POPE GREGORY THE GREAT AS GUARDIAN OF THE APOSTOLIC RELICS

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In a recent contribution to the history of Dutch manuscript illumination, Professor Byvanck included an early XVth century Book of Hours, previously in the collection of the Duke of Arenberg, and now M. 866 in The Pierpont Morgan Library.

It is a happy coincidence that this important, hitherto unpublished manuscript should have received its first expert evaluation from the pen of the dean of Dutch connoisseurs in this field.

The manuscript is an Hours of the Virgin for Utrecht Use, as are its Kalendar and Litany; the text includes, at the end, the somewhat unusual Hours of the Sorrows of the Virgin. It is comprehensive in scope and the contents gives evidences of being the personal choice of the owner. The name of St. Peter is invoked twice in the Litany (among the apostles and also among the martyrs) indicating that he was the patron saint of the owner or that the latter was a member of St. Pieterskerk, Utrecht. This special veneration is also marked in the suffrage to St. Peter, where he is addressed as: Petre princeps apostolorum nutritor mens.

There are 53 full-page miniatures, 7 half-page miniatures, 24 Kalendar illustrations and 8 historiated initials, all of the highest quality. Several of this unusually abundant series are of iconographic interest, but the one that occupies us here is a representation of Pope Gregory I, the Great.

In this miniature the pontiff, crowned with the triple tiara, is shown seated frontally on an elaborate throne. In his left hand he holds a tall processional cross. On his knee, supported by his right hand, rests a pyxis shaped as a double-gabled casket, decorated with the familiar heads of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. As an attribute of Gregory the Great, this reliquary is sufficiently remarkable to merit attention by students of the origin and descent of iconographic themes.

The present example appears to be the only recorded representation of

1 Byvanck, 43.  2 Their manuscript No. 79.
the Pope with this emblem, so that it demonstrates considerable originality and resourcefulness on the part of the miniaturist, who, in consideration of the owner's devotion to St. Peter, wished to include as many reminders of him as possible in the series of illustrations of this book. A direct literary source can be found in the letters of Pope Gregory himself.

In the year 594 the Empress Constantia asked the Pope for the head of St. Paul which she wanted to enshrine in a new church then being constructed in her palace. In his courteous reply, refusing her request, the Pope gives an admirable expression of his views on the whole subject of

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3 It is not found in the Index of Christian Iconography at Princeton University, nor does the Rijksmuseum at Amsterdam have an example among its extensive collection of early sculpture. In an altar piece by Lorenzo Lotto in the Pinacoteca of Recanati (Ancona) St. Gregory holds a crosier in his right hand, and a book decorated with the heads of two male saints in his left.

306