The Pontifical Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. A manuscript of the 17th century in the Slavonic text and Latin translation. Ed. and annot. by Č. Sipovič. The Francis Skaryna Byelorussian Library, London, 1978. 205 pp. Illustrations. Index.

Among early known Slavonic liturgical manuscripts the one belonging to the Francis Skaryna Byelorussian Library in London occupies a unique place. It consists of the Slavonic text of the Pontifical Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom together with a parallel Latin translation — which fact alone makes it something of a rarity. Moreover, unlike the majority of manuscripts of this group written by the Orthodox, it reflects the liturgical customs and practices of the Catholic Church of Byzantine rite (better known as the Uniate Church) in Byelorussia in the middle of the 17th century. For these reasons the facsimile publication of the manuscript is an event of considerable importance, especially for liturgists and all those interested in the history of the Church in Byelorussia. To a somewhat lesser extent it is also of interest to philologists, both because of its paleographical features and as a document of the 'Byelorussian recension' of Church Slavonic.

The editor, Bishop Česlaus Sipovič, Apostolic Visitor for Byelorussian Catholics, has not limited himself to the simple reproduction of the manuscript, but at the same time has provided a thorough critical study of the text, having compared it with texts of the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom found in 22 printed Slavonic editions, both Orthodox and Uniate, of the 16th-18th centuries, as well as in some modern ones. Ten of those early publications come from Byelorussia, the earliest of them being the Service Book published in 1583 by the Mamonič Brothers in Vilna. The remaining publications are of Serbian, Ukrainian or Muscovite origin.

The manuscript was originally presented by Bishop Theodore Skumino- vič, Suffragan of Vilna for Byelorussia (*Suffraganeus Vilnensis per Albam Russiam*) to the church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus in Rome, which from 1639 was the official residence of the representative (*procurator*) of the Byelorussian Basilian monks in that city. It could not have been written later than 1652, because it was in that year that Skuminovič visited Rome, where he was consecrated bishop. Bishop Sipovič gives a sketch of Skuminovič's life — a descendant of an ancient Byelorussian noble family, educated in Vilna, Cracow and Louvain, an Orthodox archpriest who later joined the Catholic Church and became bishop, and who wrote his apologia for becoming a Catholic, as well as learned treatises on canon law and the reform of the calendar. Altogether he seems to have been an interesting and colourful figure, whose life could serve as an illustration to the ecclesiastical conditions prevailing in Byelorussia in the 17th century. Furthermore, Bishop Sipovič, on the basis of the paleographical study of all known specimens of Skuminovič's handwriting, has been able to produce some convincing arguments in favour of the latter's authorship of the manuscript in question.

The book is beautifully produced on excellent paper, with a tasteful cover design by Veronica Kendle. It is a valuable and scholarly work, and an example of how such publications should be produced.

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