

## Jacob Bonggren on H.P. Blavatsky



Jakob Bonggren.

It was in her capacity of private secretary to our own dear H. P. B. that I had the pleasure to hear from the Countess Wachtmeister for the first time. It was in October 1888. The Messenger of the Nineteenth Century [H. P. Blavatsky] wrote me some lines herself, busy as she was - lines of good cheer and encouragement that are forever invaluable to me - and then she instructed her private secretary to write more fully.

The Countess greeted me as her countryman; this because she, the daughter of a French father and an English mother, had married the Swedish Count Carl Wachtmeister of Johannishus when he was Ambassador from his country to the court of St. James. Later, he, together with the

Countess, was called back to Stockholm to become Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs....

These days are never to be forgotten when ... [Countess Wachtmeister] acted as private secretary to [H. P. Blavatsky] ... and wrote lengthy, interesting, instructive letters about so many things, e. g., how to recognize elementals and other beings, clothed in finer matter than our own outer, objective bodies.

There went a thrill through me when I read them over and again, "H. P. B. wants me to tell you," "H. P. B. says," "H. P. B. explains to us," etc. etc. Whatever was told in that way was eagerly read and reread and is faithfully kept, together with other treasures of the earlier days of the T. S.

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...When Mme. H.P. Blavatsky appeared among us with her message about a secret Brotherhood of Supermen [the Masters or Mahatmas] whose insight and powers were much greater than those of average humanity, it sounded quite familiar to some of us who already knew the reality of clairvoyance, who had seen feats of real magic and who had heard from those with second sight of "invisibles" that could at will become visible....

So when I read Mr. A.P. Sinnett's dedication of his *Occult World* to a member [Koot Hoomi] of a Brotherhood of Wise Men, I saw no reason to doubt the existence of such nor of Their Lodge, and I hailed the announcement as a sign-post pointing out for me the path to the Teachers that I needed. Consequently I wrote to Mr. Sinnett, care of his publishers in London, asking for further information about the Brotherhood and the Theosophical Society that, as he told, had been founded to train men in spiritual science and to fight materialism and dogmatism.

I got his answer Christmas eve, 1883; I found next summer, through a note in *The Theosophist* magazine, the name and address of the at that time only member of the T.S. in Chicago, Mr. Stanley B. Sexton, and we founded together with Dr. and Mrs. Wm. P. Phelon, on November 27th, 1884, the first T.S. Lodge in Chicago, still existing. We got our charter next year in March and began immediately our activity with less than a dozen members.

Bro. Sinnett had in his book told us, that Mme. Blavatsky was a pupil of the Occult Brotherhood, in fact, its mouthpiece and agent, and that the author himself had contacted members of the Great White Lodge through her.

By reading her *Isis Unveiled* and her magazine *The Theosophist* the desire grew stronger and stronger in me to get into personal touch with this Link in the Occult Chain. And when I heard that she had left India for Europe and there been joined by the Countess Constance Wachtmeister, widow of a Swedish minister of foreign affairs, I hoped for an introduction through her to the Russian woman of mystery, the conundrum of two continents, hailed as a Priestess of Isis by some, violently attacked as a charlatan and a fraud by others.

My hopes were crowned with success when in the summer of 1885 [1887] Mme. Blavatsky made her headquarters in No. 17 Lansdowne Road, London, together with Countess Wachtmeister, who became her private secretary, Bertram and Archibald Keightley and others. From that time on to her death, on May 8th, 1891, I became one of her personal pupils....

There were two different ways by which H.P.B. reached us and taught us. One was by letters and articles, the other without such means. Sometimes she herself wrote; at other times, and more frequently, Countess Wachtmeister or Mr. Bertram Keightley acted as amanuenses. Friends who were occasional visitors at Lansdowne Road kept us also advised of what transpired there, of the studies, of the "phenomena," and of many other things of interest.

Many proofs did I get of what could be called the "wireless telegraphy" of H.P.B., her *direct* way of reaching and instructing her students. This is the favorite method of the Occult Brotherhood... Since the commencement of the probationary term under the Messenger of the Masters, we, her pupils, had much to do with our teacher. Mme. Blavatsky came to us, not as flesh and bones, which are only parts of the physical vehicle and the outer garment, but as *the real individual*.

I used to wake up between two and three o'clock at night and see her leonine head, with the big penetrating eyes looking straight at me in a kind, thoughtful, motherly way. Around her head which seemed to be only a few inches away from my own face, radiated something similar to moonlight. It appeared exactly as if she had looked at me through the porthole of a steamer. The full face was seen in all its details, and it did not fade away suddenly like a flash, but remained unchanged for at least three or four minutes. That I saw the head and face of H.P.B. and no one else, this was out of question, I had at my writing desk at home her photograph, signed by herself; what I saw was the same face in every particular.

At first I wondered what this vision meant; but I did not have to wait long for the explanation. I was told, that this was the way the Masters - and Their chela and Messenger Upasika [HPB] - visited their pupils and looked them over, observing to what extent the chela's aura was brightening up and developing higher qualities.

While many of those who met H.P.B. in the flesh never fully contacted her real Self, hence could have truly said with the poet: "So near, and yet so far," at the same time there is no lack of evidence that her friends and pupils, even those that were thousands of miles away, on other continents, met her more fully and directly, without interference of the physical, and were instructed through her by a system, which seemed quite miraculous at that time, long before the invention of the wireless telegraph, but which now appears quite natural.

It was no unusual occurrence, that when we read some of her writings, or anything else for that matter, or were doing our daily work, or were at rest, some new idea struck us like a flash. It seemed to come out of the void and to have no

connection whatever with our ordinary trend of thought. It seemed as if a strange bird with gaudily colored plumage suddenly had flashed through the air before our eyes. Usually in a few days, sometimes weeks, we had the pleasure, mixed with wonder to see the same idea expressed by H.P.B. either in *The Theosophist*, in *Lucifer*, in *The Path*, or in a private letter. We used to label our experience "thought transference," and we tried to imagine how it had happened.

Our teacher explained it thus. *Thoughts are things*, and certainly not "airy nothings." Thought forms that are sent out reach those who have developed the proper receiving apparatus and who are sufficiently wide awake when the thought forms come along. Thoughts properly received, tabulated, classified, and carefully connected with other thoughts that we had already made our own, make a structure of immense value for the thinker, a foundation on which he can build further by the aid of analogy and of logic.

A day or two before any letter with important information arrived, I used to see, generally when at my desk in the office or in my home, a few lines of writing, usually no more than two, slowly glide to the right before my eyes on a light background, exactly as in the moving picture shows today, parts of letters are projected on the wall in front of us to read. If the hand writing that I saw was familiar to me, I said to myself: "A letter from this friend is coming." If not disturbed, I could easily read some words and sentences. For the projection was plain. I learned by experience, that every time this occurred such a letter was sure to come. There was no need of reading all that was projected, for I knew that I would soon have the original letter in my hands and could then read it at leisure.

The fact that under such a training as this an unfoldment of keener faculties takes place is at present, I think, so well known, that little or nothing needs to be added about it. Indeed, visualizing the physically absent teacher at different times, and also reading part of letters in transition, must be evidence enough of this. Observation on other planes becomes gradually a fact by the refinement of our higher vehicles, by the change of focus and by concentration. What we thus observe not only strengthens our faith in the occult, but it gives us besides an added and invaluable knowledge.

Of this I can here say no more. The teacher warned us: "Do not speak of your experiences to the doubting nor to the jealous. The sceptic will call your visions hallucinations, will try to undermine your faith and drag you back to soul-killing materialism. The jealous will scowl at you and send out dark thought forms to cloud your vision, by the reaction hurting themselves even more than they can hurt you.

You do not want to hurt anybody; therefore, be careful. Only those who have similar experiences will believe you. With such be ready to compare notes."

In her teaching H.P.B. used the method by which she herself had been taught: the method of the Masters. She gave us problems to solve, always with some hints of how to solve them. She told repeatedly that there were different methods of solution; in fact, that there were seven different keys to use, each of them leading to a different result, the results being actual facts on their own plane, all of them. Gradually it dawned upon us that such a statement - bewildering as it appeared to those who wanted every truth stated in only one way and expressed by only one formula - really made everything plainer and easier to comprehend. If we look upon the teachings of H.P.B. and her Masters as giving us problems to solve and hints how to solve them, and not as the placing in our hands of ready-made dogmas to accept on faith, the danger of our becoming simply a new sect will pass away....

What Mme. Blavatsky aimed at was to give us for starting point a working hypothesis in direct opposition to that of the destructive materialistic and literalistic nightmare of her time. A theory founded on constructive faith, hope and charity. But she told us never to stop at the hypothesis, the mere theory, never to be satisfied by faith alone, which would be superstition, but to verify gradually for ourselves the actual facts.

As travelers we have to check up descriptions by visiting in person and seeing for ourselves the places our guide-books describe. What before was mere theory thus becomes knowledge. H.P.B. wanted us to do more than theorize. She wanted us *to know* through our own individual effort, guided by hints of our teachers. For she wanted us, who had been taught and helped, in our turn to help others by teaching them. And none can teach others what he does not know himself.

HOW H.P.B. TAUGHT US, Jacob Bonggren, *The Beacon*, New York, Vol. I, June, 1922, pp. 17-22.