

**Friedrich Wilhelm Baedeker. Leben und Werk eines  
Russlandmissionars**

**Ulrich Bister / Stephan Holthaus (ed.)**

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In 1866, Friedrich Wilhelm Baedeker (1823–1906), a cousin of the originator of the famous tourist's guide book, Karl Baedeker, experienced his spiritual awakening. A German who had earned his PhD in Philosophy at the University of Freiburg but had then settled at the English West coast, he came in close contact with the Open Brethren Movement and, especially, George Müller, who became Baedeker's close spiritual mentor. Baedeker adopted his 'faith principle' (the decision not to ask for financial support) as well as his desire for non-denominational, missions-oriented and international evangelical fellowship, and became one of the most influential European evangelists at the end of the nineteenth century. On the occasion of the centenary of Baedeker's death in 2006, Ulrich Bister (d.2008), owner of a rich private archive on Brethren history, edited and annotated thirty-five of his private letters to allow further insight into his private life and work. All but one of these letters are addressed to Toni von Blücher (1836–1906), grandniece of the Prussian Field Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher, who had been converted through Baedeker's ministry in 1875 and who became, in the following decades, instrumental in developing evangelical life in Berlin and finally, like Baedeker, in the founding of Wiedenest Bible College.

As an introduction to the letters (pp. 37–120), Stephan Holthaus, the author of the standard history of the German Holiness Movement (*Heil—Heilung—Heiligung* (Gießen, 2005)), gives a helpful overview of Baedeker's life (pp.7–35). As an independent itinerant preacher, Baedeker was active in many countries and, especially after serving as Robert Pearsall Smith's interpreter during Smith's 'triumphant journey' („*Triumphreise*“) through Germany which sparked the German Holiness Movement, became an internationally

well-known preacher. His life's ministry, however, was set in Russia. Here he took part in an evangelical revival at the court of the Tsar and, above all, visited hundreds of prisons all over the country, fighting for the improvement of their living conditions, preaching to prisoners, distributing tens of thousands of Bibles and, thus, leading thousands of prisoners to the Christian faith. He spent time in other countries, too, however, as the letters to von Blücher show: dating between 1875 and 1905, they were written from many different places including Munich, Stuttgart, Heidelberg, Southampton, Estonia, London, Budapest, Oslo, Stockholm, Zurich, and his home town in England, Weston-super-Mare. The letters are private and pastoral in character. Addressing von Blücher as his spiritual child ('liebes Kindle', 'mein teures Tony-Kind', 'in treuer Liebe Dein alter Vater' etc.), Baedeker writes about practical matters such as travel plans, his wife's illness, the death of some relative, financial mistakes of the Blankenburg Alliance (the centre of the German Holiness Movement), and pressure from other churches or the state. Some of the leading evangelical figures of the day, Theodor Jellinghaus, Johannes Lepsius, Hudson Taylor, General Georg von Viebahn, Otto Stockmayer, and others, are mentioned. 'I hope you have thoroughly discussed your matters with the precious old brother,' he writes about George Müller's 1891 visit to Berlin (p.62 [my translation]). Regarding his frequent absence from his wife, Baedeker comments, 'My travel plans are developing day and night, and my most precious better half does not say no to me! God bless her for this' (p.102 [my translation]). And two years before his death, he writes, 'We all have to become stronger Bible Christians, then we will also be [Evangelical] Alliance people, based on the eternal foundation [...]' (p.113 [my translation]). Although many letters deal with less important subjects or with people that are unknown today, they give us a flavour of the person Baedeker was and of the times in which he lived. Unfortunately, the book has no index at the end, but the annotations are very helpful, and the booklet is, all in all, a fine contribution to a still too much neglected area of research.

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