

A COMPILATION OF WORLD OPINION ON THE S.P.R. AND H.P.B.

*STATEMENTS & LACK OF STATEMENTS BY S.P.R. OFFICIALS*

“My attention has been drawn to a leaflet entitled, ‘The Society for Psychological Research and Madame Blavatsky,’ which appears to have been sent to many Members and Associates of our Society. It consists of a ‘letter addressed by Mr. A.P. Sinnett to *Light*,’ and ‘reprinted under the authority of the Council of the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society... I may take this opportunity of removing one or two misapprehensions which Mr. Sinnett has shown in his letter...” (Dr. Hodgson, here in four pages, raises no objection to the issue of official responsibility alluded to by Sinnett, as follows.) THE JOURNAL, S.P.R., vol. II, pp. 109-12, November, 1885.

“In a letter addressed to *Light*, the 12<sup>th</sup> of October, [1885] I protested against the action thus taken by the Psychological Research Society in publicly stigmatizing Mme. Blavatsky as having been guilty of ‘a long-continued combination with other persons to produce, by ordinary means, a series of apparent marvels for the support of the Theosophic movement,’...” A.P. Sinnett, THE “OCCULT WORLD PHENOMENA” AND THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH, p. 3. London, 1886.

“The Society for Psychological Research, it is true, has investigated the phenomenal basis of Theosophy, —the Wisdom Religion, —and has published the results of the investigation.” Frank Podmore, Member, S.P.R. Council and of the Investigation Committee, TIME (London), February, 1886, “Madame Blavatsky and the Society for Psychological Research,” p. 192.

“Now, with the rise of one religion our Society has already had practically to deal. Acting through Mr. Hodgson, ...a committee of the Society for Psychical Research has investigated the claim of the so-called ‘Theosophy,’ of which Madame Blavatsky was the prophetess... and has arrived at the conclusion that it is merely a *réchauffé* of ancient philosophies, decked in novel language, and supported by ingenious fraud.” PHANTASMS OF THE LIVING, by Edmund Gurney, F.W.H. Myers, and Frank Podmore (“published with the sanction of the Council” S.P.R.), Introduction, p. xlvii. June, 1886.

“Space will not permit us to discuss at length the contents of Mr. Garrett’s clever and entertaining booklet. But the nature and importance of his work can perhaps be indicated by the following extracts...” PROCEEDINGS, S.P.R., XL, p. 161. 1895. (In his review, Mr. Frank Podmore makes no note of “the nature and importance” of the following allegations of responsibility made by Garrett in the work reviewed.)

“The important differences between the exposure of Madame Blavatsky’s box of tricks by the Society for Psychical Research, and the present exposure of her successors is, that in this case we have the high-priesthood giving evidence against itself.” “As the Society for Psychical Research long ago remarked, the precise line between rogue and dupe in the Theosophical Society has never been easy to draw.” ISIS VERY MUCH UNVEILED, Being The Story of the Great Mahatma Hoax, pp. 1, 68. Edmund Garrett. Westminster Gazette, 1894.

“Further, Mr. Sinnett, in the *Review of Reviews* for June, 1891, has repeated some statements which he had previously made...” “I shall also take this opportunity to notice some other statements made by Mr. Sinnett in 1886, not long after the publication of my original Report (December, 1885), and which I thought at that time scarcely needed any fresh consideration. I

refer to the pamphlet entitled *The "Occult World Phenomena" and the Society for Psychical Research*, and the volume entitled *Incidents in the Life Madame Blavatsky*." "...Other general statements which I have quoted from Mr. Sinnett are also misrepresentations..." PROCEEDINGS, S.P.R., IX, pp. 129, 130, 133. (In this, his paper of 1893, "The Defence of the Theosophists," Dr. Hodgson did not include in Mr. Sinnett's 'misrepresentations' the following allegations of responsibility which had appeared in the latter's article and books under criticism.)

"...The tide of obliquy turned against her by the Psychical Research Society..." Sinnett on the death of H.P.B., *The Review of Reviews*, June, 1891. "Meanwhile the flood of calumny which is now directed against her is only effective in the estimation of persons who remain outside the circle of her intimate acquaintance, and inoperative with those for whom personal knowledge of her life and character render inherently absurd the conclusion now derived from the circumstantial evidence Mr. Hodgson has so laboriously scraped together, and that the S.P.R. has recklessly hurled against her without waiting to hear how it might be analyzed or elucidated by any competent critic." A.P. Sinnett, *THE "OCCULT WORLD PHENOMENA" AND THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH*," 1886, pp. 45-6.

Certainly the appearance of these memoirs has been precipitated by the attack on Mme. Blavatsky instituted by the S.P.R." *INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF MADAME BLAVATSKY*, p. 312, 1886.

"In the expiring number (March, 1891) of the monthly magazine *Time*, Mrs. Annie Besant made an attack upon my Report... and it seems to me desirable that I should myself, as briefly as possible, point out the chief mistakes made by Mrs. Besant..." Richard Hodgson, "The Defence of the Theosophists," PROCEEDINGS, S.P.R., IX, p. 129. 1893. (Not among the "chief

mistakes”, by Hodgson’s accounting, may be found the following charges against the S.P.R., by Mrs. Besant in her criticized attack.)

“The Society for Psychical Research, which has taken the responsibility of the report, has no knowledge of the facts, other than that afforded by Mr. Hodgson. Everything turns on his veracity.” Annie Besant, TIME, March, 1891.

Mr. Walter Leaf, translator, and Member of Council, S.P.R., refers to “Mr. Solovyoff’s long and excellent abridgement of the Report of the Committee on Theosophical Phenomena, and Mr. Hodgson’s Report issued with it.” A MODERN PRIESTESS OF ISIS, Abridged and Translated on Behalf of The Society for Psychical Research, from the Russian of Vsevolod Sergyeevich Solovyoff, by Walter Leaf, Litt.D. (with Prefatory Note by Professor Henry Sidgwick for the Council, 1895), p. vi. (Apparently this commendation of excellence was made to cover the following remarks of the Russian author, to which neither Leaf nor Sidgwick raised objection.)

“...The investigation by the London Society for Psychical Research of the theosophical phenomena, and the exposure of their fraudulence” (p. 1). “When these phenomena were exposed... by many proofs, particularly by the original proofs and documents of the London Society for Psychical Research, Madame Blavatsky thought herself lost” (p. 8). “After this ‘confession,’ I could, and can, speak at my ease of her verbal admissions to me at Würzburg, which were besides fully confirmed by the investigation of the London Psychical Society... this ‘confession’ of hers is a priceless treasure. In it this deeply interesting and terrible woman is wholly reflected—the woman whom the inquirers of the London Society for Psychical Research have declared to be ‘one of the most accomplished, ingenious and interesting impostors of our time [sic]” (pp. 181, 182, 183). “Her friends... might certainly well be anxious to humiliate their

detectors... To do this it is likely enough that they were prepared to sacrifice no small amount of money. But still neither the London Society for Psychical Research, nor I, nor Madame de Morsier had any cause for uneasiness; it was impossible to cite all of us, her accusers, without at the same time finally ruining Madame Blavatsky and her society” (p. 204).

“Madame Blavatsky unbosomed herself completely... There is much more about the imbecility of her dupes, and of the world in general... of Olcott’s blundering but well-intentioned assistance in ‘phenomena,’ and his acquittal by the S.P.R. of anything worse than stupidity—a verdict which Madame seems to have regarded as a personal insult.” PROCEEDINGS, S.P.R., XI p. 158 (Frank Podmore, in this review of the Solovyoff book, seems to say that the S.P.R. not only convicted H.P.B.—it acquitted her partner, Olcott.)

“I propose to indicate in Appendices (923 A and B) some of the work which the Society for Psychical Research has done in exposing and guarding against fraud and credulity...” F.W.H. Myers, HUMAN PERSONALITY AND ITS SURVIVAL OF BODILY DEATH (Editors, Richard Hodgson, Member of Council, and Miss. Alice Johnson, Member of Council and Editor for S.P.R., 1903), vol. ii, p. 207. “923 A. For accounts of the impostures of Madame Blavatsky and other members of the Theosophical Society, see:-

“(I) ‘Report of the Committee appointed to Investigate Phenomena connected with the Theosophical Society,’ in PROCEEDINGS, S.P.R. (vol. iii, pp. 201-400)” (Ibid. p. 501).

“I think you are under some misapprehension as to the nature of the reports published by the Society in its *Proceedings*. In every Volume of the Society’s *Proceedings* is printed a note to the effect that “the responsibility for both the facts and the reasonings in papers published in the

*Proceedings* rests entirely with their authors.’ The criticisms therefore of Madame Blavatsky which were printed by the Society do not rest on the corporate authority of the Society, but on that of the individual investigator, in the particular case of the late Dr. Hodgson.” Mr. W.H. Salter, “as Honorary Secretary of the S.P.R.”, *THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT*, September 17, 1948, p. 167, Bombay, India.

Re: C.E. Bechhofer Roberts book (see below), under review, “...in dealing with H.P.B.’s relations with the S.P.R. he is guilty of a few inaccuracies. F.W.H. Myers was never ‘Professor,’ and we should like to know Mr. Bechhofer Robert’s authority for the statement that he was at any time a theosophist.” W.H. Salter, *JOURNAL, S.P.R.*, July, 1931, p. 121.

“In bed too she read the interim report of the S.P.R., and penciled on it this comment...” Page 234, *THE MYSTERIOUS MADAME*, The Life and Work of the Founder of the Theosophical Society, by C.E. Bechhofer-Roberts, (1931), reviewer for and member of the S.P.R.

“...As always, the S.P.R. takes no responsibility for the opinions of its officers and members: I write for myself alone... why do you concern yourself with the adverse conclusions of Dr. Hodgson, a plain and uninspired individual? ...Why do you waste your time attacking the Society for *Psychical Research* for a report published by one of its members, in one of its earliest volumes, forty years ago and more? ...I conclude, then, with an appeal for the cessation of the useless and embittered controversies about the character of the supernormal phenomena of Madame Blavatsky...” Theodore Besterman (Editor, Librarian, Research Officer, S.P.R.), *THE ARYAN PATH*, May 1931, pp. 292-298; Bombay, India.

“At first decidedly inclined to believe, and by no means a skeptic, as is shown by his later career, he soon realized that the whole structure of ‘phenomena,’ as these very special phenomena were called, was based on fraud. His report to that effect, though, like all the S.P.R.’s publications, merely a personal one, leaves no room for doubt on this point.” Theodore Besterman, MRS. ANNIE BESANT, A Modern Prophet, p. 156. 1934.

“We have received a leaflet from the ‘Society of the Friends of Madame Blavatsky.’ In which the aim of this Society is stated to be ‘to procure the public withdrawal of the Report of the S.P.R., 1885, that condemned Madame Blavatsky as an imposter.’ The writer of the leaflet, readers of the JOURNAL may be interested to learn, remarks that the S.P.R. treated Madame Blavatsky ‘to the sort of “justice” that is now practised on a gigantic scale by the dictators’, and adds ‘This beats even Hilterism.’” Editor, JOURNAL, S.P.R., xxx, June 1938, p. 240.

“The committee was considerably impressed by the evidence of Mme. Blavatsky and her friends, and in a report, circulated within the Society but not published, declared:

On the whole (though with some serious reserves) it seems undeniable that there is a *prima facie* case for some part at least of the claim made.

“The committee recommended sending an observer to India some months to investigate on the spot. Hodgson, then quite a young man, was chosen for the purpose... The report (*Proc.* iii) which he made on his return of the tangle of fraud, intrigue and credulity he there discovered places Mme. Blavatsky’s claims in an entirely different light.” THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH: An Outline of its History (issued “with the approval of the Council”), by W.H. Salter (President, S.P.R., “solely responsible for the selection of the material

referred to in this sketch and for any comments on it, and, of course, for any opinions expressed.” P. 4), pp. 21-2. London, 1948.

“This is not the place to review the conclusion he reached and embodied in a long report... that the whole case for the genuineness of the phenomena rested on a complex of deliberate fraud and false evidence, inaccuracy of observation and memory, and excessive credulity. Theosophists have always challenged these conclusions which they impute to the S.P.R. notwithstanding its time-honoured policy of never expressing a corporate opinion.” W.H. Salter, THE JOURNAL, S.P.R., September, 1960, p. 330.

“Mr. Mostyn Gilbert referred to *The Hodgson Report on Madame Blavatsky* [SIC] BY A.V. [SIC] Waterman and asked why the book had not been reviewed in the *Journal* in view of the criticism against Hodgson and the Society... Mr. Lambert [Member of Council] and formerly President, S.P.R.] said if a book comes out which smears former members of this Society it does not place any incumbency on our Society as such to do anything about it... The Society holds no corporate opinions under its Charter. He did not think this was borne in mind by people who complain. If stories are put about which are beneath contempt the best way to avoid giving them undeserved publicity is to ignore them. This view was upheld by Dr. Fairfield [Member of Council].” SUPPLEMENT No. 35 to THE JOURNAL, S.P.R., Sept., 1965, p. vii.

#### *EDITORIAL OPINION IN ENCYCLOPAEDIA & REFERENCE WORK*

“Rather foolishly she agreed to an investigation by the British Society for Psychical Research, who, in due course, pronounced her ‘one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting



impostors in history.” John Symonds, COLLIERS’ ENCYCLOPAEDIA, 1965 edition, vol. 4, p. 253.

“Her psychic powers were widely acclaimed but did not survive investigation by the Society for Psychical Research; but this did not deter her large following.” CHAMBERS’ BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY, p. 138. New York and London, 1962.

“...She was active in exhibiting her alleged supernatural powers. These psychic demonstrations were deemed unsatisfactory by the Society for Psychical Research.” THE NEW CENTURY CYCLOPAEDIA OF NAMES, vol. 1, p. 533. Appelton-Century-Crofts, Inc., New York, 1954.

“Many of her so-called miracles demonstrated (1884) as fraudulent by the Society for Psychical Research.” WEBSTER’S BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY, G. and C. Merriman Co., 1953.

“British Society for Psychical Research reported adversely on her pretensions (1884).” AMERICAN BIOGRAPHIES, p. 85. Harper and Bro’s. London and New York, 1940.

“There seems no doubt that she had resort to deceit in order to prove her claims, as was shown by the Society for Psychical Research, in 1884.” EVERYMAN’S ENCYCLOPAEDIA, New and Revised Edition, vol. 2., E.P. Dutton, New York, 1931-2.

“Madame Blavatsky, with Colonel Olcott, went to India in 1878. Shortly afterwards her frauds were exposed through letters written by her and published by Coulomb and his wife, who had been in her service. This was acknowledged by the London Society for Psychical Research, which, in November 1884, sent R. Hodgson, of St. John’s College, Cambridge, to investigate.”

THE CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPAEDIA (16 vol's.), "Theosophy," p. 627. The Encyclopaedia Press, Inc., New York, 1913.

"It is a great credit to his organizing genius that the society became firmly established in New York and that it withstood later the emotional earthquake which the Blavatsky exposure by the S.P.R. meant for Theosophy." Nandor Fodor, THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF PSYCHIC SCIENCE, pp. 268-9.

"The field of the Society was thus a wide one, and it was still further enlarged in later years, when a committee headed by Dr. Richard Hodgson, conducted an enquiry into Theosophy." Lewis Spence, AN ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF OCCULTISM.

#### *PERIODICAL & NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL & REVIEW OPINION*

"Me. Waterman writes with passion and devotion, and his volume has the imprimatur of the President of the Theosophical Society... It is 'vindication' and a reply to the charges made in the S.P.R. report." Allan Angoff, INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PARAPSYCHOLOGY, Spring 1964, p. 212. Published by The Parapsychology Foundation, New York.

"In the wake of the S.P.R. report came wholesale defections.. And though she had read and re-read the unfavorable report of the Society for Psychical Research, she chose to align herself with the Theosophical Society..." W.S. Smith, "Theosophist Helen Blavatsky," THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY, August 14, 1963, pp. 1004, 1005.

"The Society for Psychical Research, London, studied her alleged supernatural powers in 1885; its voluminous report concluded 'We regard her neither as the mouthpiece of seers nor as a mere

vulgar adventuress; we think she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting imposters in history.” Allan Angoff, “The Blavatsky Enigma,” TOMORROW, vol. 8, no. 2, Spring, 1960. Garrett Publications, New York.

“The Society for Psychical Research investigated her claims and did not consider that they were genuine.” Helena Charles, THE CHURCH TIMES, January 30, 1959.

“‘We think,’ reported the Society for Psychical Research in 1885, ‘that Madame Blavatsky has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors of history,’...” THE ECONOMIST, September 26, 1959, p. 1017.

“...The S.P.R. report on her frauds.” Reviewer, TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT, October 23, 1959.

“According to the Society for Psychical Research, which published a lengthy report on the activities of the Theosophical Society, Madame Blavatsky was ‘one of the most accomplished, ingenious and interesting impostors of history.’” Philip Henderson, THE LISTENER, October 1, 1959, p. 539.

“Yet even in her dotage, with the Society for Psychical Research denouncing her, she remained diverting...” Charles Higham, reviewer, THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, 19 December 1959, p. 15.

“The ‘damning’ Report made by the Society for Psychical Research (1885-6) after investigating some alleged ‘phenomena’ when Mme. Blavatsky was living at Adyar in India, did her and the

Theosophical Movement a great deal of harm.” H. Cutner, THE FREETHINKER, 13 November 1959, p. 366.

“More objective and honest assessment can be found in... a monograph on H.P.B. by Dr. Besant, with special reference to the S.P.R. Report (now looked upon as somewhat questionable even in non-theosophical circles)...” Dr. L.J. Bendit, THEOSOPHICAL NEWS AND NOTES (London), Nov.-Dec., 1959, p. 10.

“Madame Blavatsky was an implicit believed in magic, a belief not shared, however, by the Psychological Research Society who denounced her as one of the most accomplished impostors in history.” T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings, “The Decadence of Modern Art,” THE AMERICAN WEEKLY, February 22, 1948, p. 11.

“Wrote the London Society for Psychological Research, in its painstakingly detailed investigation of Theosophist Blavatsky: ‘We regard her neither as the mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventuress; we think she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history.’” TIME, November 11, 1946, “Religion” section. New York.

“She was termed an ‘interesting impostor’ by the British Society for Psychological Research...” NEWSWEEK, November 18, 1946, “Religion,” p. 93.

“Madame Blavatsky was exposed beyond defense... The British Society for Psychological Research summed her up in a sentence: ‘We regard her neither as the mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventuress; we think she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of

the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history.’” Thomas Haynes, reviewer, THE NEW YORK TIMES, Book Review Section, October 27, 1946, p. 6.

“Devastating and still challenging in its admission of this strange woman’s ability, was the formal statement made of her by the British Society for Psychical Research: ‘We regard her neither as the mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventuress; we think she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history.’” THE REGISTER (Central California Edition, Fresno; Editor-in-Chief, Rt. Rev. Msgr. Mathew Smith, Ph.D., L.L.D., Jour. D.), November 24, 1946, p. 4.

“In the Irish quarterly, *Studies*, Father Herbert Thurston, S.J., recalls the judgment delivered by the Society for Psychical Research in 1884, after a careful investigation of the marvellous phenomena alleged to have been produced in India and elsewhere by Mme. Blavatsky, that ‘she achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history.’” THE FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW, November 1932, p. 256.

“A verdict of ‘fraud’ pronounced by the Psychic Research Society was inevitable...” P.W. Wilson, reviewer, THE NEW YORK TIMES, Book Review Section, May 17, 1931, p. 28.

“True, the verdict of the British Society for Psychical Research still is there that he who runs may read: ‘For our own part, we regard her neither as the mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventuress; we think she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history.’” Ernest Sutherland Bates, THE SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE, July 30, 1927, p. 9.

“If everything be true that Dr. Hodgson and the Psychical Research Society say about her, it only heightens the mystery...” Editor, BORDERLAND, October 15, 1894.

Madame Blavatsky was “shown up by the Psychical Research Society...” W.T. Stead, Editor, THE REVIEW OF REVIEWS, June 1891.

“Probably the only mistake the London Society for Psychical Research made in adopting Dr. Hodgson’s report of the Blavatsky imposture was in exonerating Olcott from complicity in that fraud at the expense of his intelligence.” Professor E. Coues of the Smithsonian Institute, Member of the S.P.R., THE NEW YORK SUN, July 20, 1890.

“There is, for example, the Madame Blavatsky of the Psychical Research Society, which, if I remember rightly, has in one of its oracular reports assigned her a distinguished place on the roll of the world’s impostors.” THE LONDON STAR, December 18, 1888.

“After his return, in April, 1885, his full and accurate report of all testimony gathered, with his own conclusions, was presented at two different meetings of the Society which, after having been carefully examined and discussed by the members, embracing many of the best scholars in England, was adopted and published in the last number of their journal...” PRESBYTERIAN BANNER, April 28, 1886, p. 2.

#### *OPINION OF HISTORIANS & “EXPERTS” IN PSYCHICAL RESEARCH*

“It was the London Society for Psychical Research who exposed the founder of Theosophy, Madame Blavatsky, as the blatant sensationalist and unscrupulous trickster she proved to be.”

D.H. Rowcliffe, *ILLUSIONS AND DELUSIONS OF THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE OCCULT* (The Psychology of the Occult, with Forward by Julian Huxley), p. 16. Dover, 1964.

“This led... to the inquiry into her pretensions by the Society for Psychical Research and the final condemnation: ‘For our own part, we regarded her neither as the mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventuress; we think she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history.’” “...Various unsavoury slanders were put into circulation about her past after the damaging report of the Society for Psychical Research...” Dr. Eliza Marian Butler, Schroder Professor of German in the University of Cambridge, *THE MYTH OF THE MAGUS*, pp. 247, 249. The Macmillian Company: Cambridge: At the University Press, 1948.

“It cannot be contended that the S.P.R. was in any way prejudiced in its verdict.” Dr. Hereward Carrington, *THE STORY OF PSYCHIC SCIENCE*, p. 61. New York, 1931.

“One of the earliest public activities of the S.P.R. was the journey to India of their representative, Dr. Richard Hodgson, in order to investigate the alleged miracles which had occurred at Adyar, the head-quarters of Madame Blavatsky... The net result is that while this and similar episodes will always cast a shadow over Madame Blavatsky’s record, it cannot be said that the particular case was finally established. In this, as in other instances, the Society’s standard of evidence, when it wishes to prove fraud, is very much more elastic than when it examines some alleged psychic phenomena.” Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *THE HISTORY OF SPIRITUALISM*, ii, pp. 72-3.

“Mme. Blavatsky is chiefly interesting from our point of view, which must ignore her speculations, as a miracle-worker, Here again the Society for Psychical Research played the part of unfriendly critic...” Joseph McCabe, *SPIRITUALISM: A Popular History from 1847*, pp. 182-3.

“Moreover, the Society for Psychical Research, which for decades had been investigating the phenomena of Spiritism, now turned its attention to those of Theosophy. It sent its expert, Doctor Hodgson, to India to examine at first hand their wondrous claim... His report was so unfavorable and even ‘smashing,’ that the Society proclaimed its belief that the supposed phenomena were nothing but cleverly designed frauds produced by trickery from start to finish.” S.A. Blackmore, S.J., *SPIRITISM: FACTS AND FRAUDS*, (with an Introduction by The Rt. Rev. Joseph Schrembs, D.D., Bishop of Cleveland, Ohio), p. 125.

“And in the course of its existence the Society has found many subjects to investigate of a cognate character, though not actually included in the original scheme. A committee of the Society, for instance, of which Dr. Hodgson was the leading member, examined and exposed the pretended marvels of Mme. Blavatsky and the early Theosophists...” Frank Podmore, *THE NATURALISATION OF THE SUPERNATURAL*, pp. 6-7.

“I wish to add a few words to clear away, if possible, the great misunderstandings that exist in the public mind as to the relations of the S.P.R. and the Theosophical Society. It must be understood that, although the present relations of the two Societies are anything but pleasant and friendly, they were not always so by any means—quite the contrary... the first *Report* issued by the Society was, if anything, most favorable in its tone—rather assuming the genuineness of the phenomena recorded—pointing out the close relation and correspondence of these phenomena



with apparitions and other kindred phenomena which the Society was investigating; and while the *Report* was entirely unbiased one way or the other, it inclined to the attitude of belief rather than to that of skepticism... and it was his [Hodgson's] entirely unfavorable and smashing *Report* that made the S.P.R. change its attitude toward the phenomena, and proclaim its belief that they were nothing but cleverly devised tricks, the supposed phenomena being produced by trickery from start to finish... Now the point I wish to impress upon my readers is this: That the S.P.R. has no quarrel whatever with the Theosophical Society, except in regard to the *phenomena*. The 'philosophy of Theosophy,' so to speak, may be true or false—that is of no interest to the Society, and it has never concerned itself with it. The attack of the S.P.R. was leveled entirely against the *phenomena* observed, and not at all against the philosophical system that Theosophy taught; and that is the fact which the public has never apparently grasped.” Hereward Carrington, *THE PHYSICAL PHENOMENA OF SPIRITUALISM*, pp. 15, 16, 17. Boston, 1908.

“No sooner had I heard of the Report of the Psychical Society, than I determined to go to H.P.B., if anywhere within reach, if only as a silent protest against the action of those most unfair and misguided gentlemen, who had endorsed so foul a slander.” Emily Kislingbury, Secretary, British National Association of Spiritualists, *IN MEMORY OF H.P.B.*, by Some of Her Pupils.

*OPINION OF ANTI-BLAVATSKY & 'NEUTRAL' BIOGRAPHERS, ET AL.*

“H.P.B.... asked whether Annie had read the damning report made by Richard Hodgson for the Society for Psychical Research about her 'phenomena' and about the Coulombs...” Professor

Arthur H. Nethercot, *THE FIRST FIVE LIVES OF ANNIE BESANT*, p. 286; University of Chicago Press, 1960.

“On 31 December, 1885, the Society for Psychical Research published its Report in two hundred pages of five hundred words a page—a substantial work on phenomena, in fact.” John Symonds, *MADAME BLAVATSKY: Medium and Magician*, p. 221 (British edition, Odhams, 1959; see p. 221, American edition, Yoseleff, 1960; see p. 180, paperback edition, Panther Books, Ltd., 1965).

“One might cite the charges made against Madame Blavatsky in 1885 by the Society for Psychical Research.” “Society for Psychical Research labels Blavatsky impostor...” E.A. Greenwalt, *THE POINT LOMA COMMUNITY IN CALIFORNIA 1897-1942*, University of California Publications in History, vol. 48, pp. 155, 232. California, 1955.

“This Report made the S.P.R. cancel their previous one of December, 1884, and they issued a statement accordingly:

““For our own part we regard her (Mme. Blavatsky) neither as the mouthpiece of hidden seers nor as a mere vulgar adventuress; we think that she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished and interesting impostors in history.”” A.T. Baird, *RICHARD HODGSON: The Story of a Psychical Researcher and His Times* (with Forward by Sir Ernest N. Bennett, formerly Member of Council, S.P.R.), p. 10.

“The more obvious one was a report issued in 1885 by the Society for Psychical Research in England upon the genuineness of the Theosophical phenomena, in which fraud was ascribed to

Madame Blavatsky.” T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings, *MONA LISA’S MUSTACHE: A Dissection of Modern Art*, p. 54. 1947.

Index, p. viii, “Society for Psychical Research, ...verdict on H.P.B., 10” “...spectacular miracles ...aroused world-wide curiosity and brought down upon her in 1884 an investigation by the Society for Psychical Research, an organization of English intellectuals predisposed in favor of supernormal phenomena, but insisting on the use of honest methods. Its book-length report pronounced Madame ‘one of the most accomplished, ingenious and interesting impostors in history.’” “Olcott and Sinnett, for once on the same side, realized that H.P.B. had been driven underground by the Society for Psychical Research.” Gertrude Marvin Williams, *PRIESTESS OF THE OCCULT*, pp. 10, 298. New York, 1946. (This is the only biography listed in the bibliography accompanying the article on H.P.B. in the 1967 printing of *THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA AMERICANA*.)

“By the S.P.R. she had been adjudged ‘one of the most interesting impostors in history’...” T.M. Francis, *BLAVATSKY, BESANT AND CO.* (with preface by Herbert Thurston, S.J.), p. 65. 1939.

“The severest crisis through which H.P.B. had to pass was the issue in 1885 of a report by the Society for Psychical Research upon the investigation made in India by their commissioner, Mr. Hodgson.” H.E. Hare and W.L. Hare, *WHO WROTE THE MAHATMA LETTERS?* (London, 1936), pp. 267-8.

“The insistence upon her engaging frankness and sincerity, which is so conspicuous in so many of these appreciations, stands in marked contrast to and perhaps was not uninfluenced by, the very different tone of the verdict delivered a few years before by Professor Henry Sidgwick in the name of the Society for Psychical Research.” The Rev. Herbert Thurston, S.J., Member, S.P.R., “The Foundress of Theosophy,” *STUDIES*, September, 1931, p. 422.

“The Society for Psychical Research had investigated Madame’s phenomena and, in a widely read report, had arraigned her as an impostor.” Gertrude Marvin Williams, *THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM*, p. 185. 1931.

“...The deadly exposures of her by the British Society for Psychical Research and by V.S. Solovyoff.” “...Indictment of Mme. Blavatsky... brought against her by the British Society for Psychical Research in 1885...” Joseph McCabe, *THIS NONSENSE CALLED THEOSOPHY*, pp. 16, 18.

“I was disposed to accept the unfavourable (and unfair) Hodgson report made upon the revelations of Madame Blavatsky by the Society for Psychical Research...” Bernard Hamilton, *ONE WORLD AT A TIME*, p. 63.

“...The report of the Society for Psychical Research cast a cloud over the Theosophical movement...” “The scathing exposure which followed the investigation of the Society for Psychical Research...” Professor Henry C. Sheldon, Boston University, *THEOSOPHY AND NEW THOUGHT*, 1916, pp. 16, 114.

“...We were then a good deal occupied in discussing the heavy tribulations encountered by the Theosophical Society in reference to the event known as the ‘Coulomb incident,’ and the hostile action taken by the Society for Psychical Research.” Edward Maitland, ANNA KINGSFORD: her Life, Letters, Diary, and Work, ii, p. 240. 1913.

“Round this group of facts there has raged a fierce controversy between the ‘Theosophists’ and the ‘Society for Psychical Research’...” “Was she really a physical medium? The Psychical Research Society has answered NO! with some emphasis.” Arthur Lillie, MADAME BLAVATSKY AND HER ‘THEOSOPHY’ (London, 1895), pp. 106, 212.

“The Coulobms had done their work, and the Psychic Research Society had finished what the *Christian College Magazine* had begun.” K.R. Sitaraman, ISIS FURTHER UNVEILED, p. 3. Madras, 1894.

Chapter head: “The Report of the Psychical Research Society.” THEOSOPHY EXPOSED. The Christian Literature Society: Madras, 1893.

“The Psychical Society had for its president Professor Balfour Stewart, Professor Sidgwick was among the vice-presidents, Mr. F.W.H. Myers was a member of the Committee with Professor Sidgwick, and among the honorary members I see the names of Professor Crookes, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. John Ruskin, Dr. A.R. Wallace, and Lord Tennyson. When this is known, madam, it will be futile on your part to ask Englishmen to regard the Society as a band of libellous blackguards, whose Report would only be believed by a ‘fool.’” G.W. Foote, THE NEW CAGLIOSTRO, p. 11 (London, 1889).

*OPINION OF PRO-BLAVATSKY BIOGRAPHERS & HISTORIANS*

“In bucking up Hodgson following his Report, the old S.P.R. sponsored both Solovyoff and W. Emette Coleman to write their scurrilous books of ‘exposure’. Victor A. Endersby, R.C.E., *BATTLE ROYAL OF HODGSON VERSUS HARTMANN VERSUS WATERMAN*, p. iii. 1964.

Section “1. The Investigation of The Society for Psychical Research,” Adlai E. Waterman, *OBITUARY: THE “HODGSON REPORT” ON MADAME BLAVATSKY: 1885-1960*, p. 1. Adyar, India, 1964.

“There is not time to go into that in detail, but the Coulomb attack, publicised by some Christian missionaries, is the foundation of a Report of The Society for Psychical Research which is the keystone of all subsequent defamation of Mme. Blavatsky.” “The Society for Psychical Research decided ...she really had been a spy all the time.” T.H. Redfern, *THE WORK AND WORTH OF MME BLAVATSKY*, pp. 22, 16. Theosophical Publishing House, London, 1962.

Chronological Survey:

“December—official (Second) S.P.R. Report (200 pages) on H.P.B. and phenomena published in the Society’s Proceedings (vol. III, Part IX).” Boris de Zirkoff, compiler, *H.P. BLAVATSKY: COLLECTED WRITINGS*, vol. vi, p. xlv. 1954.

“The present work, therefore, is not a plea for the withdrawal of the so-called Reports of the Society for Psychical Research on H.P. Blavatsky—let the blot on the record of the S.P.R. remain. But no gentleman, worthy of being so called, will associate himself with an organisation

that resorted to conspiracy to denounce an almost defenceless lady...” K.F. Vania, MADAME H.P. BLAVATSKY: HER OCCULT PHENOMENA AND THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH, p. xiv (Bombay, 1951).

“The ‘prosecution’ of Madame Blavatsky by the Society for Psychical Research was for the crime of nonconformity to the ‘accepted’ methods of the nineteenth century.” THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT: 1875-1950, p. 102.

“It has to be remembered against the S.P.R. that they never called upon any qualified person to examine or criticise the Hodgson Report. Nor did they permit the accused person to make any reply. H.P.B. was, as she said, ‘the victim of a most damnable conspiracy’...The S.P.R., not content with the wrong it had already done her, caused these articles [by V.S. Solovyoff] to be translated, abridged, and made into a book by Walter Lead, D. Litt. Which was published on its behalf... he too was swallowed whole by the S.P.R.” Josephine Ransom, A SHORT HISTORY OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, with Preface by G.S. Arundale, President, T.S., pp. 214-5. 1938.

“Neither the Society for Psychical Research, nor the Committee of Investigation, nor Richard Hodgson, its representative in India, ever saw any of the phenomena they presumed to condemn.” C.J. Ryan, H.P. BLAVATSKY AND THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, p. 167 (1937). (One of only two biographies listed in the bibliography to the article on H.P.B. in the current printing of THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA.)

“The fact that two of them [handwriting experts] later changed their verdict to suit the conclusions of the S.P.R. need not be marvelled at.” H.R.W. Cox, WHO WROTE THE MARCH-HARE ATTACK ON THE MAHATMA LETTERS? (The H.P.B. Library, 1937.)

Solovyoff “...wished to dissociate himself from Mme. Blavatsky in the minds of his orthodox Russian friends and circles of readers, because of the attack made on her by the Coulombs and the Society for Psychological Research.” Mary K. Neff, PERSONAL MEMOIRS OF H.P. BLAVATSKY, p. 311 (1937, one of only two biographical references appearing in bibliography to article on H.P.B. in 1967 printing of ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA).

“The world is only too well aware that the S.P.R. branded Madame Blavatsky as an impostor.” Beatrice Hastings, DEFENCE OF MADAME BLAVATSKY, vol. ii, p. 9. 1937.

“When the now monstrous report of the Society for Psychological Research was published in 1885, the public accepted the report as absolutely reliable, for much evidence seemed to be carefully presented.” C. Jenarajadasa, President, The Theosophical Society, DID MADAME BLAVATSKY FORGE THE MAHATMA LETTERS? (1934), p. 1.

“He stood unflinchingly through the discreditable attack on Madame Blavatsky by the Society for Psychological Research...” REMINISCENCES OF COLONEL OLCOTT by Various Writers, 1932.

“The attack of the S.P.R. upon Theosophy and its leaders fell with great force upon the followers of the movement...” Dr. Alvin Boyd Kuhn, THEOSOPHY, Studies in Religion and Culture under the editorship of the Department of Philosophy of Columbia University, 1930, p. 180.



“When we view today, after so many years, and after all the actors in the affair are dead, the methods of the English Society for Psychical Research in their attack on H.P.B., were filled with a moral nausea.” Dr. E.R. Corson, *SOME UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF HELENA PETROVNA BLAVATSKY*, p. 63.

“...The Society for Psychical Research published their condemnatory Report on the phenomena connected with the Theosophical Society...” “Alas! It was precisely these... which aroused the antagonism of the scientific world represented by the Society for Psychical Research, and led to their prejudged, unscientific, and illogical ‘Report’...” William Kingsland, *THE REAL H.P. BLAVATSKY*, pp. 139, 197. (London, 1928).

“One cannot, then, but speculate as to what would have been the result if the S.P.R., instead of thus rejecting the stigmatising on the most superficial grounds the wholly exceptional phenomena presented to them, had treated the matter sympathetically—albeit with every natural reservation of judgment—and had bestowed upon it the same amount of patient care and investigation which they afterwards bestowed upon certain mediums—Eusapia Palladino, for example.” William Kingsland, *WAS SHE A CHARLATAN? A Critical Analysis of the 1885 Report of the Society for Psychical Research on the Phenomena connected with Mme. H.P. Blavatsky* (London, 1926), p. 56.

“At the actual time of the exposure by the Society for Psychical Research, the ensuing scandal drove most of the best brains, most of the eminent and gifted men who had joined the Society or expressed their interest in the movement, to sever every connection with Theosophy. Thus F.W.H. Myers and Professor Richet regarded Madame Blavatsky as a charlatan exposed...” G. Baseden Butt, *MADAME BLAVATSKY*, pp. 75-76. (Riders, 1926.)

“The world which is always willing to listen more to condemnation than to praise has naturally remembered H.P.B. far more by the judgment of the S.P.R. than by the judgment of those who investigated facts without any bias against occultism.” C. Jinarajadasa, THE GOLDEN BOOK OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, 1875-1925 (Adyar, India), p. 91.

“You furnish in your own pages convincing and conclusive reasons against accepting anything that emanates from the S.P.R. without substantial confirmation from independent and trustworthy sources... And yet you actually ask us to accept Hodgson and the S.P.R.’s Report on H.P.B. Hardly!” Mrs. Iona Davey, Hon. Sec. (for the Council of\_ The Blavatsky Association, to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, April 15, 1924, PROCEEDINGS, B. Assoc., i, p. 17.

“New generations of theosophists it is true have arisen in the thirty years and more that have elapsed since her downfall, and by the vast majority of these her memory has been so entirely re-gilded that the investigation and conclusion of the Psychic Research Society, respecting her, are simply forgotten or ignored, as in the main they deserve to be... the S.P.R. attack...” A.P. Sinnett, THE EARLY DAYS OF THEOSOPHY IN EUROPE, pp. 63, 69.

“It is to Mr. Charles Johnston (I.C.S., retired), the learned Orientalist, that that we owe the most able and best reasoned expose of this Report and the methods of the Society for Psychical Research that has ever been written... ‘...not one in ten thousand of those who to this day believe that the S.P.R. “exposed” Madame Blavatsky ever read the Report. As the verdict fell in with their prejudices they—(a) accepted the view of the Society, which (b) accepted the view of its Committee, who (c) accepted the view of its agent, who (d) never saw the phenomena he

professed to investigate.” Alice L. Cleather, H.P. BLAVATSKY: HER LIFE AND WORK FOR HUMANITY, pp. 52-3. (Calcutta, 1922.)

“Mr. Hodgson’s report would have had no greater nor more lasting effect upon the destinies of the Society and its Founders than any other wrong-headed reading of the dial on which history, moment by moment, records itself in the life of the time, had not the committee, and through them the Society for Psychical Research, lent the weight of its great name to the findings he had made.” Claude Bragdon, EPISODES FROM AN UNWRITTEN HISTORY, p. 51. 1910.

“Sixteen years and a half have gone since Helena Petrovna Blavatsky passed away from this mortal world. Yet attacks are still made upon her veracity, upon her character, and good and sympathetic men still turn away from the Theosophical Society with: ‘Oh! I do not care to belong to it; it was founded by Mme. Blavatsky, who was convicted of fraud by the Psychical Research Society.’” Annie Besant, President, T.S., H.P. BLAVATSKY AND THE MASTERS OF THE WISDOM, p. 3. 1907.

“...The S.P.R. made its merciless attack upon H.P.B., our Masters, and ourselves...” “If the S.P.R. had had to convert the public to a belief that ran counter to its preconceptions... does any sane man believe that they would have brought forward so weak a case as this, and so hastily risked the indignant censure of a more enlightened posterity?” “As for the victim of the S.P.R., she is beyond their reach, and can smile at their most malicious attempts to do her harm.” Col. H.S. Olcott, OLD DIARY LEAVES, vol. iii (1904); PP. 100, 111.

“Now, the charges of fraud made against H.P.B. are based mainly upon the statements of Monsieur and Madame Coulomb, supported by the Blavatsky-Coulomb letters, as they are

called, and upon the report, largely founded thereon, of the Society for Psychical Research, or, to be more accurate, upon that of Mr. Hodgson, which the Society somewhat hastily, if not unwarrantably, adopted...” S. Studd, CONCERNING H.P.B., pp. 1-2. (1903)

“The quiet, studious life that I have tried to describe continued for some little time, and the work on *The Secret Doctrine* progressed steadily, until, one morning, a thunderbolt descended upon us. By the early post, without a word of warning, H.P.B. received a copy of the well-known *Report of the Society for Psychical Research...* the malignant attack of the Society for Psychical Research on H.P.B.....” The Countess Constance Wachmeister, REMINISCENCES OF H.P.B. AND “THE SECRET DOCTRINE,” pp. 25, 59, London, 1893.

#### *MME BLAVATSKY ON THE S.P.R. & THE COMMITTEE REPORT*

“...For our own part, we regarded her neither as the mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventuress; we think she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history.’

“...The verdict has gone around the world. It has been welcomed with avidity by all the garrulous and tattling journals, and has received the most friendly hospitality in the pages of the so-called scientific and philosophic magazines; it has provided high-sounding talk for some more or less literary pamphlets, and has been hailed and commented on by the swarming penny-a-liners. But why did they choose that sentence from the Hodgson decree? It is perfectly simple. That decree comes from a scientific Society, from that *Society for Psychical Research* which lays claim to separate the good grain from the chaff, to recognise the true from the false, and so to establish the reign of peace and brotherhood among the English materialists and spiritualists. Has not its founder and chief, Mr. Myers, been a member of the Theosophical Society for three years? Does

not everyone in London know that he was one of the first in the *London Lodge of the Theosophical Society* to be ‘fooled,’ since they will have it so, and that there was a time when he believed fully in all those phenomena? The latter are now called ‘tomfooleries’ (*niaiseries*), IN the *Revue Scientifique*, whose editor is another ex-Theosophist who has withdrawn in time, as in a comic opera, to save the face of Science.<sup>1</sup> Ergo, the verdict is loudly proclaimed; Madame Blavatsky is condemned by default.” “It must, however, have been a very strong motive that, having first driven me to invent Adepts and a mighty Fraternity in the Himâlayas, compelled me afterwards to forge letters in the names of several of them... These are the letters to whose production I am accused of devoting my time and my life. Why? Well, the sagacious Mr. Hodgson discovered the reason. According to him, it was *for pure patriotism* and as a spy of the Russian Government that I invented the whole thing. That accusation leaves much to be desired, because it explains nothing. In what way could the Hindu and Buddhist Adepts, living in the Himâlayas, ever benefit my country? How could a bell-sound in the shoe of an Anglo-Indian or a cigarette passing from a pocket into a piano be of any use to a Russian Army on its way to break into Afghanistan? So many mysteries merely complicate the chaos of *scientific explanations* of

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<sup>1</sup> “Never having had the honor of knowing Charles Richet [President of the S.P.R., 1905], it is not I who have fooled him in making him enter the Society, but rather two ardent ex-Theosophists, a Parisian lady and a Russian. The latter [V.S. Solovyoff], having sworn to all Theosophical Paris that one of the Adepts (*Mahâtman*s) had appeared to him in the astral body in his own room. had talked to him for nearly an hour, while seated on a chair before him, and had reappeared again ten minutes after leaving in order to prove that what he had seen was no dream, it follows that I am not the only one who has invested oriental Adepts—if they are mere fictions. The gentleman thus visited thinks he can get out of the scrape *now* by putting the public on the wrong scent. He asserts to everyone that it is Madame Blavatsky who had *hypnotized* him and had forced him by that method to perceive that scene. If this were so, the illusion having lasted nearly an hour, it would be rather illogical to deny me the possession of extraordinary powers. The phenomenon would only be the more remarkable. The *Review Scientific*, finding that *The Occult World* ‘might provide the subject of a curious study of the psychological condition of its author and of his heroes’ (No. 16, April, p. 503), would have to begin by making this study of the two Theosophists who recruited its editor into the ranks of the Theosophical army, before permitting him to undertake it. Feminine gossip and personalities do not agree well with exact science.”

See the 1885 Committee Report, p. 393 ff.

the Psychological Society. From Cape Comorin to the heights of Simla there was one loud guffaw when this accusation was read. There is not an Anglo-Indian who does not know it to be an absurdity. The English in India may say *mea culpa* for the many alarms created by their chronic fear of the Russians, but they have never been so stupid as to believe a motive of this nature. They know the contrary far too well. During the first three years I passed in India, the Viceroy himself did not have such a fine escort of disguised police detectives as those who shadowed me night and day. Everywhere I went I was followed and watched. Finally, the war ended and I was left in peace. Convinced that there was nothing to discover, it only remained for them to pay the bills. It was Sir Frank Souter, head of the Bombay police, and Sir Alfred Layall, at Simla, who admitted this to me personally.” H.P. Blavatsky, “Judges or Slanders?”, *Le Lotus*, Paris, vol. i, no. 4, June, 1887, translated for H.P. BLAVATSKY: COLLECTED WRITINGS, vol. vii, pp. 330, 331-2, 340-1.

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“But it seems possible that in part it may have been due to some power possessed by Home in common with other mediums. Madame Blavatsky appears to have possessed on occasion the power of causing the persons in her train to see visions and reams dreams. Frank Podmore, MODERN SPIRITUALISM, A History and a Criticism, ii, p. 268.