

‡MARK BRAHAM. *JEWS DON'T HATE*. Nelson XXXIV + 140p. Reviewed by Emile Marmorstein*.

The number of new friends that "Heaven at Bay"† brought me has perhaps been the most abiding gain that I derived from its publication. When Mark Braham first contacted me in the autumn of 1970, I soon discovered that he had been, though later, at the same school and university and, what surprised and pleased me more, that he was nevertheless a devout member of our community of belief and practice. One result of this encounter was that I read the book that Nelsons had commissioned him to write—chapter by chapter straight from the typist. I came to regard it as a privilege—and do so now, even more intensely, after re-reading this fascinating account of a secularly cultivated English Jew's pilgrimage to Truth. For, by Divine grace, he can write:

"After the age of about twenty-five I ceased being a Jew in a negative sense, and commenced the slow and laborious trek that leads to Orthodox or Torah Judaism; I became a Jew by conviction and made a not always successful attempt to be a Jew in the full sense of the word understood by traditional Judaism. To me, this conviction did not include Zionism. I became a Jew in the positive sense that I would not have chosen to be anything else even if the opportunity existed."

The writer of those firm and humble lines was unlikely to drift from laxity into a cosy sociological routine with religious overtones. He embarked on a veritable voyage of spiritual exploration; with prodigious industry, he devoured a large part of the literature available to him in English; and, applying to it an acute and judicious mind as well as a faithful heart, he distilled from it a coherent notion of the mainstream of Jewish thought throughout the ages. This course naturally led him into collision with the secularizers, who are by and large ready to tolerate observant Jews as mild and harmless eccentrics provided they share the Jewish connotations of their own substitutes for Judaism.

Now Braham prospered in Australia, so that he could easily spare time not only for his reading but also for writing a regular column in the *Australian Jewish Herald*, a "ninety-year-old Melbourne-based weekly newspaper with a national distribution." He regarded his journalism "as a communal duty, donating my salary—such as it was, as the Jewish press is not lavish with its writers—to various charities, mainly the United Israel Appeal." (A few pages later he tells how he sent his son as a "volunteer" to a Kibbutz after the June, 1967, war.) But all this could

hardly compensate for his independence; and a ferocious campaign, which culminated in the newspaper's demise, was launched against him. Yet though his forum was destroyed, he was not silenced. The episode, which plays a purely introductory role in his book, spurred him on to a profound analysis of Zionism and a forthright exposition of its content.

For all the vigour and clarity of his style, he is charitable. Indeed, his fifth chapter (entitled "Greek Tragedy") which is devoted to Herzl, is a model of compassion; but, unlike the writings of Herzl's religious admirers, it has substance as well—it is with real skill that Braham unravels the "conspiracy of silence that appears to surround his personal life." Furthermore, he is painstakingly fair, subjecting the claims and conduct of all parties to the present political dispute, in equal measure, to the glare of his acute critical faculties. For instance, he notes that Arab nationalism bears the same relationship to Islam as Zionism to Judaism, with "imperialism" in the former serving as the counterpart to "anti-semitism" in the latter; but he adds: "you can search Zionist literature of the past seventy-five years and not find anything to match even the mildest anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish diatribes emanating from Arab sources"; and his exposure of the attitudes of the Great Powers to the problems is just as devastating.

Altogether, I can warmly commend this book as the work of a brave, honest, intelligent and able writer and as a source of illumination in the midst of the elaborately contrived obscurity in which the Holy Land continues to languish. The reflective reader will find it stimulating, the unreflective shattering.

* The reviewer, Emile Marmorstein, has had the advantage of a strikingly varied background: his education at St. Paul's School, London, and St. John's College, Cambridge; a grandson of the Chief Rabbi of the third largest community in Hungary, son of Professor Arthur Marmorstein, and brother of Bruno Marmorstein, Chairman of Governors of Jews College, London; pre-war experience as a journalist in Jerusalem; headmaster of Shamash Secondary School, Baghdad 1936-9; official of the BBC (External Services) 1941-71; lecturer in Arabic at Jews College; part-time tutor at the Open University.

† "Heaven at Bay: The Jewish Kulturkampf in the Holy Land", Oxford University Press, 1969.

‡ Mr. Mark Braham has requested the Society to publish this Review with the object of correcting the impression which may have been conveyed by certain references to him appearing in the recent publication "75 Years". The Society has agreed to the request and publishes this Review accordingly.