

**An Inconvenient Truth A film review by Rev Dr Steve Taylor  
(Originally written for New Zealand, Methodist Touchstone. Reprinted with permission.)**

Do all Christians love the hoiho (yellow-eyed) penguins?" asked my then 6 year old over breakfast. And so a doctrine of creation was explored over weetbix and washed down with milo. "God does love the hoiho. So yes, so should all Christians."

Kiwi children grow up environmentally aware. Sadly, a Christian understanding of God as green, maker of a good earth, entrusted to human care, is a distant toddler.

Al Gore chooses a different starting point. His movie *An Inconvenient Truth* entwines a number of narratives. The opening shots offer us a gentle stream flowing through the Gore family farm. The stream meanders through the movie, inviting us to consider what future we are gifting to our children. Our earth, and our children's future, is Al Gore's starting point.

A second narrative is Al Gore himself. The events of his life - the drama of his failed Presidential campaign, the accident that injured his (then) 6 year old son, the death of his sister from lung cancer, linked to the growth of tobacco on his family farm - become woven into his environmental campaign. The cynic could suggest this movie is more than a plea for environmental action, but also a PR job essential to the public redemption of Al Gore.

The third narrative is Al Gore's slide show. I approached the movie wary, afraid of 100 minutes of Al Gore-with-Powerpoint. The graphics are certainly clever. The one-liners are definitely slick ("I used to be the next President of the United States"; "Political will is a renewable resource") in a well-worn way. *An Inconvenient Truth* is a powerful presentation. Continue our patterns of CO2 consumption, continue to petroleum power our driving habits, and we face catastrophic climatic disaster. Our new industrial technologies demand new ways of human acting. It is a rare movie when rolling final credits are mixed with a Dummies guide to Environmental Responsibility.

Change a light  
Drive less  
Recycle more  
Check your tires<sup>1</sup>

Strangely, I left the movie mouthing the Lords Prayer. "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done." Then it struck me. In an odd way, *An Inconvenient Truth* represents the high-water mark of secularity. The entire focus of the movie is our planet, our rivers, our oceans. Cause and effect are human.

In contrast, a Christian doctrine of creation starts with God. We care, we love, because God first cared and God first loved. As I told my 6 year old over buttered toast, "God does love the hoiho penguin." So yes, all Christians should care. We should protest against the drift net fishing that trawls up dead penguins.

But our starting point is not their imminent extinction due to human actions. Our starting point is God's love. We care because God first cared for hoiho and wild flowers. We act, we participate, we respond to an *An Inconvenient Truth*, not for extinction's sake, but for God's Kingdom come, on earth as it started in heaven.

---

<sup>1</sup> For more see <http://www.climatecrisis.net/pdf/10things.pdf>

505 words

*Steve is Senior Pastor at Opawa Baptist Church and Lecturer in Gospel and Film at Bible College of New Zealand. He is the author of *The Out of Bounds Church?* (Zondervan, 2005) and writes regularly at [www.emergentkiwi.org.nz](http://www.emergentkiwi.org.nz).*