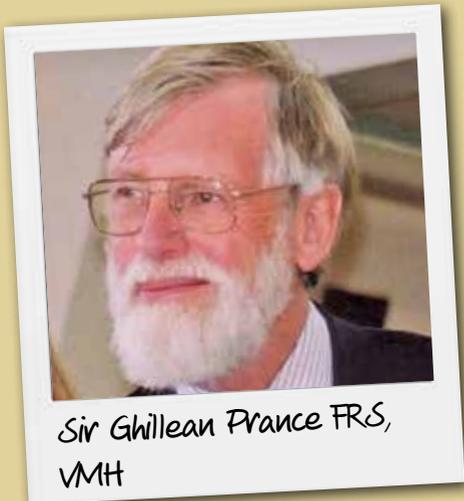


Nevertheless, some churches have realised the importance of creation care. The Ecocongregation programme gives awards for environmental improvement in churches. It also provides much helpful teaching material for churches wanting to become more involved in environmental stewardship. Your church too could become an eco-congregation.

For me, the motive for taking better care of creation is summed up in a verse from the Bible book of Colossians: "For in Him (Christ) all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, or rulers or powers – all things have been created through Him and for Him." Colossians 1: 16



Sir Ghillean Prance FRS, VMH is a botanist, former Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (1988-1999), led 20 botanical expeditions to Amazonia and collected over 350 new species of plants. He is author of 21 books and 540 scientific and general papers in botany and conservation and holds fifteen honorary doctorates. He was awarded the International Cosmos Prize (1993), knighted (1995), made Commander of the Order of the Southern Cross, Brazil (2000) and the Order of the Rising Sun, Japan (2012). He is Chairman of A Rocha International and a Member of Lyme Regis Baptist Church.

## All things have been created through Him and for Him

### Further information

[www.cis.org.uk](http://www.cis.org.uk) - Christians in Science  
[www.jri.org.uk](http://www.jri.org.uk) - The John Ray Initiative  
[www.arocha.org](http://www.arocha.org) - A Rocha, Christians in Conservation  
[www.ecocongregation.org](http://www.ecocongregation.org) - Eco-congregation

### Suggested reading

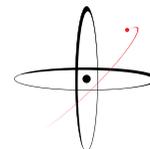
Bookless, D. Planetwise: dare to care for God's World. Intervarsity, 2008  
Prance, G. Go to the ant: reflections on biodiversity and the Bible, Wild Goose Press, 2013

THINKING ABOUT...

# creation care

is it a responsibility of Christians to care for the environment?

ADDRESSING QUESTIONS OF SCIENCE AND FAITH



THINKING ABOUT...

# creation care

Sir Ghillean Prance FRS, VMH

## Science is not about trying to disprove God

**The world is facing a huge environmental crisis that is largely the result of human greed and overexploitation of our natural resources.**

Climate change is real. Biologists all over the world see its effects and the way that the natural world is changing. Birds are migrating at different times, plants are flowering at unusual times and either drought or extreme rainfall is severely damaging crops.

For many years Botanist Nigel Hepper has recorded the date on which the flowers of about three hundred species first

opened at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. He found that most plants are, on average, opening eight days earlier than thirty years ago. This is one of many studies by scientists around the world that demonstrate how biological events are changing because of a changing climate. Science has now shown beyond reasonable doubt that the increase of carbon dioxide and other gasses in the atmosphere is causing global warming and climate change. Yet,

my experience is that there are many church goers who are sceptical about climate change.

Science is not about trying to disprove God. Rather, as a Christian I see it as about learning more about the wonders of how creation works. I have had the privilege of discovering and naming over 300 new species of plants from Amazonia.

To me it is not just the discovery, but the process of finding out more about their interactions with the bees that pollinate the flowers or the bats that disperse their fruits. With each new discovery I marvel more about the wonders of creation and how God has allowed these creatures to evolve into such intricate relationships. Christians should not be afraid to use the findings of science to change our attitudes and behaviour towards the environment and to promote the stewardship of creation.

Species of animals and plants are becoming extinct on a daily basis. I am writing this while working on a plant conservation project in Hawaii where 70 species of birds and 97 species of plants are known to have become extinct since the arrival of people on the

DO YOU BELIEVE IN CLIMATE CHANGE?

Islands. I have also witnessed extinction in many other parts of the world such as Madagascar and Indonesia. To me these species are all representatives of God's creation, and their extinction by humanity cannot be justified.

The Toromiro tree (*Sophora toromiro*) of Easter Island off the coast of Chile was one of the most useful of all trees to the Polynesian settlers. It was used for medicines, wood carvings, and as a building material. When explorer Thor Heyerdahl visited the island he collected seeds of the one remaining Toromiro tree. It died soon afterwards, leaving the species extinct in its native habitat. No wonder the civilisation of Easter Island collapsed and became only a remnant of its former glory, for they had completely deforested the island. Fortunately the seeds of the Toromiro that Heyerdahl collected germinated in various botanic gardens in Europe and so the species was not completely lost. Today efforts are being made to re-introduce this species back to Easter Island. The use of the very last individual of a useful species is by no means confined to the residents of Easter Island. It is a much more general part of our greedy lifestyle that does not think about the need of future generations.

If we really believe that "the earth is the Lord's" (Psalm 24) then we surely have a responsibility to take better care of it, for

we are speaking about God's creation and not merely about the environment. If we became better keepers of creation then some other words of the psalmist would be realised: "Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy." (Psalm 96)

Fortunately some Christians are beginning to respond to the destruction of creation in a positive way and various organisations have been founded to help Christians become involved in the care of creation (see resources below). There are several scientists who are Christians who are involved with such organisations or are working on creation care as individuals because they believe that it is important to use their skills to avoid environmental disaster.

However, churches have been relatively slow to respond and many of us who are involved in environmental issues are lone voices in our congregations.

IS YOUR CHURCH MOTIVATED TO CARE FOR CREATION?



DO YOU THINK OF NATURE AROUND YOU AS THE ENVIRONMENT OR THE CREATION?