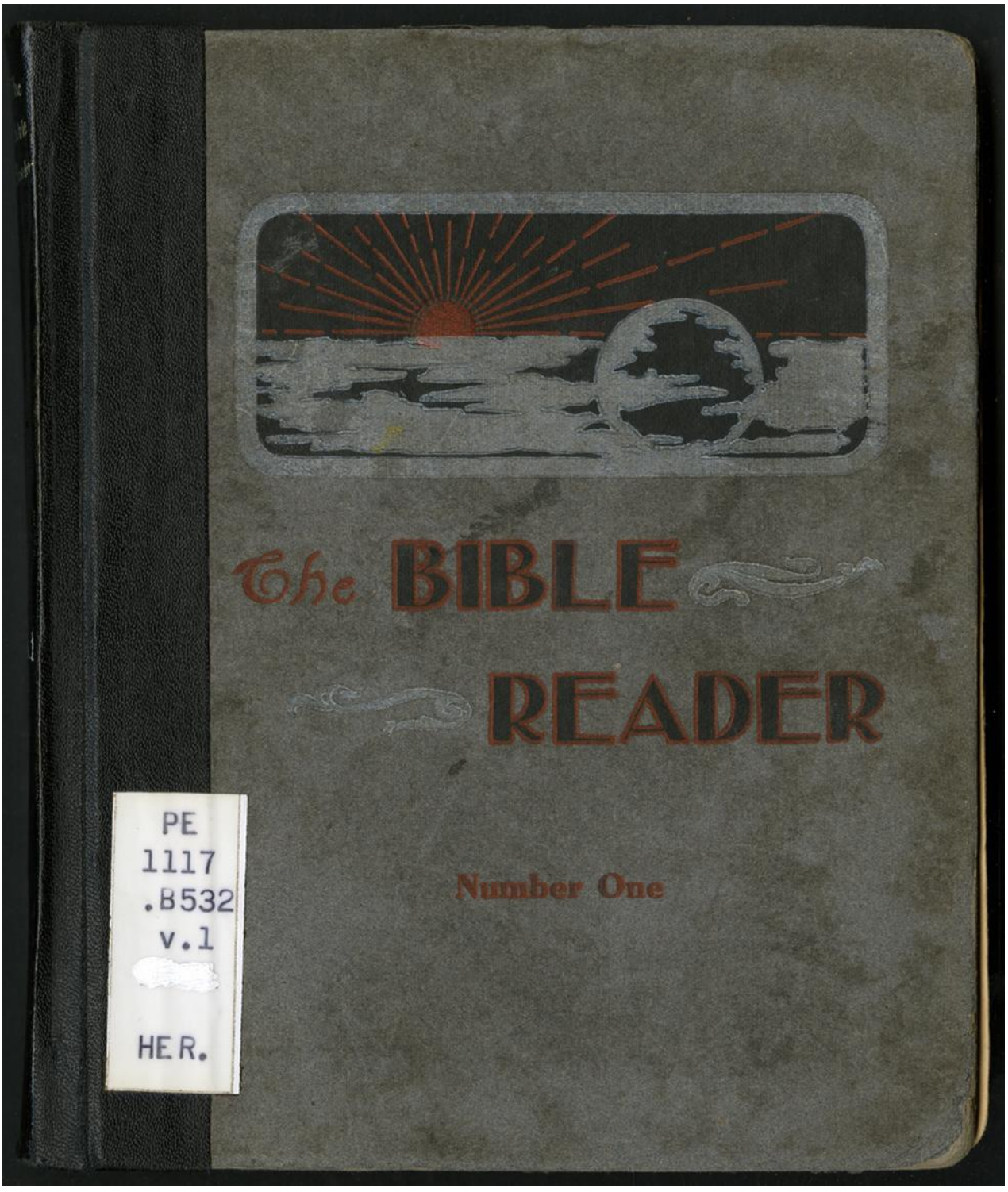
Copyright 1900

by E. A. SUTHERLAND

Third Edition Revised 1903



Bible Reader – Number 1
True Education Method
Introduction and Suggestions to Parents – Teachers - Tutors

"Hold fast the Bible as the Sheet anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book are we indebted for all true progress made in our civilization; and to this we must look as our guide in the future," said Ulysses S. Grant in his message to the children and youth of the United States.

Can its study be commenced too young? Certainly not, for it is first impressions that stay with us through life. Instead of meaningless sentences or mere groups of words, let us teach our children to read by giving them the best of subject matter. This the Book of books offers; and while divine, it is yet so simple that the little child, as well as the one who is older grown, finds that the Bible "lives on the ear, like music that can never be forgotten."

In the preparation of this Reader, the great object kept in mind was the formation of character while teaching the child to read. There was a vocabulary to be built up, and at the same time a soul to be reached by the love of God. This is the first of a series of readers having this object in view. It is believed that the child who thus learns to read will early develop a love for pure literature, and will be led to that grandest and noblest of all books—the Word of God.

Says Prof. R. G. Moulton, “The English Bible is the natural source to which the English people should go for their training in literature. The Bible is, in fact, the supreme English classic.” From the readers used, the character of the entire educational system may be judged. The primer stands at the gate of entry, and in unmistakable language tells of all future studies. The Bible was the reading book in the schools of the early Christians. The great Reformation demanded a change in readers. Luther began the work by giving the children a Bible primer. As Protestantism has declined, the character of our school readers has materially changed. The widespread demand for novel and cheap literature, and the ever- increasing spirit of skepticism, are results of the seed sown in the primary reading class. The present reformation demands a return to pure Bible literature.

This Reader, together with the other readers of the series, will serve as a guide in correlating the various branches taught in the elementary Christian schools. In order to insure the greatest degree of success, teachers are requested to study carefully the “Suggestions,” on the following pages. The author has endeavored so to arrange the text that it will meet the minds of progressive teachers; and with their co-operation good results are confidently expected. One thought which above all others the author desires to impress upon the teachers of small children, is the importance of prefacing every reading lesson with oral instruction.

Suggestions to Parents – Teachers – Tutors

General Observation.—Do you wish to judge of the merits of a system of education? Gather together the readers which it places in the hands of the children. You then have an index to the entire system. Moreover, of all readers, the *first* reader is most important, for it places before the child subjects for thought at a time when the mind receives its first and most lasting impressions. The importance, then, of placing *truth* before the child when he begins to read, has been recognized by all nations who have sought to give a spiritual education.

To illustrate: "The Hebrew parent was not only to impart oral instruction to his children, but to teach them also reading and writing. He was required to inscribe the words of the Lord upon his door-posts and gates." "To read and write was general among the ancient Jews, and in this particular they surpassed every other nation of antiquity."

The Hebrews also had a primer, which is thus described: "It breathes a deep religious, poetical, spiritual tone, and we can now understand the psychological problem how the Hebrews proved to be better devotees to their faith [than the pagans]. The answer to that problem is the Jewish primer and the idealistic spiritual education which was implanted in the heart of the child by it, and has inspired later the grown Hebrew to endure temptations as well as persecutions."

Speaking of the child Jesus, we read that "his intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures shows how diligently his early years were given to the study of God's Word."

In the early Christian church, and even as late as Puritan days, children were given reading-matter which "was indeed heavenly manna, and from it they caught the 'trick of looking upward." Historians say that "they sought to lead the infant minds of their children up to God by familiar narrations from Scripture.

The history of the patriarchs and prophets whose lives are narrated in the sacred volume, were the nursery-tales with which they sought to form the tender minds of their children. The parents made it their sacred duty and delightful task daily to exercise them in the recital of select passages of Scripture. The Bible was the first, the last, the only school book, almost, of the child."

When Protestantism had its birth in the days of Luther, children of the new faith had portions of the Bible placed in their hands, as readers and spellers. The effect of thus using the Sacred Word was to develop faith. Today there is need of faith. Let it be cultivated, since it comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), by placing portions of Scripture in the hands of our children.

Object.— 1. To impress principles of truth on growing minds. Childhood is the age of faith: direct the child to Christ instead of to fairy tales. God's Word contains enough of the wonderful, the beautiful, and the sublime, mingled with simplicity, to meet every need of the child-mind.

2. To develop a taste for pure literature. "The English Bible is the natural source to which the English people should go for their training in literature. The Bible is, in fact, the supreme English classic. The Bible is a whole literature within the compass of a single volume. It is universally recognized as being on the highest conceivable literary level."

3. To develop a vocabulary which will make it possible for the child to read in a short time the Bible itself.

Plan of Work.—Every lesson should be introduced by oral instruction. The value of the Reader will depend, to a great degree, upon the way the subject is presented by the teacher. Tell the story, which is the basis of the reading lesson, in such a way as to arouse the interest and imagination of the class. Make the story short, but vivid. Deal with great truths. Use the language which you find in the lesson. Ask questions which may be answered by sentences in

the lesson. Place the child's answer on the board. Let him read his own sentence. Then let him find the same in his Reader.

Make a careful study of your Bible. Feel that you dare not go before your class until thoroughly familiar with the subject. Be able to teach from an inner life. Thus only can you teach in reality, and then only will your pupils live what they learn in the class.

Nature Lessons.—Too often teachers deal with minutiae and with the unimportant, thus tiring the mind until the child loses the central, saving truth. In all nature studies let the spiritual truth lead. Do not hide the Creator behind an array of facts. For instance, when studying trees, study about the tree of life, and let the children see that trees today are but shadows of that tree. Spend more time with the substance than with the shadow. Study *life*, and above all, *spiritual* life. You may have the idea that a little child can not comprehend this. He can, for his mind is made to grasp spiritual truths as taught in nature.

As God's greatest power is seen in man, let the study of life as manifested in the human body, lead all nature lessons. The child should early learn the laws of his own being, and no study will be more interesting and profitable than healthful living, food combinations, and the proper care of the body.

Spelling.—This exercise accompanies the work throughout the Reader. The child should learn to spell every word he uses in reading. This is not all the spelling he needs, but this he does need in connection with his reading. Moreover, he should know the meaning of every word, and be able to use it in an intelligent way. This will be so if the pupil is properly drilled from day to day, not only in mechanical spelling, but in writing sentences. The new words appear at the beginning of each lesson.

Phonetic Spelling.—In Lesson III one word is divided, indicating that spelling phonetically should be begun. From this time on the child should spell phonetically every day until he readily spells by sound the most difficult words of the book.

Marking.—In Lesson XII the long and short sounds of the vowels are marked. Later, the broad and flat sounds of *a* are indicated, and gradually the sounds of other letters are indicated by diacritical markings. This is merely a suggestion to the teacher that such marking should be taught. When once introduced to the long *a*, the child should mart the long *a* every time it is met. Deal likewise with the other sounds, introducing the markings only so fast as the class can master them.

Special attention should be given to words haying the same sound but which are spelled differently. Arrange groups of such words from time to time. Drill by spelling these words, and by using them in sentences. Children are interested in such exercises as this:—

How do you make *son* from *on*, *on* from *one*, *two* from *to*, *sing* from *singing, farmer* from *farm*, *shepherd* from *sheep?*

Vary the exercises to impress both the sound and the sight of the word on the mind.

Writing.—From the first, script is introduced, as the child will learn script as readily as print. Since he will make constant use of script as he grows older, have him copy in writing words from the Reader and from the board.

Composition.—At first, the child will copy the words and sentences placed before him. Later he will be able to use isolated words in sentences. Soon he can give sentences of his own and write them. Technical terms in grammar are not needed by the First Reader child, but the correct use of language should be taught, together with the proper use of capitals, the period, and the question mark.

Drawing.—This exercise should accompany all instruction. Children are apt at illustration, and should be allowed to represent with crayon or pencil the mental picture which the lesson-story has produced.

Number Work.—Do not crowd little children into arithmetic. Introduce numbers in a natural way, teaching the children to

count, and giving them simple mental work in the four fundamentals.

Busy Work.—In this exercise the child will get number work. The work should consist of measuring distances and quantities, cutting, sloyd, and gathering specimens for natural science study.