Hsia also points out that as the blood libel declined, witch trials increased. Women, not Jews, were now seen as the representatives of the demonic in the community.

Jewish accounts of the blood libel also assume that often it was purely a cynical pretext. The Jews would naturally denigrate their antagonists' religiosity; but I think that Hsia errs equally in underestimating the role that active deceit and sheer cruelty played in ritual murder accusations.

Hsia's book suggests a liberal interpretation of Reformation history. The sixteenth-century German Jews and their Lutheran and Habsburg allies were successful in their lobbying efforts against myth and prejudice. But the ambiguous heritage of German liberalism requires the author to look beyond his story's optimistic conclusion. The memory of the Holocaust lies heavy over any study of German anti-Semitism. Hsia cautiously evokes that memory in the book's first pages, bringing an example of the deep-seated anti-Semitism of even enlightened eighteenth-century Germans.

The Reformation, Hsia writes, did not "eradicate the long tradition of Christian anti-Judaism. . . . [Rather] Lutheran pastors concentrated their attack . . . on Jewish injury to the Christian moral economy. The image of the Jewish moneylender eventually replaced that of the Jewish magician" (pp. 147–148). Hsia also notices the perpetuation of anti-Jewish myths, including the blood libel, by the Counter-Reformation church and in German folk culture.

We should also notice the split between Habsburg legal and Lutheran religious reforms. Lutheranism at an early stage disengaged itself from the movement for political reform. Hsia's story has two heroes; that these two heroes were at cross-purposes, were indeed enemies, suggests a weakness crucial for later history.

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Michael Stanislawski. *For Whom Do I Toil? Judah Leib Gordon and the Crisis of Russian Jewry.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. 263 pp.

For Whom Do I Toil? is a somewhat puzzling title for this incisive study of the nineteenth-century Russian Jewish poet Judah Leib Gordon. It

echoes, of course, the title of one of Gordon's most famous poems. But, as Stanislawski himself shows, this "brooding and poignant" poem, which he wrote in 1871, does not really epitomize its author's basic outlook on life. Frequently misconstrued, it is in fact "but the most successful of Gordon's periodic ponderings on the meaning of his life, on the frustration he felt as a lonely campaigner for a moderate reform in the life and culture of the Jews of Russia." *For Whom Do I Toil?* makes it quite clear, however, that Gordon spent far less of his time brooding about his frustrations than campaigning for reform. A title that better summed up his life might therefore have been borrowed from another of Gordon's famous poems: "Awake, My People!"

As this lucidly and vividly written book demonstrates, Gordon's activities as an educator, a communal functionary, a publicist, and a poet were very largely directed to rousing Russian Jewry from what he perceived to be its self-destructive backwardness. Among other things, he prepared textbooks for state-run Jewish schools, pioneered in the establishment of modern schools for Russian Jewish women, championed Haskalah in the Russian Jewish press, and, most memorably, wrote satirical poems aimed at undermining the authority of the traditional rabbinate. Gordon's deepest desire was to see Russian Jews follow in some, but not the more extreme, of the footsteps of their Western coreligionists. The best model Western Jewry had to offer was, he believed, that of moderate reform, the kind that was propounded by Zacharias Frankel and exemplified by the Breslau Jewish Theological Seminary.

But why only moderate reform? What was the source and nature of Gordon's enduring commitment to a fairly traditional form of Judaism? This was a question eventually posed by his friend-turned-critic, Moshe Lilienblum. As Stanislawski notes, Lilienblum maintained that he could not find a single poem in Gordon's entire oeuvre that praised anything Jewish. Nor, he complained, did Gordon ever say anything that would inspire the young to stay within the Jewish fold.

The ultimate source of Gordon's faith is difficult to locate. In spite of his deep attraction to things German-Jewish, he had, it seems, no philosophy of Judaism, indeed, no noticeable inclination to philosophy at all. Nor does one find in his writings any trace of a pious sensibility, anything evincing a fear or a love of God. Gordon's God is very, very remote. In his epic poems, for instance, protagonists in extreme difficulties frequently call upon Him, but He never responds. It seems that Gordon had an especially intense distaste for the idea of particular providence.

The closest thing to a theology, in Gordon's writings, is an affirmation of

a more general sort of divine providence. In a manifesto entitled "House of Jacob, Come Let Us Walk," Gordon unequivocally identified the traditional idea of redemption with the Jews' attainment of salvation through self-improvement and integration into European society. This was not, as Stanislawski observes, "simply an attempt to secularize the process and meaning of redemption," but a "radical identification between God's will and Western European mores, between Isaiah's prophecy and the promises of the Enlightenment."

While this manifesto may have indicated that Gordon was, as Stanislawski puts it, pondering profound problems, it cannot be said that he presented, here or elsewhere, any profound solutions to them. It is impossible to discern the source of Gordon's faith in providential support for human progress. Nor is it possible, on the basis of his writings, to understand why this kind of faith in providence should have led to a call for moderate and not radical reform.

Whatever the source of Gordon's fundamental beliefs, he adhered to them steadfastly, even in the aftermath of the pogroms of 1881. In the most interesting chapters of his book, Stanislawski shows how he struggled to uphold his vision of the future during the early 1880s, at a time when some of his erstwhile allies were abandoning any hope for the improvement of the situation of the Jews in Russia. In spite of all that had happened, he continued to believe and to argue that Russian Jewry could be saved not through emigration to America, colonization in Palestine, or socialist politics, but through a cleansing and rejuvenation of Judaism itself.

Ultimately, however, even Gordon began to have severe doubts about the tenability of his position. By the mid-1880s, Stanislawski tells us, his faith was all but shattered. He found that confidence "in the inevitable victory of righteousness and reason was . . . difficult, if not impossible, to sustain." Hovering on the brink of despair, he asked himself, once again, "For whom and for what should I toil?" It is with an eye to this last bout of near despair, it seems, that Stanislawski chose the title for his book. Yet, as Stanislawski himself proceeds to tell us, Gordon still had an answer to this question. To the end of his life, he "refused to succumb; he persisted in his irremediable fidelity to a vision of Western humanism blended with Jewish dignity." He remained "convinced to the end that his hoped-for synthesis was possible." Without publicly acknowledging his private doubts, he continued to argue resolutely—if somewhat intermittently—that the Haskalah had not failed, that its program was still intact.

It is precisely because Gordon retained to the end at least some of his

faith in his earlier ideals that Stanislawski succeeds in achieving one of his principal goals in writing *For Whom Do I Toil?* He helps to remind us that the Haskalah was not swept away by the pogroms of 1881, and that well after the events of that year there were still Jewish thinkers in Russia who, in his words, "insisted on the need for the Jews to reform themselves in a moderate, Western fashion." In doing so, he has made a significant contribution to the disentanglement of history from ideology.

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