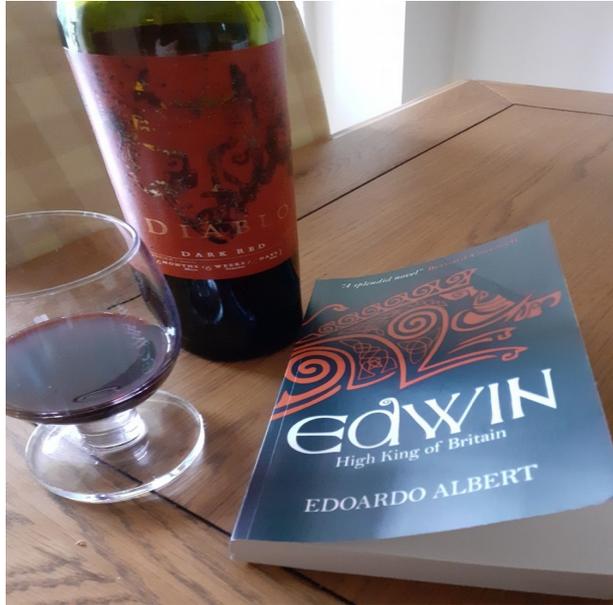


# “Wine-ing about the Water”

***“They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine.” John 2:9***

One of the traditional readings for the season of Epiphany is the account in John’s gospel of the Wedding at Cana, the first of Jesus’ miracles. Jesus is made aware at a wedding banquet that the host has run out of wine, and after some persuasion tells the stewards to fill six stone water jars to the brim. And on tasting the water, the master steward finds this is the finest wine and he now has about 120 litres of it. And the celebration continued..



I have always wondered at the necessity of this miracle, a rather frivolous use of one’s power you might argue. But I wonder if this miracle might also be seen as an act of great compassion.

I have been reading a book by Edoardo Albert called “Edwin” which re-tells the story behind the Northumbrian King Edwin around 600 years after this wedding at Cana. In the book the King himself is holding a wedding banquet. Aethelburh his new bride has come to Edwin, and with her a priest Paulinus and it is through these two that Edwin becomes to be introduced to the Christian faith.

So imagine this wedding banquet being held by King Edwin, imagine the nobility that has been invited to share in the feast, imagine the banquet hall filled with guests – and the King wanting to make sure his guests are entertained. So he calls for those gathered to share stories of the adventures and quests. And it is Paulinus, not wanting to waste an opportunity to share the gospel, who stands up and tells the story of this Wedding at Cana.

But it is at the point in the story when the host of the banquet runs out of wine, that Paulinus asks his audience what they would do should that happen at the King's banquet: "Cut off the stewards head!" "Feed him to the dogs" "Feed him to the Britons" are their barbarous and drunken replies.

Perhaps then, Jesus' intervention in the case of the empty wine glasses may just have been an act of compassion rather than a flamboyant party piece. Perhaps Jesus sees the consequences of the stewards miscalculation and takes the opportunity to spare him the suffering of such a mistake. And in the process, may even have elevated him in the eyes of the bridegroom.

The wine came from simple ordinary water.  
The ordinary was turned into the best of all.  
A mistake was turned into an opportunity for promotion.  
For this really is a miracle of transformation.

When God comes to earth, to share his life with us, he does not come as a new order of being, but as a human. God takes our human nature and transforms it into the divine in the person of Jesus.

And I think we are called too to follow that pattern of taking ordinary things, and turning them into extraordinary things. Whether it is water, or our human lives, God has the power of transforming them into something special.

We might ask how God is going to transform the world, and bring about his kingdom here on earth? It is not by wiping away everything there is and starting again, but by taking what we see and touch here and now, and transforming it, so that it might fulfil God's purpose.

Our lives might seem ordinary, but they are capable of being transformed, just as the water was transformed into wine.

Just as a musician might take sounds and compose them into a melody that can lift our hearts and souls

Just as a painter might take coloured dyes and create a picture that takes our breath away.

Just as an author might take words and create vivid pictures in our imaginations – that take us away to lands and times beyond our own.

So each of us can take the things we have been given – our sorrow and joy, our labour and rest, our success and failure – and with the help of the Holy Spirit, transform them into something extraordinary and holy.

We give thanks that through Christ water may be turned into wine, and that through Christ with us, the ordinary things of our lives may be transferred into miracles of the extraordinary.