



FROM MY DIARY

No blogging in the last week. On Monday 6th January I had a brand new and rather expensive Dell G5 Inspiron 5090 desktop delivered, with screen. I spent the week trying to set it up. It's time-consuming, isn't it! Sadly by the end of the week I had determined that there was a problem with it. After three frustrating days of dealing with Dell, I have been promised a refund, and I have just finished boxing it up this evening for a return. The nature of the problem makes clear that the unit was never tested or inspected at the factory. It is a beautiful-looking machine. But there is no getting around carelessness at the factory. Nor is it possible to remedy matters when nobody at Dell speaks English as a first language. I shall have to look for another machine; but I can't face that for a week or two.

This week I have been working on the new Latin programme. I feel that it needs a kind of context-sensitive pop-up help. The brief display of grammar is fine. But sometimes you need examples, and a page or so of text. The Eclipse, the editor used for Java software development, has such a feature in its intellisense, and I have patterned it on this. It's a devil to debug mouse movements, however!

As part of this, I have been taking Morwood's *Oxford Latin Grammar* to bed with me, and absorbing some of the syntax. It's a remarkably concise guide, yet useful as well. However it is too brief sometimes. The old Allen and Greenough grammar still has much to offer, while being fuller, and I bought a copy of this in printed form, for bedside reading.

I also had a go at finding a printed Latin bible. I thought that it might be nice to read some of the psalms, or the gospels, in Latin. Your Latin always improves if you use it to read stuff. But all I can find is complete copies of the Vulgate, and at a massive price - \$50 or more. I had expected that there would be a glut of these, from Catholic churches. But it seems not. Maybe I should produce something myself!

But I leave the best for last. This evening I have learned that Matthew R Crawford together with Aaron P. Johnson has completed a draft translation into English of the whole of what exists of Cyril of Alexandria's *Contra Julianum*. This was a point-by-point refutation, with verbatim quotation, of Julian the Apostate's polemic *Against the Galileans* (i.e. the Christians - isn't it odd how those opposed to Christians so often have to rewrite history?), in at least 20 books. But only books 1-10 survive, plus a few fragments of later books. It's a fascinating work, and I hope that the translation is written in such a way that we can read it and follow Cyril's thought, rather than use it as a "crib" for the Greek. It will take them a couple more years to get it fit to publish, however. Cyril's Greek is diffuse and hard to render. This was probably a useful characteristic in political terms - how do you criticise someone when you can't understand? - but not great for us. It's a truly valuable thing to do. It will kick-start a world of scholarship on the late 4th/early 5th century.
