Professor Bessey says truly that Dr. Beal "came of Quaker stock and preserved to the end the sterling honesty of action and speech instilled in him by his parents." Therefore, he would certainly wish that the errors Professor Bessey made in the article published by you on May 29, 1925, should be corrected.

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CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,
JUNE 2, 1925

THE METHOD OF SCIENCE

As a counterblast to numerous shocked and grieved allegations of the fundamentalists, various committees and groups of scientists have been issuing apologetic pronouncements, more or less measured in tone, but all alike striving to show that science is innocent of iconoclasm in things religious. And, in line with this, emphasis is laid more and more upon that part of scientific text books which disavows any effect of scientific teaching "to discredit the Bible." The careful report of the committee of California presidents, published in your issue of April 3, 1925, demonstrates this tendency with great clearness. The report itself, incidentally, refers to the "respect and consideration" due to "fundamental principles of religion, as presented in the Bible." Of course, the pressure even of a popular minority is an important factor in democratic control of educational policies: and yet, methinks, they do protest too much.

Am I incorrect in understanding that science is, fundamentally, a matter of method—a process that gains its sanction solely from its ascertainment of positive data and its treatment of these according to a recognized method of rational generalization? If I am not, is it a too reckless thing for scientists to come out openly and stand by their guns, not to defend conclusions but to assert their unqualified faithfulness to the method whereby they derive the only justification for their order in the intellectual life?

The scientist who gives preliminary pledges that his conclusions shall interfere with neither this nor that religion is no whit more reliable than the one who would similarly assure that his conclusions would never upset the complacency of the Nordics, the Vegetarians, the Geocentrists or any other body who have established themselves upon a conclusion which they are bound to maintain, willy nilly, to the bitter end.

Yet if they are not to do this, should they not abandon all this loose talk of religion and gods and Bibles, and frankly admit that, as scientists, they have nothing whatever to do with the matter, since it offers neither the datum nor the concept which is susceptible of treatment or entitled to recognition upon the scientific plane?

And ought not scientists, in committees or in groups as in individual cases, to stand openly forth before all apostles of reaction, whether called fundamentalists or voodoo magicians, and tell them in unmistakable English that the day has passed when truths should be sugar-coated to appease the prejudiced palates of the W. J. Bryans of the day?

For a century plain speaking has been a rarity in the churches. Heaven help us if it depart also from the halls of science.

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WEATHER CONDITIONS AT SUMATRA

A REPORT secured by Mr. Charles L. Hoover, American Consul at Batavia, Java, from the Royal Magnetic and Meteorological Observatory at Batavia, relating to weather conditions of Sumatra, for the information of expeditions wishing to study the eclipse of the sun in 1926, reads as follows:

The duration of sunshine has been estimated for every hour half from 8 A. M.–4 P. M. in a scale of 0–10, 0 being = entirely overcast, 10 = full record during the half hour.

The mean values express in percentages, are as follows:

Duration of sunshine, from 8 A. M.–4 P. M., in percentages.

	December 1924	January 1925	February 1925
Benkoelen	76	62	61
Palembang ...	48	56	51

In each of the 3 months the percentages of Benkoelen are the higher ones.

For the separate half hours, mean values of the 3 points, the following percentages are obtained:

Duration of sunshine in percentages, December, 1924–February, 1925

8 — 8:30	8:30 — 9	9 — 9:30	9:30 — 10	10 — 10:30	10:30 — 11	11 — 11:30	11:30 — 12	12 — 12:30	12:30 — 1	1 — 1:30	1:30 — 2	2 — 2:30	2:30 — 3	3 — 3:30	3:30 — 4
Benkoelen:															
62	63	65	67	71	72	70	72	70	68	72	70	68	65	57	49
Palembang:															
46	51	56	59	59	59	55	55	49	55	52	56	51	47	41	38
Difference:															
16	12	9	8	12	13	15	17	21	13	20	14	17	18	16	11