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Review of HAZEL RUE, *Bomby the Bombardier Beetle*

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BOOK REVIEW

HAZEL RUE with illustrations by SANDY THORNTON. **Bomby the Bombardier Beetle.** Institute for Creation Research, El Cajon, CA, 40 pp. ISBN 0-932766-13-7. Cost: too much at any price.

I wish to propose for the readers' favorable consideration a doctrine which may, I fear, appear wildly paradoxical and subversive. The doctrine in question is this: That it is undesirable to believe a proposition when there is no ground whatever for supposing it is true. I must, of course, admit that if such an opinion became common, it would completely transform our social life and our political system. Since both are at present faultless, this must weigh against it.
—Bertrand Russel

Well, I thought that the style of brainwashing seen in this revisionist book went out with the 1950s Cold War era. However, the Institute for Creation Research demonstrates that brainwashing is alive and well as it continues to wage its own cold war against reason in order to replace it with superstition. In this highly disjointed little book, the target is young children, which makes the authors' sin of deliberate ignorance even more reprehensible. Educating children about the wonders of nature is a delightful endeavor, but here it is a vehicle for blatantly meshing pseudo-natural history with creationist dogma that has, at no extra charge, a good dose of patriarchal sexism thrown in (standard operating procedure for fundamentalist religious groups).

The Institute for Creation Research is known for its twisted science, improbable research, and flawed conclusions, and this little propagandist tract maintains that tawdry tradition. I have two principal goals with this review: (1) to alert any beetle-oriented moms and dads thinking about getting a nice beetle book for their youngsters that this offering is more ultra-conservative religion than natural history, and (2) to save the buyer a few dollars that would otherwise flow to the Institute for Creation Research that would then finance other assaults on reason and science.

Predatory ground beetles that have eye balls, cannons, tail pipes, tightly-knit family structure, a continually varying number of tarsal segments from picture to picture (5-5-7, 6-9-6, 7-6-7, 7-8-7; sorry Sandy), smiley faces, and “beetlish sighs” . . . now that is creationist-style science! Even science for kids does not have to be that cheesy. And these people want equal time in our public schools?!? Shudder.

On page 9 we find: “We [beetles] are the largest family on earth.” The author confuses family (ground beetles, Carabidae) with the larger taxonomic category of order (beetles, Coleoptera). On page 18: “We can shoot over a thousand times real fast if we have to.” That would be an impressive feat, if true. But it isn't true because bombardier beetles can fire only several bursts in succession before running out of ammo. Gatling guns of the carabid world they are not! Once again, these are inaccuracies of fact. And so it goes throughout the entire story.

But as in all brainwashing, there is repetitive conditioning to achieve a result. On page 14: “Where did I come from? I won't ask. I will keep still and listen and listen.” Let's see now, don't ask questions, don't challenge authority, and always listen and obey. This mind-numbing litany is repeated throughout the story, and such indoctrination of the young helps to maintain the dominance of the established order (creationism), as chilling and intellectually repressive as that might be. That is the whole *raison d'être* of the book. The creationist dogma uses a superstitious world view to create a history of humankind that is consistent with a literal interpretation of documents (the Bible) written nearly two millennia ago by pre-industrial people from a vastly different culture.

This could-have-been interesting story about bombardier beetles is simply a come-on to the creation story as espoused by the creationists: God created all living things fully formed several thousand years ago. Artist Sandy Thornton's illustration on page 29 of the giant hand of God reaching down out of a cloud ought to be enough to scare the living hell out of any kid (no pun intended). . . or make them hysterical with laughter at the comical image of a huge hand descending from heaven. Nevertheless, children reading this propaganda (or having it read to them) are innocent victims of exceedingly narrow-minded adults. I won't even get into a discourse on extinct, fire-breathing dragons

(read dinosaurs) that were, according to this book, contemporaneous with people. This was discussed at the end of the book in a weirdly tangential diversion from the main story.

In the prologue, the author writes “You may wonder what purpose God had in creating this little beetle in the first place. As you read further about Bomby and his interesting ways, you are sure to be amazed at the creative genius of our Creator.” Were I to paraphrase: “You may wonder what purpose the author had in writing this little book in the first place. As you read further about Bomby and his interesting ways, you are sure to be amazed at the creative license of the author who has, herself, succumbed to the dark side.”

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