30 Μαΐου 2009

The Early Centuries of the Greek Roman East (3)

Ξένες γλώσσες / In English



The coronation of David. Miniature from the byzantine Psalter of the National Library of Paris (early 10th century). Ο Δαβίδ στεφόμενος. Μικρογραφία από το βυζαντινό Ψαλτήρι της Εθνικής Βιβλιοθήκης των Παρισίων (αρχές 10ου αιώνος).

(continuation from 2)

Literature and the Arts

Outside the Augustaeum, in Constantinople, one would notice a statue of Justinian wearing what was known at the time as the armour of Achilles. But the Emperor carried no weapon. Instead he held in his left hand the symbol of power of the

Christian Roman Emperor, the globe, which signified his dominion over land and sea, and on the globe was a cross, the emblem of the source of his rule. Justinian as Achilles was a natural example of the fusion of classical culture with Christianity in the Eastern Roman Empire. This fusion begun before Justinian's time but was to continue to be one of the distinguishing marks of education and literature in the age of Justinian. Along with the legal and architectural splendours discussed above, the reign of Justinian also saw a flowering of literature such as the Greco-Roman world had not enjoyed for many years.

The earliest Christians avoided the worldly learning of the Greeks with their "philosophy and deceit", and saw no way in which the blasphemous literature could be brought into any sort of relationship with Christian teaching. This reaction of many Christians, as late as the second century, could be summed up in Tertullian's famous phrase, "what has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" In time, however, Christian thinkers began to realize that there was much to be carried over into Christian teaching from the Classical Greeks. Socrates and Plato, for example, often seemed to approximate Christian thought. Likewise many of the writings of Aristotle could be fit right into the teachings of the Church. MORE... (περισσότερα...)