 years on with the word 'imperial'. And it certainly shows the enormous changes that have happened across the world in those 70 years. Although King Charles said something similar

during the last week about his commitment, but of course no reference to the empire, but also no reference to the commonwealth. But when she came to the throne, the Lord Altrin, a courtier and a royalist, commented in this way, he said, in 1957, he complained not only about the tweedy composition of the court, but about the queen herself. Her speeches, he said, were "prim little sermons. Her voice was a pain in the neck. And like her mother, she appears to be unable to string even a few sentences together without a written text." No one would be critical today. And there was a lot of criticism of her, which we forget, in the 1950s. She wasn't at ease making speeches. I don't think she was ever at ease making speeches.

Charles of course is quite different, as is William, but they've grown up in a different world to the very closeted world in which she was brought up. They, of course, went to school, she never went to school. They went to university, she never went to university. A lot of things have changed during those 70 years, not least are the monarchy itself. One of the constitutional roles of the monarch is to advise council and warn the prime minister of the day. As far as anyone can judge, she has made no intervention into politics and she isn't expected to. Although if she did in her private weekly meetings with the Prime Minister, where no minutes are taken and no Prime Minister has ever discussed what was discussed in those meetings. If she did, then we're pretty well in the dark. But what we can say is we can see no evidence of any prime minister changing their position. Much earlier, much earlier in the 20th century when Asquith was Prime Minister, George V fell out with him over the government's treatment of force feeding suffragettes in prison. And apparently Asquith's reply was to the king, "There are only two of us in this room, sir, but only one of us was elected." Now whether he did or did not say that, he's, Asquith was quite pompous, he could well have said that. We know that the Queen objected to Eden's Suez adventure and we also know that she didn't express her view because she was felt too young to challenge the experienced politician Anthony Eden. We believe, but we don't know for sure, that she opposed Mrs. Thatcher's attitude during the mine strike. And we believe, but we don't really have much evidence for that she opposed Tony Blair's invasion of Iraq. Maybe one day we will note the answers to those questions.

So at the Queen's death, we are left like Alice in Alice Wonderland with the Cheshire Cat's grin and smile. We too are left with an image of our Queen, an icon, that we can't quite and never could quite understand and place in context and yet, and yet we grieve for her and we've been grieving in Britain for her for these 10 days. And perhaps in doing so we've been grieving also for our national past. Grieving. In "The Spectator" magazine published this week, I read the following. An article by the historian, A.N. Wilson: "Her task, did she ever quite realise it, was to preside over a country in decline and not merely to preside over it, but to be the nation's anaesthetic, creating the illusion the nightmare was not happening."

Something very profound I think has been happening in Britain in the past 10 days, perhaps more accurately I should say in England. The Queen represented, as we look back over her life, the Queen represented in retrospect a more tranquil, a more settled society. Our favourite made not. Now that vision of a rosy past may well be false, but it's a comfortable myth for the nation as we face national and international crisis in these dark times in the third decade of the 21st century. Some commentators have said that the Queen was the best of England and perhaps we'd like to recapture some of that. And some of the people interviewed on the television in the queue to walk past the coffin in Westminster Hall said something similar to that. She was the best of us. There's still, and this small one, quietly raining in the midst of enormous change, social and political. I always thought that when the Queen dies, a curtain would come down and a new play would follow. And it certainly has felt that a curtain has come down not only on the Queen's life, but in England now gone forever. Beyond recall. The England of my grandparents born in the 19th century, the England of my parents born before and during the First World War. She represented our last real contact with the Second World War and the period that Churchill described as our finest hour. I'm intrigued how we still use the phrase since the war or pre-war. I suspect now we won't. I suspect now the Queen's reign will be our touchstone. 'Oh, it happened when the Queen was on the throne.'

Now I've mentioned England, and for those of you who don't live in Britain, maybe I should just explain, in Northern Ireland, the largest politic party, Sinn Féin, is both Republican and seeks to leave the United Kingdom and to join the Irish Republic. In Scotland, the largest political party, the Scottish Nationalist Party, wants full independence from England. Although whether it wants to retain the monarch as a country within the commonwealth or not, they have slightly glossed over simply because SNP know that if they said they wanted to become a republic, they would lose a proportion of the vote that would vote for an independent Scotland. And thirdly, in Wales, the first minister is a Republican, the labour first minister, Labour Party first minister is a Republican and of course Plaid Cymru the, Plaid Cymru, the Welch Nationalist Party, wants a fully independent Republic of Wales. And then finally, of course, there is the commonwealth where many countries will be lining up to become republics, not to leave the commonwealth, shall we say. And we've had statements this week from the whole range of politicians within the commonwealth, but most importantly from the prime ministers of Australia and New Zealand who regard it as inevitable that they will become republics, but remain within the commonwealth. Because the other extraordinary thing is that there are countries seeking in Africa from Francophone Africa to join the commonwealth like Togo. And we've had Rwanda join and Mozambique join. It's a strange phenomenon, is the commonwealth. And that's one of the things that King Charles will have to turn his attention to. How do we rewrite what the

Commonwealth is? Do you remember Conan Doyle in his stories of Sherlock Holmes talks about the "game's afoot"? Well, I think the game is afoot. With all those questions of Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the commonwealth now that we have a new king, the old rule book has been torn up, but no one knows what the new rule book will say.

Perhaps it's important now that these and other constitutional questions are brought into the light and are talked through and conclusions come to. But what I answer since the death of the Queen is that the monarchy will survive. In a poll taken after the Queen's death, it showed 73% of us in favour of a monarchy. There's no political party in Britain, sorry. There's no political British party that is for the whole of the United Kingdom. The parties that sit in parliament in Westminster, there's no major political party, conservative or labour, that wants, let alone would have dare to argue for a republic. Now of course there are Republicans. Within the left of a labour party, there are Republicans. And The Times reported this week, "Clyde Lewis, a former shadow defence minister, a labour politician, claim the arrest of anti-monarchy protestors and the state-sanctioned cancel culture of those who dissented showed the royal succession is as much about coercion as consent". That refers the fact that some people who went, Charles was walking around talking to crowds, put up signs saying no to the monarchy or shouted abuse out and were arrested. And a lot of people, you don't have to be a Republican to feel uneasy about that.

But he goes on to say "Writing in the guardian newspaper, Clyde Lewis went on to say that his initial reaction to watching the live stream of mourners fighting past the Queen's coffin was one of bemusement followed by a touch of despair. Lewis, a Republican said, the movement must understand that the key motivation for many mourners queuing for the lying in state was not a desire to honour the monarchy or the Queen, but rather to feel a part of something more than themselves." But that's the point. That is precisely the point. To feel part of something more than themselves. To feel a part of a nation. And that's what the monarchy as an institution and that's what the Queen as a person did for this country. She symbolised us. That's what people feel about the crown. Unlike parliament and politicians, the crown stands above politics and gives us all the sense of what being English, even being British means. Everybody in the armed forces takes an oath of allegiance to the Queen, now to the King. I think it's akin to being a football fan. I was born in the city of Bristol and I never feel more Bristolian than when I'm standing with fellow Bristolians cheering on my club, Bristol City. It's a sense of belonging to something bigger than ourselves that is almost eternal. My football club began in the 1890s and my grandfather was at the first match. And the monarchy, as I watched the funeral, I thought of the coronation as I said, and I thought, my, I lived as a child with both my parents and my father's parents. So my grandparents were there and my mother and

father were there and relations and friends were there, all watching this black and white TV and it's who I am and I was watching as much for them as I was watching for me. It links us. It links us to a past and it links us to a present and it links us to a future. After all, our monarchy is over 1,000 years old. Back to the time of King Athelstan, and the blue sapphire at the top of the imperial crown, once belonged to the Saxon King, Edward the Confessor. We go back in time. It means something here in this country.

So as we think about all these things, let me go back and say something about the Queen's early life. And I'm going to read because it short-circuits what I want to say. "At 2:40 AM in the morning on the 21st of April, 1926, a baby girl was born in a townhouse in Mayfair London. Princess Elizabeth was delivered by Caesarean section at 17 Buton Street at a time when it was unheard of for a member of a royal family to be born in hospital. She was the first child of the Duke and Duchess of York and was named Elizabeth Alexandra Mary after her mother, grandmother, and great grandmother. The course of Princess Elizabeth's life was to change forever in 1936 when she was just 10. Her grandfather, King George V, had died earlier that year and was succeeded by her uncle, David, who became King Edward VIII. But after 327 days on the throne, King Edward abdicated in order to marry the American divorcee, Wallis Simpson", twice divorcee I should say. "After the turmoil of the abdication, it fell to her beloved father Bertie, George V, to save the fortunes of the monarchy." So from the age of 10, she became the heir apparent. Before that it was assumed that the Prince of Wales, later Edward VIII, would marry and have children. But of course that was not to be, so at the age of 10, she knows that one day she will be monarch.

Now, perhaps I should add for the benefit of transatlantic listeners that the marriage to the twice divorced Mrs. Simpson itself socially and even morally questionable in 1936, was merely a smoke screen for the British establishment to get shot of a man, Edward VIII, who was not only lazy, he didn't read his red boxes, but unbalanced, he kept a loaded pistol. His private secretary later explained he kept a loaded pistol under his pillow at night. And phoning Mrs. Simpson said that if she did not marry him, she wasn't keen on marrying him, that if she did not marry him, he would shoot his brains out. But worst of all was his close relationship with the Nazis in the German embassy in London, including the Ambassador von Ribbentrop. There were rumours of a liaison between Mrs. Simpson and von Ribbentrop. And for what it's worth, I met a lady, oh, 20 years ago now who was a maid in a big house in Essex and she remembers von Ribbentrop and Mrs. Simpson staying for a weekend and she was convinced that they were lovers. I merely add that as a piece of untested history. But Mrs. Simpson was felt to be, well of course we know, that she was more Nazi than Edward, be that as it may, remember they spent part of their honeymoon at Baptist Garden with Hitler. With Edward VIII inspecting an SS guard of honour. And it was, as I said earlier, Edward VIII's abdication

that influenced our late Queen never to contemplate abdication. Her mother, the late Queen Mother Elizabeth, blamed Edward for her husband's, George VI, early death. That of course was nonsense. George VI died of lung cancer because he was a heavy smoker of cigarettes. And Queen Mary, the late Queen's grandmother and mother of George VI, was horrified at her eldest son Edward, or David as he was known in the family, Edward VIII's lack of a sense of duty.

When Edward died and his body was brought back for burial at Windsor in a private service, the strange thing was that his name was never mentioned during the service. Have you ever been to a funeral where the deceased's name has not been mentioned? Well, his wasn't because what he had done to the royal family had bitten deep into them. George VI, the late Queen's father, mainly thanks to Churchill and World War II, stabilised the monarchy during his relatively brief reign between 1936 and 1972. Sorry, 1952. 1936, 1952, his death. Our late Queen went on to stabilise the monarchy more. The monarchy was extremely unstable in 1936. Had there been no Second World War, well that's an alternative story we needn't look into. What we do know is that the monarchy was stabilised, stabilised by George VI, supported by Churchill and stabilised especially by the Queen. I remember my grandparents being infatuated with this young woman who had become our queen. They of course could remember Queen Victoria. And to see a queen again on the throne meant something important to them. The monarchy during the Queen's reign, the institutions being rocked, not least by scandals within her own family. Princess Diana's death and the Queen's less than adroit immediate reaction to that. Andrew's virtual admission of paedophilia and the jejune actions of Harry and Meghan. To say nothing of the earlier scandal surrounding the Queen's sister Margaret. Margaret's own divorce, Charles' divorce, Anne's divorce, Andrew's divorce for a woman who took her position as head of the Church of England seriously. But the Queen, swan-like, glided on. No family is without its tragedies and no family perhaps is without its black sheep. So many of us can sympathise and empathise with the Queen.

"The Spectator" said this, wrote this this week, "Surely after the Lady Di interview with Martin Bashier no depths in embarrassment could be deeper. No one could have predicted the sheer horror Prince Harry giving an interview to Oprah Winfrey and writing memoirs calculated to cause dismay. To name his second child Elizabeth would've been a charming olive branch to the family after a period of tension. To name her Lilibet was somehow a vulgar intrusion into the Queen's childhood. Nothing which Harry and Meghan did or said however could match the story of Prince Andrew. Very much to her credit, the Queen held on for as long as possible, supporting him." A maternal instinct. Although we have all tried to imagine them, her feelings as the story of Andrew, Epstein and Maxwell unfold are unimaginable. Who would want to live one's life in the public glare with a family like that? And now we have change.

"The Economist" magazine in Britain this week wrote this, "Half a dozen middle aged and old women are loitering after the end of Anglican church service in the village of Steeple Bumpstead in Essex. All of them are feeling rather shaken. They have just sung the national anthem with unfamiliar line, 'God save the King' and it brought them up short. Besides the death of Queen Elizabeth II, who's changed Britain in some way, says Edna Jackson. There's something floating around, she said, in the ether that's completely different." There's something floating around in the ether that's completely different. And it is. We've turned a page of British history. Where we've lost the comfort blanket of the Queen and all she represented of old values, of our links with Churchill, who was her first Prime Minister. Interesting to note that Churchill, her first Prime Minister, was born in 1874 and her last Prime Minister, Liz Truss, was born in 1974, 100 year gulf. We've lost something and we don't quite know what we've lost. We don't quite know yet where we are going, but I think most people trust Charles more than they would trust an elected politician to guide us into the next phase of our history.

I've used "The Spectator" before and I'll use it again. I want to read this little piece. This is by the writer Matthew Paris who at one time was a conservative member of parliament. "So it's farewell your majesty. And to the Charles who talked to trees, hated having to cosy up to blood thirsty dictators, and was passionately attached to hopes of saving the planet from global warming. The Charles with strong views about architecture and holistic housing. The Charles with the range of altruistic pet projects that he was never hesitant about promoting. The Charles who privately exploded in indignation that the idea of transporting asylum seekers to Rwanda. All these versions of a man, a man we half thought we got to know, must now we say be consigned to history. That was the Prince of Wales. Here now is King Charles III. The Prince is dead, long live the King." I'm not sure that's correct at all. There could be a change in the way that Charles views the role of the monarchy. To advise and to council and to warn is his constitutional duty. Nowhere does it say that has to be in private. Is he likely to stop speaking out about the environment? And only in the last couple of days, the Prime Minister of Australia has said he should not stop talking about the environment, but in talking about the environment, he will run contrary to the views of our present government. Whose views on the environment are, to say the best, cavalier. The fracking issue which we had banned is now coming back and that's just part, we're allowing because we're excited out of the EU. We breached the former EU regulations on sewage and France is in dispute with us because of the amount of sewage we're pumping in to the English channel.

Will Charles remain quiet over green issues? Will he leave it to the Prince of Wales, William? And what about issues like Rwanda? Will he really remain quiet about that? And what about the Northern Ireland

protocol where the government is intent on breaking international law in its dispute with the European Union? To break international law, which they've already done once is serious stuff. Will he remain silent? Will he say something in private or will he say something in public? He himself said, of course, that he would not speak in public. That his role as Prince Wales was in the past and he recognised his constitutional duties. But many people hope he will speak out. It's not as simple as that. I don't know, I simply don't know.

"The Spectator" magazine wrote this: "There is a Charles still who had those opinions and attachments, some of them to our liking, some of them for some of us, possibly not. And who's perceptiveness and patent sincerity we've been increasingly recognising. A prince in many ways ahead of his time. To be King is different, I appreciate." This is Matthew Paris again. "To be King is different, I appreciate, but we be the same now? Is it wrong, is it unconstitutional to hope perhaps that the terrible pressures he will soon be under, Charles will be able to remain true to himself?"

Now the idea of a monarch being an icon really only emerged with George V, George VI and Elizabeth II. Prince Albert, virtually the monarch while he was alive in Victoria's reign and Edward VII certainly didn't take that view. Edward VII who negotiated to all intents and purposes the Entente Cordiale with France before the First World War. And Albert who had strong views on the Crimean War and expressed them and people know he did. Charles can go back to a different model. I don't think he will be gung-ho about it, but I think he will be very different than Elizabeth II. He will certainly not be a clone of his mother. He will be his own man. And in my view, the country will be the better for it. And an example of the big issue of the moment politically is the cost of living crisis. And "The Times" reported this week, "The King has expressed concerns over the cost of living crisis and promised to protect religious diversity in a signal of some of his priorities. Mark Drakeford, the Welsh First Minister, revealed the King's worries about economic crisis and how people will get through the winter in an interview with Talk TV." This sounds more like the better side of King Edward VIII. When he went to the South Wales Valleys and said something must be done and did nothing. Is Charles going to say something's got to be done for poor people this winter and say nothing? Of course he won't say nothing. That isn't the man that is now our King. How this will turn out, we don't know.

Charles knows, as does William, the new Prince of Wales, that the monarchy must change. And they have already begun that change by the process of walkabouts amongst crowds around the country. And they've been quite remarkable. And they've used other members of the family like Anne and Edward and Sophie to do also glad-handing. But what is incredible is the way they've communicated to people and the way that people have responded. People have leant forward from the barriers to

grasp Charles' hand in theirs and kiss it. Women were kissing his hand. This is like a mediaeval monarchy. Sophie hugged an autistic child twice. This is a different style of monarchy. This isn't a monarchy on a pedestal as the Queen. Imagine kissing the Queen's hand like that. And Charles seems extraordinary comfortable with this. Now you could be cynical and say they're doing it as they're cashing in on the fact that there's support for the monarchy at this moment in time to pin that support down. I think that is not true. I think this is the real Charles and the real William. And I think the people's response is also a genuine response. After all, that's what William IV used to do when he went on holiday to Brighton. He used to go down the pier and just stop people. I mean, you could be walking on the pier with your wife and he'd stop you. In fact, he used to go through, they used to publish in the 19th century lists of important visitors to Brighton and he used to go through this every day and find someone to invite. And they weren't aristocracy, they were middle class people. And one woman told the story that she received an invitation in hotel that would she join the King and Queen for dinner? And the King had added, please don't dress up because the Queen and I don't. What a, I mean that doesn't sound like Victoria or George V or George VI or Elizabeth II. But it does seem more like King Charles III and William Prince of Wales. We seem over these last 10 days to become more royalist than we have been for a long time. The crowds have been very wide cross section of British people, young and old, men and women and children, black and white, Muslim and Christian and Jew. Grey-suited men from the city, young women in shorts and union jack t-shirts. This isn't the woke Britain that the media talk about, this is the real Britain. This is a real Britain that's speaking. There is a poem that was written long time ago now by G.K. Chesterton. And G.K. Chesterton wrote in this poem, the following lines: "Smile at us, pay us, pass us. But do not quite forget for we are the people of England that never have spoken yet."

Well, I would argue that the people of England have spoken over the last 10 days and it's taken the woke media by surprise. No one forced anyone to join those queues. In fact Macron and his wife seemed to have so impressed by what saw that they did a walkabout. They took a walk down the side of the Thames last night to see for themselves. You, it's difficult to imagine, it's difficult to imagine this elsewhere than in Britain. Republicans will say, but we aren't free. We're subjects. But it misses the point. We don't feel like subjects. We are free people. There are limits to what the crown can do. It's often said that the crown is a constitutional monarchy. It isn't. It's a parliamentary monarchy. The House of Commons can get rid of a monarch in 24 hours. It got rid of Edward VIII pretty quick. But the truth of the matter is that the monarchy serves us well. I'm proud to be British. I'm proud to be English. I'm proud to be royalist. And I'm not wearing a black tie tonight, I'm wearing a tie of the order of the British Empire for which I hold a gong, presented in my case by Princess Anne on behalf of the Queen. And on my wall over there is my

document signed by the Queen and Prince Philip appointing me to the order of the British Empire. And I wear it tonight in memory of the Queen and in support of the King.

You see, we are a strange race. We chopped off the head of a king in January, 1649. A king that we tried illegally and found guilty of treason against his people in that very same hall in which the Queen's coffin lay, Westminster Hall. But today we are not just the inheritors of Charles I, we are also the inheritors of Oliver Cromwell. And as someone wrote in the 1950s, we are in fact a crowned republic. We found our way through by a different route than the British in America found their way through. In the turbulent years of the 17th and 18th century. We in effect became a republic, but with a king. America became a republic without a king. For all the historical reasons that we know, we're happy as a people with what we've got. It isn't as though there aren't problems with the office of president. No one has a system that is perfect. But Macron really, really hit the bullseye for British people when he said, "To you, she was your Queen, to us, she was the Queen. She will be with all of us forever." What an extraordinary thing for a French president to say. And to say it because he meant it.

So in conclusion, how do I draw this to a close? Well, first of all, the size of the outpouring of public emotion over the Queen's death surpassed what anyone could have expected. The new Prince of Wales, William, has said that the Queen herself would've been surprised and astounded I think was the word he used by it. We've also been very surprised at the support shown to the new King and the Queen Consort, Camilla, far beyond expectations, especially in the light of the Princess Diana story. That story seems now to be consigned to the history books and have nothing to do with the next period in our history led by Charles III and Queen Camilla. Why people say not just abroad but in Britain, Why has this happened? Well, I said just now, it was G.K. Chesterton who said that it the voice of the people of England that have not yet spoken, but have spoken this last 10 days. At the time of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, Michael Patterson in his book on the House of Windsor, which is on my blog page, you can look it up, wrote this, "Despite euphoria," that was over the Diamond Jubilee, "there is an often expressed view in the media that we've all had enough of the monarchy that it will wither away through the increasing indifference of modern and forward looking people, especially the young. In the days and weeks before the Jubilee, there was much talk about the general lack of enthusiasm. The perspective was always the same, that the Queen's subjects becoming more and more disenchanted with their constitution and that by implication will not be such event in future because the monarchy will have gone. The foreign news coverage was especially dominated by this. But it didn't." They, it simply didn't. And when foreign press went round searching with a microphone, someone to say, yes, it will go, they didn't find anyone. This is the people of England speaking. And the

monarchy has responded, again from Patterson at the time of the Diamond Jubilee, he wrote, "While it will take a revolution to overthrow the monarchy, there's already been a quiet one within the institution itself. It's been going on for almost a century, gradual and often unnoticed. It's been carried out not by a mob at Palace Gates, but those inside. It has been so successful it's calmed annoyance, disarmed criticism, and survived detraction. It will continue, for the royal family will carry on learning the lessons of this and adapting to reflect the better instincts of the people over whom it rules." And a piece in "The Times" said this, "In an age, of course, populism and authoritarianism across the globe. When an American president rejects the fundamental principle of loser's consent, that is essential for a smooth transition of power. Freedom and democracy are under pressure as never before. As odd as it sounds, our own curious mix of parliament and royalty, may be a guarantor of both."

God save the King.

I think I've got some questions.

Q & A and Comments

Q – I had a question that was asked me by email by I think some people in Canada and in the States, which was the question of the succession, "Was William to die before his father, who would then be the heir to the throne? Would it be Harry?"

A – No. It goes down the line, you have to keep going down the line. So you start with the eldest, now child, by it could be a woman now, the eldest child of the king. That is Prince William. Then it goes to his eldest child, Prince George, and then to Princess Charlotte and then to Prince Louis. Only then does it go to Prince Harry and subsequently to his children, Prince Archie and Princess Lilibet. The chances of Harry gaining the throne are pretty well zero. It would require the three children of William to die before their father or to succeed to the throne without any of them having children. And then it will go to Harry's children. That is extremely unlikely. So the order of succession is now guaranteed. At the moment, it stands at Prince William, then at Prince George and then at Princess Charlotte. And Prince George and Princess Charlotte were at the funeral today. And apparently it is because the advisors at the palace said the children should appear because they are in the line of succession and it shows that is what a monarchy is. It doesn't end with Charles or William, there are others in line. And I don't know about anyone else who saw it, I was very moved by seeing the little girl, she's only seven, Princess Charlotte, and she looked magnificent. And she had a little diamond brooch of a horseshoe apparently to remember her grandmother, the first brooch she'd ever worn and the first time she'd ever worn a

hat.

So let's see if we've got some questions, shall I? Maybe I can even answer them.

People are saying about the ceremony, how wonderful it was. Susan says, "I'm obviously not British. Your entire country brought class and dignity to a troubled world."

Q - "What do you think are died of?"

A - Do you mean the Queen? Well, we don't know. We don't know.

- "The Queen would've been proud of the whole proceeding."

Yes, and and she organised most of them. Thank you.

Thank you, Myrna. I appreciate your thanks to me because it wasn't easy. She also goes, Myrna goes on, said, "but personally I found it very difficult take the unpopular view, and not feeling any emotion whatsoever. Why should I feel grief at the death of someone who I didn't know and who lived in a great comfort to a ripe old age?"

Well, I think I suggested why people do feel a sense of grief and a sense of change. Interesting to note that President Biden felt he needed, this is Joe, felt he needed to fly his beast car over and enter the palace via the garden, not the front entrance. Whereas the new King and his family have walked very slowly and in safety through the streets of London. The, that thought had crossed my mind.

Q - "Why did George VI and Queen Elizabeth, now Queen Elizabeth II, and Philip decide to be buried in Windsor, not Westminster Abbey?"

A - We haven't had a King buried in Westminster Abbey since George II. So they're buried in Windsor.

Arlene says "nobody does spectacular pageantry like the British."

Marion says, "I'm Swiss and American got up before dawn to watch a whole ceremony. Nobody but the British know how to do pomp."

Well, yes. And without sounding, I don't know, without sounding in any way superior. We rather like it. We rather like the ceremony, it makes us different. Not better, not better, but different. So we, we like it.

Q - "And did the Queen ever visit Russia or the USSR?"

A - Yes, she did, I think I'm right in saying.

- "I remember Churchill and Kennedy's funerals. Also remember the coronation portrait, been through all this," says Alan. "Also remember singing God save the Queen, King, then later the Queen."

So do I. Also remember the head mistress at my school weeping when she announced the King's death. I remember going from my prep school to the village hall to see, I think it was in colour, a colour film of the coronation. And we kept books and we, I was about seven, eight, and we traced the Queen and Prince Phillip's journey around the commonwealth and I bought stamps and oh, it was, we were really into it.

No, I don't want visuals, thanks. No, I don't do visuals for things like that. There's plenty of books and things you can see if you want visuals. We've all seen the visual today of the funeral.

Oh, who says this? Joan, "David Wilby made a mistake in his conference that the Queen was not crowned with the imperial State Crown, but St Edward's Crown, which is only ever used in coronations."

Now what is interesting is how many mistakes have been made in the foreign press. We know the New York Times has come in for a lot of criticism, but in fact there's been enormous number of mistakes in the British press. The Daily Telegraph even managed to say that Charles II was succeeded by his son James II. I mean, I give up with people's lack of knowledge of history and not only lack of knowledge, but the lack of an intention to go and find the real answer.

A - And I'm, Robert's asked, "why did the Queen never visit Israel?"

Q - Well, the Queen never chose to visit anywhere. The monarch doesn't do that. It's a government decision. So the decision that the Queen never went is political. Maybe because they were worried about her safety or maybe they were concerned about the oil flowing from the Middle East. I really do not know. And I don't suppose we will know unless a politician tells us. It's nothing, the Queen only goes anywhere on a royal visit, the King now, where Parliament says, or the Prime Minister rather says he can go. And they're usually deployed for political reasons.

Hannah says she's heard that Queen died of leukaemia.

Q - Jean from America says, "why did the Navy escort the coffin and not one of the other branches?"

A - Answer, as Robert says underneath, the Navy is the senior service. And the Navy were there when the horse traced broke in 1901 and the member of the royal family, who was in fact German, but was an officer in the British Navy. And it was he who said to Edward VII, why don't we use the sailors? And that's what they did.

Q – "Would I elaborate on the differences between Charles and his father?"

A – Well, that will take too long Brenda, I'm afraid. But Charles was is a very sensitive person. I don't think anyone could describe Phillip as sensitive. Let me just leave it at that.

John, you're right. "When asked about the impact of the 1789 French Revolution Mount said it was too early to tell. Same here about the reign Queen Elizabeth II."

Yeah, it is too early to say, but I do not think you can make much of a case for anything she did. We've been told about her visit Ireland, but her speech would've been agreed by the Prime Minister. She did it with a clerk and with some grace. But, she did not initiate it.

Q – Jonathan says, "could it be that constancy was the characteristic Queen was important?"

A – Yes. "As a counterweight, Britain changed into a multicultural nation. In other words, a confluent mind in the old Britain. Yes, except of course she was extremely open to the new arrivals in Britain, as all the royal family had been."

Q – "What about the 39 acts of Parliament" says Brandish, "she did not sign into law?"

A – Sorry. No sovereign has refused to sign an act of Parliament since Queen Anne. So I'm not sure what you mean by that. If you mean they're outstanding acts, then they will be signed by Charles. But the Queen has signed every act.

Whilst, Peter says, oh, hello Peter. "Whilst the Queen has no political power, surely she has a great deal of political influence."

Yes, she does. But we don't see any evidence of her influence having changed any single British Prime Minister's decision. Maybe we will see evidence of that, but I can't imagine where.

– "I wonder if the criticism early in her reign was about being a queen or not a king."

No, I think it was because there was a strong element of republicanism at the time. I don't think it was anything to do with gender.

Sorry, Sheila says, "when I watched on TV, the people walking for hours in the queue went to Westminster Hall, travelling down by train or waiting in crowds on the side of roads on the routes that the coffin was travelling in Scotland, in London and Windsor, it reminded me of

the pilgrimages made throughout history and Geoffrey Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales", the pilgrimages to Jerusalem in biblical times and which are still celebrated on the Jewish pilgrim festivals."

Well, it is something like that, you are right. It is something like that.

Q – Oh, Peter says, "you will have watched stuff with Charles. Will he make a good king?"

A – Yes, he will. I have every confidence in him.

You're right Churchill didn't want Edward VIII to abdicate. That's absolutely true. He was in a minority and the speech he made on behalf of Edward VIII in the House of Commons was the worst speech in Churchill's career. After the war, and this is a story that was told by a student of mine, a lady who was a child and her father knew Churchill and Churchill was out of office and Churchill had dinner with her mother and father. And her father asked "Churchill, what do you now think of the Duke of Windsor?" In other words Edward VIII, and Churchill swore and swore and swore. And then suddenly realised this little teenage girl was there and said, "oh, I do apologise, you haven't heard these words". And she said, "well, in truth, some of the words I had heard, but some of them I never had heard." He'd realised he'd been taken in. That is of course before he became Prime Minister, he was taken in. So he didn't see the papers about the links with Germany.

I've answered the question about, I think, about Israel. I can't answer more than that. I simply don't know and no one can answer that question except to say it's a political decision. I got so excited, I've lost.

– "Princess Margaret might not have gone off the rails had she'd been allowed to marry Townsend."

Agreed. Apparently, one story I was told by someone, someone with connections, was that when Townsend went to see the Queen Mother, as she then was asked for Margaret's hand in marriage, the Queen Mother thought he was coming to ask for her hand in marriage. Whether that's true or not, I don't know.

Suzanne says, "I hope that the new King will in fact speak out about the environment."

Yes, you and me likewise. "How he does this will be interesting to witness."

Well, he can do things. He could, for example, call an international summit and chair it. He wouldn't need to say anything much if he did

that. No one is likely to turn down an invitation that he sent. Look at the people who turned up today. It was an extraordinary moment.

Oh, hang on. I've gone past where I was.

Q – "How to envision challenges and responses to the monarchy by the potential political breakup of the union?"

A – It will matter not at all. It won't matter. Scotland had only joined us united in 1707. Our history is much, our history had been going as a king, as a kingdom for over 700 years before Scotland joined. It will just go on.

Oh, Sandy, that sounds interesting. "During the war, a Polish airman who was staying with us leapt to attention when the anthem was played on the radio. He was concerned we did not. 'Oh, you don't need to do that in England,' said my grandmother calmly."

No, but some of the kids you see at the coronation, we weren't the only family to do that. I've heard other people of my age say they were forced to stand up.

Myra says, "I will never ever consign Diana to the history book."

Well, fair enough.

That's, Thank you. People have been very nice. Some have suggested the monarchy is an offence to modernity. Well, I won't comment. Thanks. I think Trump, a president of the biggest democracy in the world, was an offence. You don't have to be a monarch, I don't find Charles offensive in any way. It not, the monarchy doesn't have power. It has influence. There's somebody else.

– "There is some discussion about whether Canada should continue to have the monarch as head of state, but it would be far more difficult for us to change this in our constitution than it sounds, it would be for the British to become a republic."

I don't actually believe that's true. I think you could change it. You might have to get a vote of the House of Commons as well. But it would be merely a formality.

Q – "Do I think younger generations feel differently about the monarchy?"

A – Arguably, but some of the figures don't support that and the evidence of our eyes don't support that. And maybe people understand the value of it as they mature.

Q – "Please enumerate the constitutional parts of the monarch."

A – Oh dear. That I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Calvin. I can't do that in a minute. There's too many of them. I'm so sorry. I really can't do that in a minute.

Q – "Do you think there will be infighting amongst the younger royals?"

A – Absolutely not. Harry and Meghan will go off and do their own thing and presumably in the end head for divorce courts.

Oh, Philip says, "I remember Queen's 21st birthday celebrations in Cape Town. She visited by school where I was a cadet and had the privilege of giving her the royal salute with our rifles. It is a lifetime memory."

Fantastic, Phillip. But that really is, I've never met anyone that did that. That's fantastic.

Arlene. Oh, thank you Arlene. That's nice comment.

Sheila, "BBC showed a colour film of coronation this afternoon never seen it before in colour."

That's the one that I was referring to that I saw in the village hall where my prep school was. And yes, there were lots of Canadian mounties in it and it's different to the coronation, but it was very nice to see the Canadian mounties leading the parade back from the funeral today.

Yes, "the British ambassadors," Nicola says, "doesn't visit East Jerusalem. There's a separate console."

It, yeah. I mean the whole thing is very complex. It's very political. There's not anything to do with the Queen or now with the King. Is, am I correct that there is an individual sole, not sole responsibility, It's the Duke of Norfolk, which, and it's hereditary duty. He's the Earl Marshall and he does have that responsibility as he does for the coronation. Not on his own, but with a large workforce.

Yes, I don't think Harry and Meghan, people here are sick to death of hearing about them. And if the reports in the British press are correct, Americans are sick to death of hearing about them and they're just, maybe they'll grow up. Maybe they're come to their senses. But I don't know. I'm afraid Harry isn't very bright and well, we'll have to see.

Q – "While surprised, but glad see the wife of the leader of the Ukraine. What is the significance, if any?"

A – No significance. Ukraine is a country whose head of state was invited to come, as other heads of state were, for obvious reasons, he couldn't. He sent his wife instead and she had a private meeting with the Princess of Wales in Buckingham Palace. So it's part of showing support for Ukraine by the royal family, not by politicians.

– "And the Queen's mother-in-law is buried in Jerusalem."

You're absolutely right. That is to say the Duke of Edinburgh's mum. No, you are right. Who is that saying that? Aubrey, I believe you are right.

There wasn't a renter crowd. It wasn't a renter mob. People came because they wanted to come.

And I think, yes, Jonathan, the Queen's mother-in-law is honoured in the in Yader Washim, yes, you're right.

– "The Canadian Constitutional Recovery Province and the federal pass of evolution to change our government from monarchy to a republic."

Yes. That's internal to Canada. Absolutely, Neil. Whether Canada wants to be a republic or not, it'd be very interesting to know how French Canadians think. Maybe you'd be surprised.

Yeah, glad that William is the heir or not his brother, but of course his brother is what he is because he's the spare. And that's the problem we've had with the royal family, the number two sons have, or daughters, have always had problems. You think of Margaret, I mean, goodness gracious. At least Harry isn't quite as bad as Margaret. I think I've come to the end, haven't I? I think that's probably the end. It should be.

– Thanks. Thanks, bye.