

Society for the Study of the History of the Brethren Movement in Germany

In 1995 historians of the Brethren assemblies in Germany met together to found a society for the study of the history of the Brethren Movement (*Arbeitskreis Geschichte der Brüderbewegung*).

The **aims** of this society are:

- a. running an **archive** with documents from the Brethren-Movement in Germany,
- b. publishing **literature** in the field of Brethren-History and
- c. organizing **conferences** on topics related to the history of the brethren.

Members of the society belong to the different wings of the German Brethren-movement. They are teachers of the Bible-Institute Wiedenest in the Rhineland and individuals interesting in the research of the Brethren Movement. The society meets two times a year.

The **archive** is located at the Bible-Institute Wiedenest in the city Bergneustadt, near Cologne. It contains books and pamphlets, mainly written by members of the assemblies in Germany. In addition there are more special sections in the library of the Institute, which are relevant for research, for example the *Erich-Sauer-Archive*, a special collection of Brethren journals, some files with letters and material on the Brethren in the Third-Reich etc. The archive is open for the public (Contact: borner@wiedenest.de).

The Society functions as editor of a special series of **books** on the Brethren history. The books are published by *Jota-Publishing House* in Hammerbrücke, Germany (www.jota-publikationen.de).

In the last years we organized two **conferences**, both at the Bible-Institute at Wiedenest. One conference in 1998 in memory of *Erich Sauer*, well-known lecturer at Wiedenest and author of many books, the other in 2000 in memory of *John Nelson Darby*. In fall 2003 we were involved at a larger conference in Dillenburg in memory of the 150th anniversary of the German Brethren Movement. In 2005 we host the BAHN-conference.

The Brethren Movement in Germany starts in 1853 in Wuppertal-Elberfeld. Some earlier assemblies in the area of Dillenburg and Rhineland later joined this exclusive wing of the movement, which became the largest brethren group in Germany. This movement became well known by its own bible-translation, the „Elberfelder-Bibel“, edited by John Nelson Darby, Carl Brockhaus and Julius Anton v. Poseck, who later emigrated to England. The beginning of the „Open-Brethren-Movement“ is not easy to date because there were many forerunners in the field of „alliance-assemblies“, who later joined the „Open Brethren“. They were assemblies in Berlin, Dresden and Bad Homburg. The 1905-founded Bible-Institute in Berlin (since 1919 at Wiedenest) became a centre of the movement. In 1937 the Nazi-regiment closed the exclusive brethren-assemblies in Germany. In the same year - under the pressure of the regime – the exclusive assemblies were reopened again und joined together with the open brethren assemblies in the „Bund freikirchlicher Christen“. In 1942 they founded together with the Baptists the „Bund Evangelisch Freikirchlicher Gemeinden“, meanwhile some assemblies meet in hidden secret outside this union. After the war more than half of the brethren assemblies left the union with the Baptists and created the „Freie Brüdergruppe“, others joined with the „secret-brethren“ of the Nazi-time to found the new group of the Exclusive Brethren.

For more information see <http://www.bruedergeschichte.de> or contact Dr. Stephan Holthaus holthaus@bruedergeschichte.de. See also www.bruederbewegung.de