

SAINT ANGELA MERICI

WRITINGS

RULE

COUNSELS

TESTAMENT

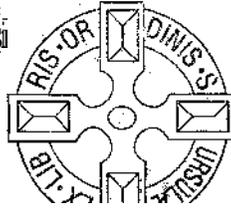
Earliest-known Italian Te

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Translation by a team of Ursulines of

the Roman Union

Rome 1995



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WRITINGS OF SAINT ANGELA

TRANSLATORS' INTRODUCTION

The *Rule*, the *Counsels* and the *Testament* of Angela Merici, commonly called **Writings of Saint Angela**, were actually dictated by the saint to her secretary, Gabriel Cozzano. They have thus the character and rhythm of spoken rather than written language.

Many translations have been made of her writings. A mere ten years ago the Ursulines of the Roman Union published a new translation prepared by a team of sisters working at their generalate in Rome. Why another translation now?

Texts of Angela's Writings

Rule

Until the mid-twentieth century, translations of the Rule—of which there were very few—were based on one or other early Italian edition. For the most part these editions were successive revisions of the Rule as reformed by Charles Borromeo and published in 1582.

In 1932 the first printed edition of the Rule was discovered. It had been published in Brescia in 1569 by Damiano Turlino, and became the basis for translations which followed, including the translation published in 1985 by the Ursulines of the Roman Union.

About the time of the above-mentioned translation, a pre-

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viously unnoticed manuscript copy of the Rule came to light in the Trivulzian Library (La Biblioteca Trivulziana) of Milan. It can be dated from the end of 1545 or the beginning of 1546, and is the earliest text we know.

Transcribed within five or six years of the death of the Saint, it is relatively close to the moment when Angela dictated her Rule to Cozzano. We could suppose that this proximity in time would bring us a little closer to catching something of the nuances and even the accents of Angela's way of speaking. In fact, numerous details of vocabulary and syntax are characteristic of Brescian speech of the period.

Study of the Trivulzian Codex has led to the realization that it is significantly different from the printed Turlino edition of the Rule; this realization gave birth to a desire for a translation which would reflect the special qualities of the "new" text. This is the reason for a new translation of the Rule, carried out with careful respect for the characteristics of the language of the manuscript.

Counsels and Testament

Like the 1985 translation, this one is based on the text in the Acts of the Process of Canonization in the Vatican Secret Archives, an authenticated copy from the original manuscript of Cozzano: *ASV SCRit; Processus, vol. 341, f 946v-958v*.

However, it was natural to think of translating the *Counsels* and the *Testament* again in the light of the Trivulzian Codex

with the idea of trying to capture in the translation something of the spoken character of the original Italian, and with the desire of encouraging a fresh reading.

Angela's Way of Expressing Herself

Angela's way of expressing herself is not polished, not literary. She tries to be clear and precise; she is bent on placing important points in bold relief, and on giving reasons for the norms proposed. She does this spontaneously, using typically oral modes of explanation and emphasis. The texts are full of repetitions, for instance, of many conjunctions and adverbs with which she develops, supports and qualifies her thought. There are long, complicated sentences. There are series of brief phrases which taken together express a single idea, although they are punctuated with periods. We have tried to retain such characteristics in this translation.

The Merician writings contain Latin quotations which are usually followed by "cie 6, ...", meaning "that is, ...". But Angela rarely translates the Latin literally. Usually she proposes an interpretation intended to clarify some point she wishes to stress.

The original texts are neither divided nor numbered. The division and numbering in the present texts is an editorial device to facilitate textual reference. Capitalization and punctuation have been more or less regularized.

The Audiences to Whom Angela Was Speaking

It is impossible to read the Merician writings correctly without understanding to whom Angela was addressing herself, and why.

In the *Rule* Angela speaks to *all* the members of the Company of Saint Ursula, and points out the path they should walk in order to become what they are meant to be: "true and virginal spouses of the Son of God."

Angela directs the *Counsels* to the colonelli, that is, the small group of virgins of the Company who were the leaders (today we would call them local superiors) and carried the responsibility for formation. This text is a formation handbook, a collection of counsels to guide the colonelli in leading their younger sisters along the path of the spiritual life.

The *Testament*, a collection of "Legacies", was intended for the Matrons, noble widows of Brescia who had the role of representatives and guarantors of the Company vis-a-vis the ecclesiastic and civic authorities. Angela's purpose was to instruct them regarding their mission in all its importance and dignity.

Our hope is that this translation will allow those who read it to hear better the living word of Angela, and so come to a more direct and intimate knowledge of her person and her message.

The Translators