I trust will long remain to you, to your sister and brothers, and to all of us, a providential leading star on our path of life. When you look at her and turn over in your thoughts all the immeasurable good she has lavished upon you by her constant self-sacrificing devotion as long as you live, and when that reflection makes your heart and eyes overflow with gratitude, love, and veneration, then you feel God and are godly.

This is all I can tell you about religion, all I know about it; but this will remain true, as long as one man will exist in the creation, as it has been true since the first man was created.

The outward form of religion your teacher has given you is historical, and changeable like all human ordinances. Some thousands of years ago the Jewish form was the reigning one, then the heathen form, and now it is the Christian. We, your mother and I, were born and brought up by our parents as Jews, and without being obliged to change the form of our religion have been able to follow the divine instinct in us and in our conscience. We have educated you and your brothers and sister in the Christian faith, because it is the creed of most civilized people, and contains nothing that can lead you away from what is good, and much that guides you to love, obedience, tolerance, and resignation, even if it offered nothing but the example of its founder, understood by so few, and followed by still fewer.

By pronouncing your confession of faith you have fulfilled the claims of society on you, and obtained the name of a Christian. Now be what your duty as a human being demands of you, true, faithful, good; obedient and devoted till death to your mother, and I may also say to your father, unremittingly attentive to the voice of your conscience, which may be suppressed but never silenced, and you will gain the highest happiness that is to be found on earth, harmony and contentedness with yourself.

I embrace you with fatherly tenderness, and hope always to find in you a daughter worthy of your, of our, mother. Farewell, and remember my words.

NOTE

1. Abraham Mendelssohn (1776–1835), son of Moses Mendelssohn. A deist and a rationalist by conviction, Abraham brought up his children—Fanny and Felix—as Protestants in order to improve their social opportunities. In 1822 he and his wife also embraced Christianity "because it is the religious form acceptable to the majority of civilized human beings." He wrote this letter to his daughter Fanny (1805–1847) upon her confirmation into the Lutheran church.

HEINRICH HEINE

6. A Ticket of Admission to European Culture (1823, c. 1854)¹

From the nature of my thinking you can deduce that baptism is a matter of indifference to me, that I do not regard it as important even symbolically, and that in the circumstances in which it will be carried out in my case it will have little significance for others

likewise. For me perhaps its significance will be that I can better devote myself to championing the rights of my unfortunate brethren. And yet I hold it beneath my dignity and a stain on my honor to undergo conversion in order to obtain a position in Prussia. Dear old Prussia! I really do not know what course to take in this bad situation. I'll turn Catholic yet for spite, and hang myself.... We are living in sad times. Scoundrels become our "best," and the best must turn soundrel. I understand well the words of the psalmist: "Lord, give us our daily bread, that we blaspheme not Thy name. . . ."

The baptismal certificate is the ticket of admission to European culture. . . . My becoming a Christian is the fault of those Saxons who suddenly changed saddles at Leipzig, or of Napoleon, who really did not have to go to Russia, or of his teacher of geography at Brienne, who did not tell him that Moscow winters are very cold.

NOTES

1. Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), German-Jewish poet and essayist. In 1825 he was baptized a Lutheran, with the hope that his conversion would facilitate the gaining of a doctorate and the pursuit of a career as a civil servant or academic. His repeated attempts to secure a position were, however, futile. Finally, after having failed to obtain a promised chair at the University of Munich and fearing police action against himself because of his political satire, he left Germany for Paris in 1831.

2. At the battle of Leipzig, October 1813, the Saxon troops fighting with the French defected to the allies, and thus ensured the defeat of Napoleon.

LUDWIG BOERNE

7. Because I Am a Jew I Love Freedom (1832)

My well-meaning friend in the Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung says: no one should forget that I am a Jew. Unlike others, however, he does not mean this as a reproach; on the contrary, he recalls the fact as an excuse for me, or even in praise of me. He says: I am justified in being resentful of the Germans who have oppressed and disgraced my people; not hatred, but love has distorted my view. . . . It is miraculous! I have experienced it a thousand times, and yet it is always new to me. Certain people object to my being a Jew; others forgive me; still others even praise me for it; but everybody remembers it. The Jewish mystique seems to have cast its spell on them, they are unable to free themselves from it. And I know fairly well where this evil spell comes from. The poor Germans! Living on the first floor, and oppressed by the seven stories of the higher classes, it relieves them of their anxiety to speak of people who live even further down, in the basement. That they are not Jews consoles them for the fact that they are not even court counselors. No, that I was born a Jew has never made me bitter against the Germans and has never distorted my perspective. I would not be worthy of the sunlight if