An interview with Ghillean Prance

The President of CiS, Professor Sir Ghillean Prance is Scientific Director of the Eden Project in Cornwall, Visiting Professor at Reading University and elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1993 and awarded the Victoria Medal of the Royal Horticultural Society in 1999. He has served as President of the Linnean Society, the Systematics Association and the Institute of Biology. He is married with two daughters; one lives in Recife, Brazil, and the other is a surgeon.

What have you been doing until now?
After studying botany at Keble College, Oxford, I went to work as a research assistant at the New York Botanical Garde...
as close as possible to where I was working. This was difficult for them at times, but we felt that it was important to keep the family together, and it worked out well.

**How has your faith helped you as a scientist, or vice versa?**
My faith has helped me in many ways. It has made a more disciplined person – both my life in general and my science have been helped in this way. It has helped me to have integrity in my scientific work, and calmness in a crisis. This was especially important in some difficult situations while I was working and travelling in the Amazon.

**What science-faith books have you most enjoyed/found most helpful, especially as young scientist?**
*Mere Christianity* and the other writings of CS Lewis were very helpful in my Oxford days. I also appreciated the writings of John Stott. I have, and still do, read many science-faith books, and the ASA journal, *Perspective on Science and Christian Faith*, which started before *Science and Christian Belief*, has been very useful.

**Anything else?**
Yes - as my career in biology progressed, I became very concerned about environmental issues. This was a professional concern, but very close to my faith too - care for God’s creation is very important. I have had a long association with the Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies. This has been a really helpful two-way exchange; I have really valued the fellowship I received there. I have also been involved with the Christian conservation organisations A Rocha and the Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies in Michigan, USA, and took part in the formation of the *Eco-Congregation* project that encourages churches to think about the environment. This and many speaking engagements are my main form of Christian service at present, and takes up a lot of my time now.