

### PIETISM IN THE PALATINATE

The great majority of the early Brethren were natives of the Electoral Palatinate—an irregularly shaped section of Germany south and west of Frankfurt-Main along the Rhine River valley. The particularly disturbed religious and political situations there have been previously described. With the established churches engaged in bitter in-fighting, it is not surprising that some of the populace would be receptive to new religious ideas promising more genuine spirituality. The repeated invasions and continuing threats of war disrupted the conservative forces of tradition and custom. Wandering prophets proclaimed the impending end of the world. The times were insecure and unsettled, the burdens of the sovereign crushing, the future dark.

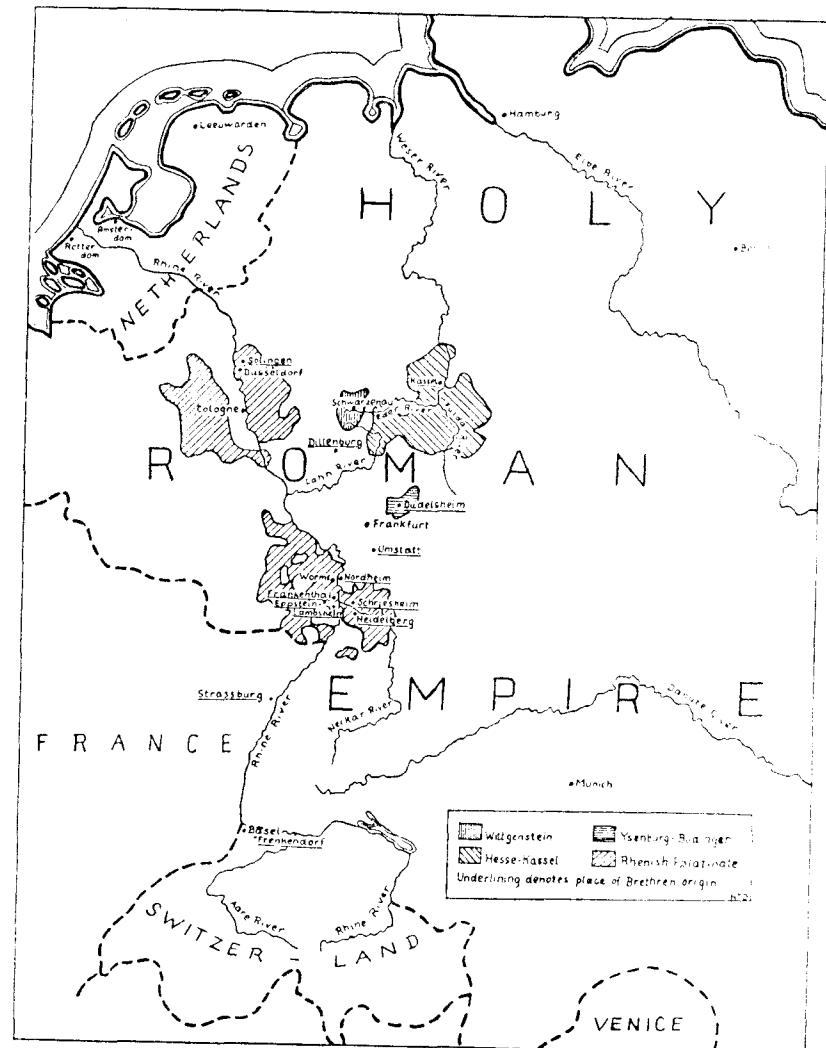
The records of the Palatine government (now kept at Karlsruhe) show that separatist activities began in the Palatinate at the very beginning of the century.<sup>2</sup> In 1702 Mathew Baumann openly attacked the established church in his home Lambsheim near Frankenthal.<sup>3</sup> He early migrated to Pennsylvania, where he became the leader of the "New Born," who believed that they had become perfect and therefore could not sin. In 1705, four Lambsheim citizens—John Traut, Jacob Bossert, Jacob Berg, and Adam Pfarr—refused to swear oaths of allegiance because they said that oath-taking was forbidden in the Bible. They were accused of Pietism and were to be imprisoned until they were willing to profess themselves again to one of the established churches.<sup>4</sup> These men later appeared in the Marienborn area east of Frankfurt, where Bossert and Traut became Brethren.

It was, however, with the appearance of Ernest Christopher Hochmann von Hochenau in the Palatinate in 1706 that a real movement began which caused the church and the government authorities much concern. Hochmann came first to Schriesheim, five miles north of Heidelberg on the Bergstrasse, at the invitation of Alexander Mack.<sup>5</sup> A miller by trade, Mack (1679-1735) was to become the organizer and leader of the Church of the Brethren. He had become acquainted with Hochmann during visits to meetings in the Marienborn area.

### THE PIETISTS IN SCHRIESHEIM AND MANNHEIM

#### *Activity in Schriesheim*

A report from the Reformed church council at Heidelberg to the Palatine government gave warning of the evangelistic activity of Hochmann, Mack, and the others.



Map by Hedda Durnbaugh

Where the Brethren Originated

European Origins of  
the Brethren

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In Mennonite College  
Library, Goshen, IN

9/4/2000