

The Environmental Ethic of Bill Mason: A Model for Environmental Education

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Abstract

Almost 20 years after Bill Mason's death, the writings and films of this legendary Canadian canoeist, filmmaker, and artist remain popular: "Few people of any nation have been so influential in creating a sense of responsibility for the environment" (Buck, 2005, p. 12). Supported by statements in Mason's writings and films, this paper presents eight themes of Mason's environmental ethic which reflect a Christian perspective on caring for the earth. Haluza-Delay (2000) argues that religious understandings can be influential in developing meaningful environmental ethics and environmentally friendly lifestyles, as religious membership and practice are a significant source of values and motivation for behavioural change for many people. Thus, for many Canadians, Bill Mason's environmental ethic may be a good model for constructing their own environmental ethic. Implications for environmental education are discussed.

Résumé

Près de vingt ans après la mort de Bill Mason, les écrits et les films de ce canoéiste, cinéaste et artiste canadien légendaire demeurent populaires : « Peu de gens dans le monde entier ont exercé une telle influence qui a suscité un sens de responsabilité envers l'environnement » (Buck, 2005, p. 12). Cet article, rempli d'énoncés des écrits et des films de Mason, présente huit thèmes sur son éthique de l'environnement, laquelle reflète une perspective chrétienne de la prise en charge de la terre. Haluza-Delay (2000) soutient que l'entendement religieux peut avoir une influence qui donne une éthique sensée de l'environnement et qui dégage des styles de vie écologiques conviviaux, vu que les pratiques et les effectifs religieux sont à l'origine de valeurs et de motivations menant à des changements de comportement pour bien des gens. Ainsi, pour bon nombre de Canadiens, l'éthique de l'environnement de Bill Mason peut constituer un bon modèle pour développer sa propre éthique de l'environnement. On étudie des répercussions/con-séquences/implications de l'éducation écologique.

Keywords: Bill Mason; environmental education; environmental ethics; Christianity; theology; religion

Almost 20 years after Bill Mason's death, the writings and films of this legendary Canadian canoeist, filmmaker, and artist remain popular. The 2005 film *Things that Move—Canoe*, winner of the Best Canoeing Film in the

2006 Reel Paddling Film Festival, has several references to Mason's writings and films. The book *Bill Mason: Wilderness Artist from Heart to Hand* by Ken Buck, who worked as a cameraman with Mason, was released in 2005. Buck (2005) writes that "few people of any nation have been so influential in creating a sense of responsibility for the environment" (p. 12). Although books and articles have been written about Mason's life and art (e.g., Buck, 2005; Raffan, 1996), there has not been an in-depth analysis of his environmental ethic which was strongly influenced by his Christian spirituality. In a review of Raffan's book *Fire in the Bones* (1996), Gardner (1996) comments that "Raffan admires the depth and flow of Mason's spirituality though he is less clear about its source" (p. 12). While the main focus of Buck's book is Mason as a wilderness artist, he is very clear about the source of Mason's environmental ethic:

the single most compelling force behind Bill Mason's passion for keeping the wild in wilderness was his deep unwavering Christian faith. He believed that man [sic] did not have "dominion over," but "responsibility for" the world. God did not create the world for man to abuse it, to exploit it, to destroy it. Man must nurture it. (Buck, 2005, p. 11)

Purpose of Study

Due to the wide appeal of his works, especially in Canada, Mason is acknowledged as an inspirational figure promoting the value of nature. Furthermore, as a self-acknowledged Christian, Mason remains a Christian conservation figure whose views can help students and others look deeper into the connections that can be made between religion and environmental thought. Following on Hitzhusen's (2006) suggestion that many sources exist that can serve as case studies for exploring how religious views are relevant to environmental ethics, the purpose of this paper is to investigate some of the main themes of Mason's Christian environmental ethic and to discuss the implications for environmental education.

Method

The method used in this study was an analysis of Mason's writings and films, primarily: the books *Path of the Paddle* (1980), *Song of the Paddle* (1988), and *Canoescapes* (1995); quotations of Mason's letters and other writings found in Raffan's (1996) biography of Mason; and Mason's feature film, *Waterwalker* (1984). Although not all of Mason's films have been thoroughly reviewed in this study, *Waterwalker* is probably the most important film to consider; as Raffan (1999) noted: "It was not until his final film *Waterwalker*, that he actually makes an overt statement about his views on wilderness spirituality ...

espousing what had been intuitively evident in all his work” (p. 27).

The type of analysis used in this study was inductive content analysis (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1995). The above-mentioned documents were read and reread, while the films were viewed again and again to identify Mason’s phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that explain his environmental ethic. Mason’s discussion of his ethic is not extensive as a large percentage of his writings are on technical subjects, such as canoeing and camping skills. Once a list of these quotations was compiled, they were grouped and regrouped into common themes. To confirm that these themes were an accurate reflection of Mason’s views, the themes and quotations that form the “Results” section of this paper were reviewed by a few people, including his wife, one of his ministers, and friends who knew him well and are very familiar with his writings.

Results

The outcomes of this study may be summarized in eight themes, all supported by statements in Mason’s writings and films.

1. *God is Creator*

Mason’s frequent references to God and God’s creation indicate that his environmental views were theocentric, not anthropocentric or biocentric. For example, in *Canoescapes* (1995), Mason writes, “The forest that God created...” (p. 157); elsewhere he writes about “the Creator who put it all together so long ago” (1982, p. 9). From an early age he believed that God was the creator who created the earth. In *Canoescapes* he explained how he learned in school why ice forms on the surface rather than the bottom of a lake. He concluded: “This fact, as well as many others that I learned in science, convinced me that God really knew what He was doing when He created the Earth” (1995, p. 15). In the 1950s in Winnipeg, he would frequently give a slide show of his wilderness photos accompanied by a commentary. In the notes for this slide show he stated, “For nature is part of the glorious fullness of God’s creation no less than man” (quoted in Raffan, 1996, p. 80). In his feature film *Waterwalker* (1984), Mason compared the relationship between Creator and creation to that between the artist and art:

I look around me at the colours, the textures, the designs. It is like being in an art gallery, God is the artist. And he has given us the ability to enjoy all this, and to wonder, and in our own small way to express ourselves in our own creativity and that’s why I like being here.

In *Path of the Paddle* (1980), he rejected the anthropocentric view: “It might seem that we own the earth, and we certainly act that way, but I don’t

believe we do” (p. 194). He lamented the fact that there is little support for the theocentric position in our society: “Our culture, so far removed from the natural world ... continues the debate over whether or not the Creator even exists” (1995, p. 157).

2. *God the Creator Communicates*

For Mason, God the creator was not an absent or distant God who created the world and then left it alone. An analysis of Mason’s works indicates that he believed not only that God created the world, but that God communicates to humans through the Bible and through the created world. This is what is known theologically as revelation: God communicates through the Bible (special revelation) and through creation (general revelation). It is interesting that Mason titled his early slide show, in which he combined photos of creation with biblical quotations, “God Revealed” (Raffan, 1996). Concerning this slide show, Buck (2005) wrote: “The title accurately reflected Bill’s goal. While the topic was the wilderness as God’s handiwork, the purpose was to celebrate God’s infinite power and generosity in creating such a world” (p. 55).

In regards to special revelation, in a section of *Song of the Paddle* (1988) titled “Reading List,” Mason wrote the following about the Bible: “It’s a must [to read] if you believe God created the world and lived in the person of Jesus Christ” (p. 179). For Mason, knowledge of God was learned through both the Bible and creation. As a youth, he participated in and led Bible studies, as well as explored the natural world (Buck, 2005). Although Mason did not quote the Bible frequently in his writings and films, many of his underlying principles reflect biblical values.

More references can be found in his works about general revelation than about special revelation. For example, in *Path of the Paddle* (1980), he wrote: “A journey by canoe along ancient waterways is a good way to rediscover our lost relationship with the natural world and the Creator who put it all together so long ago” (p. 3). He reflected upon God speaking to him through creation in the catalogue for his 1980 art show, *Wilderness Impressions: A Dialogue with the Arts*: “It has taken me almost a lifetime to learn to look and to listen to what God has to say through His creation. The more I am able to do this the greater the pleasure I derive from what I create” (quoted in Raffan, 1996, p. 228). The notion that humans can learn from the created world is also communicated when Mason quotes Job 12:7-10 at a central place in *Waterwalker* (1984):

But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of all of these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.

3. Humans Have a Unique Place in Creation

In Mason's works you can observe his view that humans are not just one of many creatures, but have a unique place in creation as God has given them the ability to create. For example, in the catalogue for his 1980 art exhibit, Mason wrote: "Creativity is one of God's greatest gifts and in fact is one of the things that differentiates us from the rest of the animal kingdom. As an artist the urge to create almost consumes me" (quoted in Raffan, 1996, p. 228). A similar statement appears in *Canoescapes* (1995): "The ability to create is one of God's greatest gifts to mankind. It's one of the things that separates us so dramatically from the rest of the animal kingdom" (p. 156).

4. Humans Destroy Creation

Although humans have a unique place in creation, they often misuse their gifts to destroy and change the environment. Mason follows the quotation above about creative ability with the assertion that human creativity is "also at the root of our destruction of the natural world. In so many of our activities we have to destroy something in order to create something else ... It all boils down to stupidity and greed ... the grinding war that all of us are waging against wild things" (1995, p. 156). In *Path of the Paddle* (1980), he laments both the taming and changing of God's creation:

Today the land, to a great extent, has been "tamed." It's getting harder and harder to find those remote hidden places where we can enjoy the natural world as God created it. (p. 191)

We have become so totally committed to changing our environment that we have become oblivious to the fact that the world around us is a creation itself—God's creation. (p. 194)

In a form letter written shortly before his death, Mason wrote:

God has created us, placed us in a wonderful and beautiful world and set us free to create and utilize it and delight in it. We have the capacity to use it with compassion for all the creatures that share it with us, but we have turned the air, water, and land into chemical soup. (quoted in Raffan, 1996, p. 265)

Although he does not label this human destruction of the earth a sin, he associated it with two human behaviours—ruthlessness and greed—often associated with sin: "The changes being wrought by the James Bay project, acid rain, and the pollution of lakes and rivers are the result of stupidity, ruthlessness and greed" (1982, p. 10). In a writing titled "Some Private Thoughts," he also associated environmental problems with human alienation from God:

I am convinced that our problems in relation to nature and also in human terms are because of our alienation from God the Creator. An alienation caused

by us. Not God. It is not His fault that we prefer to leave him out of our lives. (quoted in Raffan, 1996, p. 188)

5. *Humans Are to Care for Creation*

Mason believed that humans have a moral obligation to preserve and care for the created world. In the notes for his “God Revealed” slide show, he quoted from the biblical book of Revelation: “Cried the angel in Revelations: ‘Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees’” (quoted in Raffan, 1996, p. 80). In *Canoescapes* (1995), he wrote that “I cannot believe that God ever intended us to overrun the earth at the expense of all other living creatures. Somewhere on earth a species of life becomes extinct every day” (p. 150). In *Path of the Paddle* (1980), he stated “I believe that we have a moral obligation to preserve and care for the habitat of animals and plant life because, like us, they were created by God and have a right to exist too” (p. 192). Subsequently in *Song of the Paddle* (1988), he made a similar statement: “[N]ot just for your sake or mine or that of our children, but for the sake of all the myriad forms of life that live there, we have a responsibility to ensure that they continue to exist because they, like us, were created by God and have a right to exist” (p. 179). Mason learned from Dr. Fred Mitchell, pastor of the interdenominational Elim Chapel in Winnipeg that Mason attended in his early years, that the word “dominion” in the King James’ version of Genesis should be interpreted as “responsibility,” and this understanding became a cornerstone of Mason’s environmental theology (Buck, 2005). He believed that a successful environmental ethic must be based on the fact that all living things were created and had a right to exist, rather than anthropocentric reasons, such as saving nature for future generations:

Most environmental campaigns have as their premise the conservation of wilderness for the benefit of our children and their children, but that’s a lost cause. We are far too greedy as individuals and as nations for that approach to work. The only approach that has any hope of success must be based on compassion for our fellow humans and for all other living things. They were all created as a part of the whole and have a right to exist. (Mason, 1995, p. 156)

6. *A Theology of Humility*

While Mason’s environmental ethic is rooted in Christian theology, his theology was characterized by humility in that he was able to learn from other traditions. In *Canoescapes* (1995), he wrote: “The words of the native people reflect a relationship with the land that does not come easily or naturally to our culture” (p. 157). He also gives an example which illustrates that he could be critical of his own faith tradition and that he could learn from other traditions:

There is an island off Gargantua Harbour in Lake Superior with the ominous name of Devil's Warehouse I was intrigued by the name Devil's Warehouse. No doubt this name was given to the island by the voyageurs. They were a superstitious lot and inclined to attribute any strange or unusual land forms to the devil. In stark contrast, the native peoples tended to think of these same places as having special spiritual qualities. Not far from Devil's Warehouse Island, another island bears a startling resemblance to a chair. The white man calls it Devil's Chair Island. The native peoples regard it as the chair from which the Creator or Great Spirit created the world. Their attitude to things natural suggests that they had a more harmonious relationship with the natural world than did some of those who were strongly influenced by the church. (1995, p. 38)

As Buck (2005) notes, "Interestingly enough, in *Waterwalker* [1984] there are more references to aboriginal tenets of faith than to Christian ones" (p. 56). Perhaps one of the reasons Mason found Aboriginal voices helpful was because they reflected a belief in a Creator, while white North American culture debated the existence of Creator: "Almost all of the recorded speeches of the native people reveal a profound belief in a Creator" (Mason, 1995, p. 157). In *Waterwalker* he stated another reason why he found the Aboriginal perspective helpful: "I think that because they lived close to the land that they were the experts and what they have to say is worth listening to, especially today." At one of the central points in *Waterwalker* Mason quotes Aboriginal voices, and then turns to his own Christian tradition and quotes Job 12:7-10. Mason's approach seems to be like that of the Apostle Paul in Athens, when he began by discussing the Greeks' statue to the unknown God and then moved on to presenting a Christian perspective on this statue (Acts 17:16-34). Mason's environmental ethic was a Christian one, but he listened to and learned from other traditions on how to live in harmony with the land.

7. Caring for Creation is Energized by Faith in God

For Mason, the task of caring for creation was energized by faith in God, such as the apostle Peter had when he walked on water. Mason wrote that "Since it is humans that are causing the degradation of the world around us, the only hope for stemming this tide of destruction lies within all of us" (1982, p. 10). However, for Mason, this was not an anthropocentric solution but a theocentric one, because of who God created humans to be. In the pivotal scene in *Waterwalker* (1984), and also the one that gives the name to the film, Mason states:

I think that the only hope for what is left of the natural world is to rediscover that love and compassion for it that the native people talk about. And I think that is possible because God created us with the ability to do the impossible. When Jesus called Peter to walk to him across the water, Peter was just fine until he remembered that people were not supposed to be able to do that. I think that we have just forgotten to walk on water.

B. Ultimately the Fate of the Earth is in God's Hands

Mason's environmental ethic was an optimistic one, as he believed that ultimately the fate of the earth is not in human efforts, but in God's hands. In a letter written as he was approaching death, Mason wrote:

I spend considerable time lamenting about what a mess I'll be leaving it [the earth] in. However, I have never believed in harping on the negative. My obsession has been to share the wonder and infinite beauty of the world God has created and to help people develop an appreciation and concern for it. My optimism is rooted in my faith that God has not forsaken us. My relationship with God in his son Jesus Christ, and with a relationship like that there's really not a lot that can go wrong. (quoted in Raffan, 1996, p. 265)

Discussion

The themes of Bill Mason's environmental ethic, as identified in this study, are congruent with Christian understandings of caring for creation and overlap with some of the most frequently discussed tenets of Christian ecotheology (Hitzhusen, 2007). In a survey of Christian environmentalism in the 1980s and mid-1990s, Kearns (1997, cited in Haluza-Delay, 2000) identified three broad categories of Christian environmental theology and activity: stewardship, eco-justice, and creation spirituality. Mason, influenced by the "responsibility" definition of "dominion" in Genesis, fits most closely with the stewardship category, and thus this discussion will rely primarily upon sources from this perspective (e.g., Bouma-Prediger, 2001; DeWitt, 1991; Wilkinson, 1991). First, Mason's view is thoroughly theocentric, a basic tenet of the Christian view. Dependence of the earth on God is a clear teaching of the Genesis account and of all scripture. God as Creator is both the starting point and the focal point in this view. As such, theocentrism is distinct from both anthropocentrism (with its focus on humans and an ethic of exploitation), and biocentricism (with a focus on nature, not the Creator, and an ethic of adoration) (Santmire, 1970).

Second, Mason viewed God as a Creator who communicates with humans through both creation (general revelation) and scripture (special revelation). This notion is explained by the script of *Wilderness Treasure* (1962), Mason's first film produced for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship to promote Pioneer Camps:

There are many treasures in the wilderness for those who learn to look and to listen, but the deeper treasures need an understanding that only the Creator himself can give. We turn from the Book of Nature to the Book of the Written Word of God, and then back again, with an ever deepening appreciation for the one who wrote both.

The idea of the Book of Nature is an ancient one with scriptural roots: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20, *New International Version*). Numerous scriptural passages—such as Job 12:7-10 which Mason quotes in *Waterwalker* (1984)—as well as Christians down through the ages, claim that knowledge of God may be learned from the natural world (Book of Nature, 2006). For example, Mason’s description of creation as an art gallery that he could learn from is reminiscent of Calvin’s description of creation as a “most glorious theatre” or a “magnificent theatre” that is a constant source of revelation (Bouma-Prediger, 2001, p. 178).

Third, Mason saw God’s gift of creativity to humans as a reflection of the unique place humans have in creation. While there has been much theological debate regarding how humans are unique, Hall (1986) argues that the image of God is fundamentally about how people demonstrate the character of God through their exercising of dominion as service. The Christian view is that humans have a unique position in, and a unique responsibility to, all of creation (Wilkinson, 1991). Like all creatures, humans are made from dust, but theologically “we are made in God’s image, after God’s likeness... We are unique, but our uniqueness implies not superiority but service” (Bouma-Prediger, 2001, p. 123).

Fourth, Mason observed that humans abuse their God-given creativity and, as a result, destroy the earth. His references to ruthlessness and greed are reminiscent of the prophets’ warnings of God’s displeasure with greedy people which lead to devastation of the land (e.g., Hos. 4:1-3). The Bible forbids and defines as sin human attempts to use the earth as they wish to suit their own selfish desires.

Indeed, the world is out of whack because of what we, God’s image-bearers, have done and left undone. A contagion like sin haunts our lives and affects all we touch, and so we bear the weight of inherited sorrow and perpetuate in ways known and unknown the brokenness of our lives in the world. (Bouma-Prediger, 2001, p. 123)

Fifth, Mason taught that humans are to care for the created world. His understanding of the interpretation of “dominion” as “responsibility” reflects extensive Christian literature on dominion as stewardship. Mason’s view is consistent with the Christian motif of earthkeeping: God is the owner of the earth, but God gives humans the responsibility and joy to keep the earth as a garden with all “its intricate fullness and dynamic relatedness” (Bouma-Prediger, 2001, p. 154). Or, as Wilkinson (1991) puts it, “we are *stewards* of God, managers of this particular part of his household... to preserve, enhance, and glorify the creation, and in so doing, to glorify the Creator” (p. 308). As Hall (1982) points out in *The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age*, the concept of the steward has a long tradition in Christianity, but it has particular

significance in this time of environmental concern. It is interesting that Mason, who learned the “responsibility” interpretation of “dominion” in the late 1940s and early 1950s (J. Mason, personal communication, May 16, 2007), was communicating these ideas about Christian stewardship of the earth at the same time, or earlier than, the proliferation of books on this topic in the 1980s.

Sixth, Mason’s environmental ethic reflected a theology of humility; he could be critical of his own tradition and learn from other traditions. Mason’s observations reflect that “Christians—and Christendom—have often failed to live according to the truths they have affirmed” (Wilkinson, 1991, p. 276). Some have argued that the church’s care of creation has lacked in its attention to other perspectives, and that Christians should seek to learn from other religious traditions (Granberg-Michaelson, 1988). If so, Mason makes a good example of a Christian who has not failed on this count. While Mason learned from other traditions, “he was committed to Christianity, remaining so his entire life” (Buck, 2005, p. 23).

Seventh, Mason believed that we cannot care for creation on our own. His views are very similar to those of Christian author L’Engle (1980):

When Jesus called Peter to come to him across the water, Peter, for one brief, glorious moment, remembered how, and strode with ease across the lake. This is how we are meant to be, and then we forget, and we sink. But if we cry out for help (as Peter did), we will be pulled out of the water, we won’t drown...The impossible still happens to us. (p. 196)

Like Peter walking on water, we need faith in order to do the impossible. This story of Peter walking on water is reminiscent of several statements of Jesus that all things are possible with God, and that everything is possible for those who believe (Mt. 19:26, Mark 9:23, Mark 10:27, Luke 18:27). Humans cannot do it on their own, but need the help of God: “Through his (Christ’s) life, death, and resurrection, the alienation between ourselves and God has been broken down, and we are invited, through the power of God’s Spirit, to take part in the healing and reconciliation which our Creator and Redeemer is bringing about” (Wilkinson, 1991, p. 276). For the Christian, work as an earthkeeper is grounded in Christ’s work, through which all things are being reconciled (Col. 1:20; DeWitt, 1991).

Eighth, Mason’s environmental ethic was an optimistic one as he believed that ultimately the fate of the earth is not in human efforts, but in God’s hands. Throughout the Bible, the visions of the kingdom of God are visions of humans living in harmony with creation (e.g., Is. 11:6-9; Wilkinson, 1991). A Christian environmental ethic is based upon hope in God:

An orthodox Christian eschatology speaks...of its [the earth’s] renewal and restoration.... As many prominent theologians from the mainstream Christian tradition have insisted—from Irenaeus and Augustine through Luther, Calvin, and

Wesley—we hope for the redemption of creation....Because we rely on God's promises and faithful character rather than human ingenuity or skill, we know that, despite the despoliation of our planetary home, the whole word is, as the song says, in God's hands. (Bouma-Prediger, 2001, pp. 125-126)

In summary, the analysis of Mason's writings and films completed in this study demonstrates that his environmental ethic is consistent with Christian teachings on caring for creation. Raffan (1999) claimed that pantheism was a theme in Mason's work and that "Mason moved from a solid fundamentalist Christian foundation to assert the belief that wilderness was the divine on earth" (p. 27). However, Mason's writings and films do not reflect pantheism, nor a belief that wilderness was the divine on earth. Rather, his statements reflect a belief that the earth is God's creation and that we can learn about God through creation, but he did not blur the distinction between God and creation: God was distinct from creation, just as the artist in Mason's analogy in *Waterwalker* is distinct from the art gallery. Mason's statements about God as creator, his statements of learning about God from creation, and his quotation of Job 12:7-10 reflect the historical Christian Book of Nature tradition (Book of Nature, 2006) and not pantheism. As such, his environmental ethic reflects mainstream Christian teachings.

Implications for Environmental Education

Social scientific studies indicate that religion remains an important part of Canadian society. In his book *Restless Gods*, Bibby (2002) documents that, based on surveys of Canadians, there is a renaissance of religion in Canada. A Statistics Canada study titled "Who's Religious" released in May 2006 (CBC, 2006) concluded that Canadians are more religiously devout than is often assumed. Nevertheless, Haluza-Delay (2000) has suggested that traditional religious understandings are often ignored by environmental educators. Similarly, Hitzhusen (2007) notes that many environmental educators in the United States have paid little attention to Christian ecotheology, and the potential of this resource has been under-appreciated. Haluza-Delay (2000) argues that religious understandings can be influential in developing meaningful environmental ethics and environmentally friendly lifestyles, as religious membership and practice are a significant source of values and motivation for behavioural change for many people. Haluza-Delay recommends that educators should not neglect religious perspectives: "educators holding to the idea that religious worldviews are inherently anti-ecological will be less likely to be able to fully support program participants and engage in meaningful and respectful dialogue" (2000, p. 146).

For some Canadians, Mason's environmental ethic may be a good model for constructing their own environmental ethic. I have had good results using Mason as an exemplar of a Christian environmental ethic. In

teaching a second-year university course related to the environment, I cover different environmental ethical perspectives: rights, eco-utilitarian, the land ethic, deep ecology, eco-feminism, Aboriginal, and religious. For the section on the religious perspective, I show a clip from *Waterwalker* (1984) where Mason quotes from the book of Job about how humans can learn from other creatures. The use of the film medium, along with the popularity of Mason and his films, work well to convey the Christian view of nature. I also found Mason useful as a role model in a chapter on environmentally-friendly recreation, since Mason was someone who was wildly enthusiastic about nature-based recreation and who cared deeply for creation (Heintzman, 2006). Quotations and stories from Mason's books and films work well to bring to life the principles that were presented in the chapter. I have also used quotations from Mason in a Earth Sunday sermon, and have observed others effectively use Mason quotations and film clips in chapel services and conference presentations.

Print, video, and photo sources combined make Mason's work appealing in that they serve a range of learning capacities. The themes of Mason's environmental ethic identified in this paper, along with corresponding quotations from his books and/or segments of his films, may be used as a starting point for activities and/or discussions to facilitate the development of an environmental ethic. Other ecotheology resources, such as those referenced in the discussion section, can then be used to reinforce these themes. Examples of activities and discussions, which correspond to each of the eight themes in the Results section, are as follows:

1. God is Creator: Mason's account in *Canoescapes* of learning in school why ice forms first on the surface of a lake convinced him "that God really knew what He was doing when He created the Earth" (1995, p. 15). This could be a starting point for an activity focused on nature processes that convince a person of a Creator.
2. God the Creator communicates: Statements about learning about God from the created world (e.g., *Path of the Paddle*, 1980, p. 3), as well as the quotation of Job 12:7-10 in *Waterwalker* (1984), could be used on wilderness trips as an encouragement to learn from creation. Segments from *Wilderness Treasure* (1962) may be used to illustrate the Book of Nature concept.
3. Humans have a unique place in creation: Statements about creativity differentiating humans from the rest of the animal kingdom (e.g., *Canoescapes*, 1995, p. 156) may be used to discuss whether humans are unique and if so, how.
4. Humans destroy creation: Statements about "stupidity and greed" (e.g., *Canoescapes*, 1995, p. 156) and "alienation from God the Creator" (quoted in Raffan, 1996, p. 188) may be used to discuss the cause of environmental degradation.

5. Humans are to care for creation: Statements such as “we have a moral obligation to preserve and care for the habitat of animals and plant life because, like us, they were created by God and have a right to exist too” (*Path of the Paddle*, 1980, p. 192; c.f., *Song of the Paddle*, 1988, p. 179; *Canoescapes*, 1995, pp. 150, 156) may be used to discuss the motivation for earth care. Mason’s discussions in *Path of the Paddle* of choosing canoeing over motorboating, and hiking over a gondola ride (1980, pp. 3, 194) may be used to discuss practical actions.
6. A theology of humility: The sections in *Canoescapes* (1995, pp. 38, 157) and *Waterwalker* (1984) on Aboriginal views can be used as a starting point for learning from other traditions.
7. Caring for creation is energized by faith in God: Mason’s recounting of Peter walking on water in *Waterwalker* (1984) can be used to discuss the role of faith in caring for creation.
8. Ultimately the fate of the Earth is in God’s hands: Segments from the letter Mason wrote when he was facing death (quoted in Raffan, 1996, p. 265) can be used in relation to whether there is hope for the earth, and, if so, where our optimism comes from.

While the only films mentioned in the above examples are *Waterwalker* (1984) and *Wilderness Treasure* (1962), many of Mason’s other films can be used to encourage environmental attitudes and behaviours. Although Mason’s personal environmental ethic is not explicit in these other films, his views are “intuitively evident in all his work” (Raffan, 1999, p. 27). Furthermore, since he lived what he taught, his views are embodied in his life that is captured by the camera.

Haluzá-Delay (2000) states that “In some ways, the church’s writings on ecotheology are one of its best kept secrets” (p. 146). While the church’s writings on ecotheology may be read by a small number of people, the popular writings and films of Mason may be used as tools by environmental educators to communicate a Christian view of earth care to a greater number of people. As has been demonstrated in this study, Mason’s works exemplify some of the main themes of a Christian environmental ethic. When alive, Mason’s “wonderful and engaging abilities as a storyteller and his pictures from a canoeist’s point of view swept people with him into the wild, leaving them moved and fulfilled by the experience, and hungry for more” (Raffan, 1996, p. 79). Bill Duffy, a minister at the church Mason attended, stated:

One of the things that greatly impressed me about Bill Mason is what one might call his “theology of creation,” which is just one way of describing his great love for God’s world. He respected it; he appreciated it; he sensed he was a steward in it. He had such a great love for God’s creation because he knew the God of creation. That was the key. And that came through to those young people like a passion. (quoted in Raffan, 1996, p. 147)

Mason's books and films remain as a legacy of his passion and his theology of creation. These books and films are tools that can be used by environmental educators, as they are relevant to environmental education participants who hold religious worldviews.

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