

Linnaeus and the Apostles

Your Excellency,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau said of Carl Linnaeus: Tell him I know no greater man on earth." The German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote: "With the exception of Shakespeare and Spinoza, I know no one among the no longer living who has influenced me more strongly." Linnaeus has been called *Princeps botanicorum* (Prince of Botanists), "The Pliny of the North," and "The Second Adam".

Carl Linnæus was born in the village of Roosholt in Smooland, Sweden, on 23 May 1707. He was the first child of Nils Ingemarsson Linnæus and Christina Broderonia. His father was an amateur botanist, a Lutheran minister, and the curate of the small village of Stenbroohult in Smooland. His mother was the daughter of the rector of Stenbroohult, Samuel Broderonius. She subsequently gave birth to three daughters and another son, Samuel. Linnaeus studied mainly Greek, Hebrew, theology and mathematics, a curriculum designed for boys preparing for the priesthood but was never a good student. John Rothman, the state doctor, showed Linnaeus that botany was a serious subject. He taught Linnaeus to classify plants according to Tournefort's system and Linnaeus immersed himself in the subject. In 1727, aged 21, he enrolled in Lund University in Skoonend and in August 1728, Linnaeus moved to Uppsala University to study both Medicine and Botany. In April 1732 he embarked on a six month expedition to Lapland out of which came the *Flora Lapponica*. Three years later, Linnaeus took a doctoral degree in medicine at the University of Harderwijk, in the Netherlands and in the Netherlands, with the financial help of the Scottish doctor Isaac Lawson, he published his new system of classification of plants, the *Systema Naturae* (1735).

Back in Sweden in 1739 he married Sara Elisabeth Moræa. Together they had seven children, out of which one daughter died in infancy. During that time Linnaeus help found the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. In 1749 he became responsible of the Botanical garden in Uppsala University and professor of Botany and Natural History. His energy knew no bounds. With his students he went on various expeditions in parts of Sweden which produced more books and in 1747, Linnaeus was given the title of Chief Physician, by the Swedish king Adolf Frederick—a mark of great respect. The same year he was elected member of the Academy of Sciences in Berlin.

In 1750, Linnaeus became rector of Uppsala University, Many of his students travelled to various places in the world to collect botanical samples. Linnaeus called the best of these students, 17 of them, his "apostles". He taught them to think for themselves, to be systematic in their work and not to trust anybody. Through his latest book the *Philosophia Botanica* published in 1751, he taught them the taxonomy system he had been using in his earlier works and valuable information of how to keep a journal on travels and how to maintain a botanical garden. His two volume work *Species Plantarum*, the starting point of modern botanical nomenclature, was published in 1753, describing over 7,300 species and won him the Order of the Polar Star. He was the first civilian in Sweden to become a knight in this order.

The Swedish king Adolf Frederick granted Linnaeus nobility in 1761. With his ennoblement, he took the name Carl von Linné. The noble family's coat of arms prominently features a twinflower, one of Linnaeus' favourite plants; it was given the scientific name *Linnaea borealis* in his honour The shield in the coat of arms is divided into three parts: red, black and green for the three kingdoms of nature (animal, mineral and vegetable) in Linnaean classification; in the centre is an egg "to denote Nature, which is continued and perpetuated *in ovo*." At the bottom is a phrase in Latin, borrowed from Virgil's Aeneid, which reads "FAMAM EXTENDERE FACTIS": we extend our fame by our deeds". After a series of strokes, in

December 1777, he died on 10 January 1778 in Hammarby, his last residence. Despite his desire to be buried in Hammarby, he was interred in Uppsala Cathedral on the 22nd of the same month.

The British botanist James Edward Smith, in 1784 bought the whole collection of Linnaeus' specimens of nature: 14,000 plants, 3,198 insects, 1,564 shells, about 3,000 letters and 1,600 books. Smith founded the Linnaean Society of London five years later

Linnaeus' 17 apostles were his most promising, most committed students, and all of them made botanical expeditions to various places in the world, often with his help, either financial or finding them a place on expeditions. Abroad, the apostles collected and organised new plants, animals and minerals according to Linnaeus' system. Most of them gave some of their collection to Linnaeus when their journey was finished. Many of them died abroad in distant lands committed to their work. These apostles, were the "naturalists", who through Linnaeus's "System of Nature" aimed at constructing a global-scale classification through the description and naming of plants, animals and natural resources. By giving names and identification to the flora and fauna of foreign lands in the language system they were used to, they familiarised the former with their Euro-imperialistic attitudes and created a point of reference. Parallel to this they also produced *order*. Creating order gave them a feeling of hegemony over the land, in a peaceful and passive way that did not involve expansionism or any conquering claims on their part. As stated by Mary Louise Pratt, *the system created a utopian, innocent vision of European global authority, which I refer to as an anti-conquest*. They also served another purpose: they opened up to the European world the value and importance of the countries they visited. They presented aspects of the land to be further assessed in relation with European economic and political growth.

At this point I would like to introduce and talk about one of Linnaeus's apostles, closest to us in Cyprus, Frederic Hasselquist.

Frederic Hasselquist was born in the small village of Tornevalle in 1722, where his father was vicar. He studied and became doctor of medicine in the University of Uppsala and then followed the call of Linnaeus and went off to travel in the Orient. Although Linnaeus failed to finance his trip, Hasselquist managed to receive a free trip from the Levant Company on the boat *Urlika* and with meagre means, he set off for the Holy Land in April 1749. He prepared well for his trip, taking lessons in Arabic and other Oriental languages. Apart from the Holy Land, he visited Asia Minor, Egypt and on the way back stopped in Cyprus.

Cyprus, as in most cases with travellers, was not an intended destination. Hasselquist had to change ships at Larnaca for Rhodes, Chios and back to Smyrna. He anchored at Larnaca on 28 May 1751 and was really not impressed by the town. He was hosted by the Venetian Consul who was also Consul for Sweden (probably Bernardo Carpara, the vice consul) and decided to make use of the few days he had on the island by travelling to some known sites. So, on 9 June, accompanied by a guide and a servant he began his journey to the Mountain of the Holy Cross. They travelled with mules and Hasselquist makes a point about the sturdiness of these Cypriot animals sought after by the nearby countries, especially Syria. It was not the season for botanising but Hasselquist took notes of what he saw: greyish limestone, pure and unmixed, mines of lead, copper and small rock crystal which the Ottomans believed to be diamonds. Many of these were found in the area of Paphos. In the woods he found myrtle, pines, *cistus ladanifera*, *arbutus andrachne* and many oleanders. He commented that the villages in Cyprus were better built than those in the rest of the Levant. The group arrived at a small chapel at the foot of the mountain and began the ascent. At the top was another small chapel with two or three rooms where a monk welcomed them and gave him his cell to sleep in. The air was refreshing and cool, not to be compared with the hot and suffocating air of the town of Larnaca. From those heights Hasselquist admired the view. On one side he could see the Mediterranean until the end of the horizon, while on the other side he could see the whole island.

He wondered why the Franks did not take advantage of this view and cool air but was told that it was extremely difficult to build on the mountain due to its rocky composition.

On 13 June he travelled to Famagusta with an interpreter from the English Consulate and an English merchant from Aleppo. When at sunrise the gates of the city opened, they had to dismount and walk into Famagusta as the Ottomans did not allow Christians to enter on horseback. They then called upon the Governor, according to Hasselquist a miserable creature, to get permission to visit the fortress and the ramparts. The Governor commanded only 2-300 soldiers and all he cared for was to take money from the coffers and into his pockets. The fort was in disrepair and falling apart. About 200 cannons lay about all of them not serviceable. The Catholic Cathedral of Saint Sophia (referring to St Nicolas) was turned into a mosque. It was damaged by earthquake and badly restored by the Turks. Near the threshold lay epitaphs with Latin and Greek inscriptions but Christians were not allowed to go near. Opposite stood the Palace of the Venetian Governors with granite and porphyry columns and the Lion of Venice in relief on parts of the walls. The Palace destroyed, the town houses demolished or deserted, only three hundred Turks living in this town, once the most famous city of Famagusta.

Hasselquist noted that the principal curiosities he found in Cyprus were two species of vipers: the first most poisonous and deadly, the second feeding on small birds, agile and an enemy to the first which it devours. He commented on the mosquito of Cyprus, which gives painful bites at night and on the Lichenes of the mountain of the Holy Cross, categorising them in eight different types.

The commerce of the island concentrated on cotton, silk, hides and rice exports, mainly to Syria and Egypt. There could have been greater quantities but drought, the locust attacks and the tyranny of the Ottomans made these and other products very dear and scarce. Writing to Linnaeus he expands on his theory that the locust could not have flown to Cyprus from neighbouring lands, the distance

being too great for them, but must have attached themselves to vessels. In another letter to his teacher, Hasselquist refers to the wines of Cyprus which, according to the Bible, were introduced by King Solomon to Enggeda or Engradi, a town on the western shore of the Dead Sea. He goes on to write that although the vineyards still exist and the Arabs sell the wine to the Christians, this has degenerated and cannot be compared with the rich wines of Cyprus.

Hasselquist died upon his return to Smyrna on February 9 1752, aged thirty. His journal and collected materials cost much to be redeemed and be repatriated to Sweden, since his debtors presented bills to the amount of 14,000 dalers. Linnaeus and his friend Beck asked Queen Louisa Ulrika for financial assistance and the manuscripts and specimens were salvaged. In 1753 Linnaeus was asked to examine them and remained speechless at the wealth of scientific treasures accumulated by his apostle. He immediately proceeded to publish Hasselquist's diary in several languages, which opened new paths of knowledge to Europe about the nature and cultures of the Orient.

The project *Linnaeus Apostles*, a work of inexhaustible knowledge and inspiration, is the combined effort of many people and institutions. It has been carried out by the IK Foundation and Company in England, supported by a committee for fund raising.

A publication of eight volumes, comprising eleven books and over 5,500 pages under the title "The Linnaeus Apostles –Global Science and Adventure". It is complimented by illustrations and maps and the Encyclopaedia. The texts are set in classic typefaces which recreate the beauty of the originals. The maps follow the original scales.

Such a treasure of a work should not be absent from any library and I am sure all present join me in feeling not only thankful to the Swedish embassy, but also privileged to have these volumes made available to the University of Cyprus .

Thank you.