

# Catholic educational publishing between the two wars: the case of the publishers SEI of Turin and La Scuola of Brescia

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## *Foreword*

It is only at the beginning of the Twentieth century that a confessional type of publishing, directed mainly at schools and teachers and devoted, almost exclusively, to publishing text books for every level and type of school, came into existence in our country<sup>1</sup>. In the period between the two World Wars and, especially, after the Gentile Reform (1923)<sup>2</sup>, this type of publishing consolidated, developed and overcame its local dimension and, with the modernizing of the printing process, eventually penetrated educational reality at a national level.

This does not mean that, in the Nineteenth century, there were no Catholic publishers with a prevalent educational vocation where we can find a certain attention to school production (reading books, catechism, subject manuals, didactic aids for teachers, etc.)<sup>3</sup>.

We must remember, for example, in the period before the unification of Italy, the Milanese publishers Agnelli (1813) and Carrara (1859), the Vincenzi

<sup>1</sup> See in reference to fundamental research G. Chiosso (ed.), *TESEO. Tipografi e editori scolastico-educativi dell'Ottocento*, Milan, Editrice Bibliografica, 2003; and Id. (ed.), *TESEO '900. Editori scolastico-educativi del primo Novecento*, Milan, Editrice Bibliografica, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> See R. Sani, C. Covato, *Percorsi dell'editoria scolastica nel ventennio fascista. A proposito di un recente volume*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», I, 2006, 2, pp. 369-376.

<sup>3</sup> See R. Sani, *L'editoria educativo-popolare cattolica tra le due guerre*, in L. Pazzaglia (ed.), *Chiesa, cultura e educazione in Italia tra le due guerre*, Brescia, La Scuola, 2003, pp. 329-357.

(1808) and the Immacolata Concezione (1857) in Modena, the Marietti in Turin (1820), the Fiaccadori in Parma (1822) and many others<sup>4</sup>. We also find numerous printers and ecclesiastical bookshops belonging to bishops and archbishops or linked to seminaries of religious orders – in particular, Don Giovanni Bosco and Lodovico Pavoni's Sons of the Immaculate Maria, which sprang up during the last thirty years of the Nineteenth century as part of the initiatives of an uncompromising Catholic movement<sup>5</sup>.

Other noteworthy examples are the circuits of the printer-bookshops of the Artigianelli and Derelitti, those of St Francis de Sales established in various Italian cities, the archiepiscopal printers Giannini in Florence (1881), the Papal Printers S. Giuseppe in Vicenza (1881), the Catholic Printers in Palermo (1883), the Queriniana in Brescia (1886), and the Antoniana in Padova (1886)<sup>6</sup>. Even when attention is dedicated to school texts, the findings are not fragmentary or marginal, these Catholic publishers are animated by intentions and projects that are only partly traceable to those that inspired the lay school texts of the period: from Paravia to Zanichelli, from Le Monnier to Barbèra, from Morano to Sandron<sup>7</sup>.

In the most part, we are dealing with essentially local concerns whose circulating channels are principally linked to parishes, religious institutions, confessional associations, and popular Catholic libraries; their production affirms the importance given to the moral and religious education of the young outside of schooling by means of an enormous quantity of devotional and hagiographic publication, series of pleasant or moral readings, texts for the educational theatre and illustrated booklets for families and educators. The educational production of these publishers was mostly for local private Catholic schools, religious institutions, seminaries and only very rarely for state schools.

Very different is the situation that we find at the beginning of the Twentieth century with the founding of La Scuola publishing house in Brescia and that of the Società Editrice Internazionale (SEI) in Turin.

<sup>4</sup> See relative voices dedicated to editors mentioned in the text – ed. by respectively R. Sani, M. Gelati, G. Genovesi, P. Bianchini and G. Chiosso – in G. Chiosso (ed.), *TESEO. Tipografi e editori scolastico-educativi dell'Ottocento*, cit., pp. 10-14, 130-132, 219-221, 344-348.

<sup>5</sup> For a general picture of the situation see G. Chiosso, *Editoria e stampa scolastica tra Otto e Novecento*, in L. Pazzaglia (ed.), *Cattolici, educazione e trasformazioni socio-culturali in Italia tra Otto e Novecento*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1999, pp. 499-528.

<sup>6</sup> See F. Traniello, *L'editoria cattolica tra libri e riviste*, in G. Turi (ed.), *Storia dell'editoria nell'Italia contemporanea*, Florence, Giunti, 1997, pp. 299-319; Id., *La cultura popolare cattolica nell'Italia unita*, in S. Soldani, G. Turi (eds.), *Fare gli italiani. Scuola e cultura nell'Italia contemporanea. I. La nascita dello Stato nazionale*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1993, pp. 429-458.

<sup>7</sup> See G. Chiosso (ed.), *Il libro per la scuola tra Sette e Ottocento*, Brescia, La Scuola, 2000.

### 1. *Origins and Initial Development of Catholic Educational Publications “La Scuola” in Brescia and the Società Editrice Internazionale (SEI) in Turin*

Funded 13<sup>th</sup> May 1904 as a joint-stock company by a small group of ecclesiastic and laymen of Brescia (mons. Angelo Zammarchi, Luigi Fossati, Giovanni Grosoli, Giorgio Montini and Luigi Bazoli to name but a few), “La Scuola” Publishing House had its origins in the crisis and eventual suppression by the new pope Pio X of the Opera dei Congressi, the organization of intransigent Catholics that had been founded thirty years earlier during the climate created by the “Roman Question” and the heightening of the conflict between state and church<sup>8</sup>.

The new publishing house had essentially two main directions. The first was to ensure the survival and re-launching of school magazines «Scuola Italiana Moderna», which, founded ten years earlier in 1893 as one of the initiatives of the third section of the Opera dei Congressi, was going through a period of crisis (at the beginning of the Twentieth century, for example, there were only about 700 subscribers) and which, above all, with the disappearance of the Opera dei Congressi, risked closure together with other similar magazines involved in the intransigent Catholic movement<sup>9</sup>.

The second objective, with the founding of a genuine publishing house, was the promotion of a more organic presence in the sector of state education with particular, if not exclusive, reference to primary schools and those destined to prepare future teachers, i.e. the normal schools<sup>10</sup>.

The first of these objectives was certainly attained: by 1904-1905 there were already 2,500 subscribers which became 7,500 in the space of a decade. This proved that the new organization had had a positive influence not only on the production and distribution of the magazine but also on its didactic and cultural proposals, allowing it a more incisive penetration into the world of teaching and school reality<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> See F. Fonzi, *I cattolici e la società italiana dopo l'Unità*, Rome, Studium, 1977 (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). For the problems more directly connected to education and schools see L. Pazzaglia, *Educazione e scuola nel programma dell'Opera dei Congressi (1874-1904)*, in L. Pazzaglia, R. Sani (eds.), *Scuola e società nell'Italia unita. Dalla Legge Casati al Centro-Sinistra*, Brescia, La Scuola, 2001, pp. 87-126.

<sup>9</sup> See R. Sani, *I periodici scolastici dell'intransigentismo cattolico (1879-1904)*, in G. Chiosso (ed.), *Scuola e stampa nell'Italia liberale. Giornali e riviste per l'educazione dall'Unità a fine secolo*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1993, pp. 223-288; and other contributions in M. Cattaneo, L. Pazzaglia (eds.), *Maestri, educazione popolare e società in «Scuola Italiana Moderna» 1893-1993*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1997.

<sup>10</sup> See, in particular, E. Giammancheri, *Le origini della Editrice «La Scuola»*, in *Cultura, scuola e società nel cattolicesimo lombardo del primo Novecento*, Brescia, Ce.Doc., 1981, pp. 189-205; and G. Chiosso, *La Scuola editrice*, in Id. (ed.), *TESEO '900. Editori scolastico-educativi del primo Novecento*, cit., pp. 290-298.

<sup>11</sup> See G. Chiosso, *La stampa scolastica tra Otto e Novecento e «Scuola Italiana Moderna»*, «Civiltà Bresciana», II, 1993, 2, pp. 5-18.

More complicated is the part connected to the actual production of school texts and teaching aids in the first years of the publishing house's existence. At the beginning, it had neither its own printing shop nor a real editorial organization. In fact, until 1914, the texts published by La Scuola were printed by Artigianelli, a printer in Brescia, and by the Arti Grafiche in Bergamo. This rather difficult start to its publishing accounts for the meager number of school texts produced (a few dozen up until the 1920's) and, above all, the discontinuous character of this production, linked without doubt to the general crisis affecting school publications during and immediately after the First World War but also to the scanty financial resources available and the lack of proper organization on the part of the House<sup>12</sup>.

In spite of this modest school production, we must note the preeminence given to text books for the primary and state schools (advertised in «Scuola Italiana Moderna») as well as a series of little volumes – edifying tales for the youth and novels for young girls – destined to integrate, on an educational level, the House's editorial offer<sup>13</sup>.

Among the titles that appear in this first phase and which obtain a certain success must be remembered: the various reading courses for the different classes at primary school published by Bice Corradi Roli and by two teachers Augusto Freedom and Vittorio Gottardi<sup>14</sup>; the illustrated manuals for the study of history and geography compiled by Angelo Capitanio for the pupils of the fourth and fifth classes of primary school, reprinted more than once in the decade 1904-1914<sup>15</sup>; the fortunate little work by Giulia Varisco, *Il granello di senape. Libro di lettura per le classi 2a e 3a rurali*, reprinted many times<sup>16</sup>; lastly, a substantial series of readers for evening and festive schools edited by the teacher Giuseppe Losio, former editor in the 1890's of «Scuola Italiana Moderna»<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> See E. Valentini, *Il cinquantesimo della «Scuola» di Brescia*, «La Civiltà Cattolica», IV, 4 dicembre 1954, pp. 518-529.

<sup>13</sup> See E.M. Verzeletti, *Contributo alla costruzione del catalogo storico dell'editrice La Scuola di Brescia (1904-1954)*, Degree thesis, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano (sede di Brescia), Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione, anno accademico 1998-1999 (supervisor: prof. Roberto Sani). But now see also L. Pazzaglia (ed. by), *Editrice La Scuola 1904-2004. Catalogo storico*, Brescia, La Scuola, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> B. Corradi Roli, *Verso la meta. Nuovo corso di letture per le scuole elementari*, Milan, La Scuola, 1904; V. Gottardi, A. Freedom, *Piccoli e grandi. Letture la scuola elementare*, *ibid.*, 1907; V. Gottardi, A. Freedom, *Amate! Letture per la scuola elementare*, *ibid.*, 1908-1910.

<sup>15</sup> See among others A. Capitanio, *Attraverso il medio evo e l'evo moderno*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1905 (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1914).

<sup>16</sup> G. Varisco, *Il granello di senape. Libro di lettura per le classi 2a e 3a rurali*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1908 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1910).

<sup>17</sup> For example: G. Losio, *Manuale per il maestro delle scuole popolari serali e festive*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1909; Id., *L'amico del lavoratore. Testo di lettura per le scuole popolari e festive*, *ibid.*, 1910; Id., *I primi passi dell'amico del lavoratore. Testo di lettura per le scuole popolari e festive*, *ibid.*, 1910.

Even in the period of the Giolitti government the other Catholic publisher, the Società Editrice Internazionale (SEI), reveals a more organized and incisive management<sup>18</sup>.

The SEI had been founded in 1911 on the ashes of the Società Anonima Internazionale per la Diffusione della Buona Stampa (SAID), established by the Salesians in an attempt to unite the considerable network of Salesian printing and book shops (Turin, Rome, Milan, Parma, Sampierdarena, S. Benigno Canavese, etc.) which had developed in the second half of the Nineteenth century in the wake of the first printing shop set up in Valdocco by don Giovanni Bosco (1862)<sup>19</sup>.

The achievement of an authentic, national publishing pole was aimed at giving a new impulse to the Salesian presence in religious and educational school publishing<sup>20</sup>. This process, in fact, coincided with the introduction of a series of innovations destined to make the SEI, in little more than a decade, the most active and dynamic Catholic publishers in the field of school publications and text books. We refer to:

- the adoption of modern production cycles and the use of up-to-date printing technology;
- the installation of a flexible administrative structure, capable of meeting the constant changes in publishing requirements;
- the creation of an extensive distribution networks which availed itself not only of its religious institutions (male and the corresponding female Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice) but also of lay helpers and diocesan and local institutions for the diffusion of “Good Publishing”;
- a renewed attention to the aesthetical aspect of the product (type, graphics, illustrations) with an eye to the great lay publishers in order to have a more modern image, capable of a competitive presence on the market;
- lastly, a vast range of publications intended not only for primary and state schools but also for all types of secondary education where we can find primers, readers, supplementary texts and manuals for various subjects, dictionaries, classics, catechisms for school use, legal reference books and teaching aids<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Regarding the origins and development of this publishing house see F. Targhetta's recent and well-documented research: Id., *La capitale dell'impero di carta. Editori per la scuola a Torino nella prima metà del Novecento*, Turin, SEI, 2007; and Id., *Serenant et illuminant. I cento anni della SEI*, Turin, SEI, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Besides the critical study mentioned in the previous footnote see: Traniello, *L'editoria cattolica tra libri e riviste*, cit., pp. 299-319; and S. Pivato, *I nipotini di don Bosco*, in Id., *Clericalismo e laicismo nella cultura popolare italiana*, Milan, F. Angeli, 1990, pp. 15-65.

<sup>20</sup> See Targhetta, *La capitale dell'impero di carta. Editori per la scuola a Torino nella prima metà del Novecento*, cit., pp. 91-175; and Id., *Serenant et illuminant. I cento anni della SEI*, cit.

<sup>21</sup> See *La Società Editrice Internazionale*, «Il Raggiungimento dell'attività culturale e letteraria dei cattolici in Italia», IV, 1933, pp. 330-332.

Characterized, at least until the outbreak of the Second World War, by a production equally divided between religious works and books for schools and on education, the SEI privileged, as regards the latter, between 1911 and 1925, two specific sectors: reading books for primary and complementary schools, and manuals intended for the classical secondary-schools (*ginnasio* and *liceo*) and technical schools with particular reference to subjects such as: religion, grammar, Italian literature, history, geography, classical languages<sup>22</sup>.

Particularly dynamic, even though it must be considered a heritage of the Nineteenth century, is the production of texts to be used in catechism schools and in primary schools, evening and festive ones – this latter type disappearing in the next phase<sup>23</sup>.

## 2. *Between Idealism and Fascism. Developments in Catholic publishing from the Gentile Reform to the Second World War*

The 1923 Gentile Reform, with its new programmes for primary schools compiled by Giuseppe Lombardo Radice and, in particular, with the institution of a Central Commission for the examination of textbooks, conditioned in no small way the work of the budding Catholic publishing industry<sup>24</sup>.

Both the SEI and La Scuola of Brescia did their best in their primary school publications to follow the new pedagogical and didactic theories proposed by Lombardo Radice.

In the case of La Scuola, in particular, and thanks, above all, to the work of Maria Magnocavallo, as admirably demonstrated by Carla Ghizzoni<sup>25</sup> in

<sup>22</sup> See D. Dottori, *L'editoria scolastica cattolica tra le due guerre: la Società Editrice Internazionale (SEI) dal 1911 al 1925*, Degree thesis, Università degli Studi di Macerata, Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione, anno accademico 2001-2002 (supervisor: prof. Roberto Sani).

<sup>23</sup> As can be seen from the analysis of publication of the Turin publishing house effected by I. Pieralisi, *L'editoria scolastica e i libri di testo durante il fascismo: il caso della SEI di Torino (1926-1940)*, Degree thesis, Università degli Studi di Macerata, Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione, anno accademico 2001-2002 (supervisor: prof. Roberto Sani).

<sup>24</sup> See A. Ascenzi, R. Sani (eds.), *Il libro per la scuola tra idealismo e fascismo. L'opera della Commissione centrale per l'esame dei libri di testo da Giuseppe Lombardo Radice ad Alessandro Melchiori (1923-1928)*, Milan, Vita e Pensiero (forthcoming). But see also G. Chiosso, *La riforma Gentile e i contraccolpi sull'editoria scolastica*, in C. Betti (ed.), *Percorsi del libro per la scuola fra Otto e Novecento. La tradizione toscana e le nuove realtà del primo Novecento in Italia*, Florence, Pagnini, 2004, pp. 175-195; Id., *Il rinnovamento del libro scolastico nelle esperienze di Giuseppe Lombardo Radice e dei «lombardiani»*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», I, 2006, 1, pp. 127-139.

<sup>25</sup> See: C. Ghizzoni, *Educazione e scuola all'indomani della Grande Guerra. Il contributo de «La Civiltà Cattolica» (1918-1931)*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1997; and Ead., *Dall'aula alla redazione. Il contributo di Maria Magnocavallo*, in M. Cattaneo, L. Pazzaglia (eds.), *Maestri, educazione popolare e società in «Scuola Italiana Moderna» 1893-1993*, cit., pp. 347-387.

her research, the conception of a school for the young with renewed teaching methods and contents was destined to be adopted, *in toto*, not only in the pages of «Scuola Italiana Moderna» (particularly in the part of the magazine dedicated to teaching, edited by the same Magnocavallo) but also in the reading books intended for primary schools. This is the case, for example, of the already mentioned collection of readers *Il granello di senape* by Giulia Varisco, which was re-edited following the new programmes and pedagogy introduced by the Gentile Reform<sup>26</sup>.

Something similar took place in the texts published by the SEI. Existing texts were almost completely revisited while the new ones, after the 1923 Reform, were totally different from the cultural and didactic models of the past<sup>27</sup>. Examples of this new production of readers are: *Luci d'anima* by Averna and Marino, for the five classes of primary school and *Ore buone* by Zanoni and Fossati, these, too, invented for primary school pupils<sup>28</sup>.

The same can be said of the history and geography manuals published by both Catholic publishers edited by Pio Bonacina, Piero Gribaudo, Giovanni Rossi and, in particular, Giuseppe Fanciulli<sup>29</sup> who was the author for both publishers of a series of publications for primary school pupils greatly appreciated not only by the Commission for text books under the presidency of Giuseppe Lombardo Radice (1923-24), but also by that under the following year's President Giovanni Vidari<sup>30</sup>.

The examination of the lists of texts approved or rejected by the various central commissions during the 1920's, up to the introduction of a single state approved text for primary schools, shows a notable discrepancy between the books of the two Catholic publishers and those approved by the central commissions in comparison with that which happened to the other Italian school publishers<sup>31</sup>.

The forced contraction in the production of the most profitable sector of school texts – that is of those dedicated to teachers and primers for primary

<sup>26</sup> G. Varisco, *Il granello di senape. Per le classi I, II, III, IV*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1924.

<sup>27</sup> See Dottori, *L'editoria scolastica cattolica tra le due guerre: la Società Editrice Internazionale (SEI) dal 1911 al 1925*, cit.

<sup>28</sup> G. Averna, P. Marino, *Luci d'anima. Per le classi I, II, III, IV e V*, Turin, SEI, 1924; C. Zanoni, N. Fossati Zanoni, *Ore buone. Sillabario, compimento, letture per le classi II, III e IV*, *ibid.*, 1924.

<sup>29</sup> P. Bonacina, *Attraverso il mondo. Geografia per le classi IV e V conforme ai nuovi programmi*, Turin, SEI, 1924; P. Gribaudo, *Geografia. Per le classi IV, V e VI*, *ibid.*, 1923; G. Rossi, *Raccontini di storia per la classe III*, *ibid.*, 1924; G. Fanciulli, *Letture di storia. Per le classi III, IV e V*, *ibid.*, 1924.

<sup>30</sup> See A. Ascenzi, R. Sani (eds.), *Il libro per la scuola tra idealismo e fascismo. L'opera della Commissione centrale per l'esame dei libri di testo da Giuseppe Lombardo Radice ad Alessandro Melchiori (1923-1928)*, which quotes the judgements on Fanciulli's texts formulated by the Commission under the presidents Lombardo Radice and Vidari.

<sup>31</sup> See G. Chiosso, *La riforma Gentile e i contraccolpi sull'editoria scolastica*, cit., pp. pp. 175-195.

schools – together with, at the beginning of the 1930's, the closing of the market for primary school texts due to the introduction of the State single text<sup>32</sup>, were destined to heavily reflect on the editorial strategies of both Catholic publishing houses.

The decision to entrust mons. Angelo Zammarchi, editor of «Scuola Italiana Moderna» and an important figure in the managerial group of La Scuola with the part concerning religion in the new State texts did nothing to limit the damaging effects of the changes introduced by the regime<sup>33</sup>.

A glance at the school production of the SEI and La Scuola, in the 1930's, shows how both these Catholic publishers, obliged to redefine their editorial strategies and to give up what had, from the start, been their strongest, if not unique, sector – i.e. primary school – chose to diversify their editorial offer: the SEI directing its efforts towards secondary schools; La Scuola concentrating on teacher training schools and the cultural and didactic updating of teachers, considered useful for the penetration of confessional principals and educational models in primary schools.

Leafing through La Scuola's catalogues of the 1930's and early 1940's, we note a prevalence of pedagogical and didactic manuals intended for the preparation of teachers. This was a very important sector as is shown by the presence among the authors of a figure of the calibre of Rosa Agazzi (contributor to «Scuola Italiana Moderna» and «Pro Infantia», the magazine for nursery school teachers<sup>34</sup>) whose work *Guida per le educatrici dell'infanzia* (1932) was destined to be a great success and be reprinted many times<sup>35</sup>; other important authors were Giorgio Gabrielli, Francesco Bettini and, above all, Marco Agosti e Vittorino Chizzolini whose fortunate text *Magistero. Compendio storico e letture di filosofia e pedagogia per gli Istituti magistrali* (1938) was still being reprinted, with some adjustments and integrative material, after the Second World War<sup>36</sup>.

La Scuola, too, published a quantity of texts on the professional updating of teachers and numerous teaching aids for the primary school among which we must remember the various publications on the subjects edited by Maria Magnocavallo, especially her *L'insegnamento dell'aritmetica. Note d'esperienza*

<sup>32</sup> See J. Charnitzky, *Fascismo e scuola. La politica scolastica del regime (1922-1943)*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1994, pp. 393-408 about the events leading to the introduction of the State single text in primary schools.

<sup>33</sup> See M. Bacigalupi, P. Fossati, *Da plebe a popolo. L'educazione popolare nei libri di scuola dall'Unità d'Italia alla Repubblica*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1986, pp. 164-187.

<sup>34</sup> See R. Sani, *L'educazione dell'infanzia dall'età giolittiana alla Carta Bottai*, in L. Pazzaglia, R. Sani (eds.), *Scuola e società nell'Italia unita. Dalla Legge Casati al Centro-Sinistra*, cit., pp. 239-256.

<sup>35</sup> R. Agazzi, *Guida per le educatrici dell'infanzia*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1932.

<sup>36</sup> M. Agosti, V. Chizzolini, *Magistero. Compendio storico e letture di filosofia e pedagogia per gli Istituti magistrali*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1938, 2 vols.



*e di critica didattica* (1936)<sup>37</sup> of clear Lombardo Radice influence; by Angelo Colombo and Giulio Cesare Pico, who brought to La Scuola the ideas and experience from their long period as activists in the “Gruppo d’Azione Maestri per le Scuole del popolo”<sup>38</sup>; and lastly by a group of young collaborators – Aldo Agazzi, Francesco Bettini and Mario Mazza – of «Scuola Italiana Moderna» and the «Supplemento Pedagogico», the new magazine founded in the autumn of 1933 (later to be called «Pedagogia e Vita») in order to «mould the conscience of Italian educators» and to give them «the transcendent meaning of the educational mission, trying to connect faith to the sense of the nation» and to keep «them up to date on the issues of our schools»<sup>39</sup>.

In this, an important role is played by Mario Casotti, professor of pedagogy at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan. Not only was he an assiduous contributor to «Scuola Italiana Moderna» and «Supplemento Pedagogico», he was also, during this period, the author of a series of publications directed at teachers and educators<sup>40</sup>. And it was Mario Casotti who, a few years later, assumed the presidency of *Paedagogium*, the Institute for Studies of Christian Education, founded in 1942 through the joint initiative of the Catholic University and La Scuola publishing house, with the aim of promoting the renewal of Christian pedagogical and educational culture and of providing for the training and up-dating of teachers<sup>41</sup>.

Alongside of these interests, we must also remember the production of religious texts for secondary schools – *Il libro di religione* (1943)<sup>42</sup> by Giovanni Modugno e Augusto Baroni for example – as well as a wide range of readers for children and young people with authors such as Gherardo Ugolini, Ottavia Bonafin and Giuseppe Fanciulli<sup>43</sup>.

In this case, we are speaking about a line of publications (something similar can be found in the coeval production of the Turin SEI) only indirectly destined for the school circuit. The strong presence of works of this kind however, seems to confirm the effort – common to both publishing houses – to build a sort of

<sup>37</sup> M. Magnocavallo, *L'insegnamento dell'aritmetica. Note d'esperienza e di critica didattica*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1936.

<sup>38</sup> See R. Sani, *Bollettino della Biblioteca Circolante dei Maestri Italiani. Gruppo di Azione per le Scuole del popolo*, in G. Chiosso (ed.), *La stampa pedagogica e scolastica in Italia (1820-1943)*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1997, pp. 114-116; R. Lollo, *Cultura magistrale a Milano. Il «Gruppo d’Azione» e la biblioteca nazionale dei maestri italiani*, Milan, Prometheus, 1996; and M.M. Rossi, *Il Gruppo d’azione per le scuole del popolo di Milano 1919-1941*, Brescia, La Scuola, 2004.

<sup>39</sup> *Un ideale, una realtà e un programma*, «Supplemento Pedagogico», 1933-34, 1, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> See F.V. Lombardi, *Mario Casotti: la pedagogia della neoscolastica*, «Orientamenti pedagogici», 1963, 3, pp. 472-493.

<sup>41</sup> See L. Caimi, *Il «Paedagogium»: l’Istituto per gli studi sulla educazione cristiana costituito presso la Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (1942-55)*, «Annali di storia dell’educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche», 2, 1995, pp. 237-271.

<sup>42</sup> G. Modugno, A. Baroni, *Il libro di religione*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1943.

<sup>43</sup> See R. Lollo, *Sulla letteratura per l’infanzia*, Brescia, La Scuola, 2003, for information about these authors and their collaboration with La Scuola.

ideal library for young Catholic boys and girls, capable of transmitting to young people ideals and cultural models different from those proposed in primary schools by the State single text.

But we will return to this subject in more detail in the final part of this paper.

It is impossible here to analyze in detail the vast and varied school production of the SEI in the 30's and early 40's. We can only look at the tendencies that characterized, in general, the publishing house's editorial policies.

A first aspect, which seems important, concerns the effort made by the SEI management, on one hand, to consolidate the position the publishing house had in the area of certain subjects and schools, on the other, to extend its presence to new circuits.

It is interesting to note how, along with an increase in the production of religion, grammar, Italian and Latin literature, history and geography texts for middle and high schools, the SEI developed, in the 30's, a rich production of manuals for scientific subjects (maths, trigonometry, physics, chemistry, biology, etc.) and also for technical and commercial ones (mechanics, merceology, economics, law, accounting, banking, foreign languages, etc.)<sup>44</sup>.

Such a production covered so many fields that the SEI became one of the most important publishing poles in the country; one of the few publishers able to satisfy, with its own catalogue, the need for texts and manuals for all types of secondary schools.

In the midst of such efforts, a special and privileged attention was given by the SEI to the newly formed School of Professional Introduction with a complete range of books for all subjects – and to the technical and professional institutes in general. A choice which, on one hand, followed Don Bosco and the Salesian Family's traditional attention to working class and lower middle class youth (it is not by chance that between the two wars the Salesian built up a sizeable network of Catholic vocational and professional schools)<sup>45</sup>; on the other, it reflected the necessity of a quality leap in Catholic school publishing by entering the market in the secondary school sector – that of the technical and professional institutes – important because of the number of students and where there was no real monopoly of lay publishers.

<sup>44</sup> For these texts see the historic catalogue of school publications of the SEI edited by I. Pieralisi, *L'editoria scolastica e i libri di testo durante il fascismo: il caso della SEI di Torino (1926-1940)*, cit. See also F. Targhetta, *La capitale dell'impero di carta. Editori per la scuola a Torino nella prima metà del Novecento*, cit., 91-195; and Id., *Serenant et illuminant. I cento anni della SEI*, cit.

<sup>45</sup> See A. Gaudio, *Per una geografia storica delle scuole cattoliche*, in L. Pazzaglia (ed.), *Chiesa, cultura e educazione in Italia tra le due guerre*, cit., pp. 359-374. For the preceding phase see also P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale (1815-1870)*, Rome, LAS, 1980; and F. Traniello (ed.), *Don Bosco nella storia della cultura popolare*, Turin, SEI, 1987.

### 3. *Catholic school publishing and the fascist regime*

The advent of Fascism and its impact on schools and text books, especially from the end of the 1920's onwards, had the same massive and substantially homogenous effect on the Catholic publishing sector. Even a rapid glance at the manuals of history and geography, the Italian literature anthologies and the law and economics texts (the texts most exposed to the propaganda of the regime) shows – on the part of the SEI and La Scuola – an essential conformity to the cultural and ideological canons of Fascism.

A conformity, it must be stressed, which was anything but mitigated by the constant references, in the text books, to the religious dimension and the Catholic traditions of the Italian people; and these last elements, especially after the Lateran Pacts of 1929, were proposed not as an alternative to the ideology and pedagogy of the regime, but rather as factors legitimating the Church and Italian Catholicism, in the perspective of a superior “clerical-fascist” synthesis, fruit of the transposition on the school side of the project of a Catholic type of fascism<sup>46</sup>. Project which had long been pursued by the ecclesiastical hierarchy as well as many exponents of culture and pedagogy of Catholic orientation.

If we do not take into account the various individual “conflicts of conscience” and “interior perplexities” of single authors, and look at editorial production in general, what emerges is a certain adjustment to the spirit of the time: an adjustment that can be understood in order to avoid the censorship and banning of one's text books.

Furthermore, for their very characteristics, school manuals do not permit us to catch the various nuances of consent and the more or less veiled dissents towards the regime that can, instead, be found in the school magazines and in other similar publications, regarding the orientations that characterized Catholic pedagogical and school circles towards, for example, the war in Ethiopia and the founding of the Empire or, later the racial laws and Italy's involvement in the Second World War.

On this front, it would appear that the ideological orientation and the formative models proposed by the Catholic publishers reflect, only in part, the cultural and educational project that nourished the work and the initiatives of the Church and of the Italian Catholicism in general during the twenty years of fascism.

Others were, in fact, the channels through which Italian publishers sought to contrast fascism and to propose profoundly different – and in some ways irreducible – models and itineraries to those proposed by the fascist pedagogy of totalitarianism. I refer to, in particular, the great number of popular educational

<sup>46</sup> See F. Traniello, *L'Italia cattolica nell'era fascista*, in G. De Rosa, T. Gregory, A. Vauchez (eds.), *Storia dell'Italia religiosa. 3. L'età contemporanea*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1995, pp. 257-299.

works distributed by the ecclesiastical diocesan institutes, the religious orders, the Catholic popular libraries and the lay association circuits<sup>47</sup>.

A varied and impressive production which, safe from school censorship and control by the regime, contributed to nourish a logic of separatism and self-sufficiency of Catholic popular instruction, of its values and of its models in comparison with those of Mussolini's regime.

And this popular Catholic education, with all its limits and contradictions, destined to come to light during the years of the Second World War, constituted, much more than the educational proposal present in school publications, a not negligible obstacle to the processes of the globalization of consciences and the total fascistisation of Italian society<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> See Sani, *L'editoria educativo-popolare cattolica tra le due guerre*, cit., pp. 329-357.

<sup>48</sup> See Traniello, *L'editoria cattolica tra libri e riviste*, cit., pp. 299-319.