

derungen nach Anerkennung mit großer Vorsicht behandelt oder einfach ignoriert. Sehr wahrscheinlich kann man den Grund dafür, warum die Irvingianer nie mehr als 400 Personen zählten und bald immer schwächer wurden, in ihrer verfehlten Strategie erkennen: Trotz warnender Signale hielten sie die Verbindung zur lutherischen Kirche weiterhin aufrecht. Der unklare rechtliche Status erlaubte es nicht, die Irvingianer als Konfession anzuerkennen. Das evangelisch-lutherische Generalkonsistorium und die Polizei übten ständig Druck auf sie aus, dem sie nicht standhalten konnten. Die Dezimierung der „Filialen“ war nur eine Frage der Zeit.

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#### SUMMARY

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*An Unknown Page in Baltic History:  
The Religious Movement of the  
Irvingites in late 19<sup>th</sup> century*

This paper introduces the activities of the Irvingites in the Russian Empire and tries to characterize in more detail their activities in the Baltic Provinces. Although the official title of this religious awakening movement was Catholic Apostolic Church, more frequently they were called Irvingites, referring to their founder, the Scottish Presbyterian preacher Edward Irving (1792–1834). Initially, the Irvingites were active in Great Britain. Later, their activities spread to Germany and they achieved some popularity in the USA. Their activities in the Russian Empire date back to the 1870s, when parishes were founded in St. Petersburg, Reval, Riga, Libau and Mitau.

Documents from the Department of Religious Affairs (Ministry of Interior) in the Russian State Historical Archive in St. Petersburg enable historians to have a closer look at the history of the Catholic Apostolic Church, the basic principles of their parish organization, and their activities. Due to police investigation in Kurland, there are still complete lists of members of Irvingites available from Mitau and Libau.

The attempts of the main representatives of the Catholic Apostolic Church to achieve permission to exercise their religion freely in the Russian Empire were in vain. One of the main reasons was the small number of people involved (until the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Irvingites comprised approximately 400 people). The Irvingites did not require a neophyte to distance himself from their previous religious affiliation. Thus they officially remained Lutherans or Catholics. The activity of the Catholic Apostolic parishes finally ended as a result of intolerance on the part of Lutheran pastors and also due to local police activities. The vague legal status of the movement was another reason for its termination.