

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to describe origins, history, activity and influence of a Latvian religious movement called *Dievturība*, established in Latvia in the interwar period, interruption of their activities as a consequence of the Soviet occupation in 1940 and its renewal in exile, especially in the United States, where the followers of *Dievturība* built an important Latvian cultural centre, as well as its rebirth in the independent Latvia after 1990. With the help of the American *Dievturi* Latvian followers try to gain more attention through organizing cultural events and raise public awareness of *Dievturība*. Furthermore the thesis surveys origins of the movement's doctrine, contacts of *Dievturība* with folklore groups, attitude of its followers, *Dievturi*, towards politics and media and especially the significance of *Dievturība* for forming the modern Latvian society.

Special attention is paid to Ernests Brastiņš, a founder of the movement, to his life, thoughts, ideas and plans connected with his effort to revive Latvian national cultural consciousness. There are also important the views of critics of *Dievturība*'s doctrine and its understanding of pre-Christian Latvian religion, to which *Dievturība* relates. In my work I also try to outline the pre-Christian Latvian religion and to find differences comparing *Dievturība* to this old Latvian religion. I also take heed of conception of three divinities: *Dievs – Laime – Māra*. I put *Dievturība* into context of similar Baltic movements and of neopaganism and *New Age*. *Dievturība* was also reflected in Latvian literature. The most important is mythological prosaic work of Jānis Veselis, whose masterpiece is undoubtedly his collection of Latvian legends *Latvju teiksmas*.

After perusal of the literature on this topic and evaluation of the known information about this phenomenon, I came to conclusion that *Dievturība* cannot be understood as an adequate reconstruction or recovery of the old Latvian pre-Christian religion. In my thesis I also point out to extensive gaps in research of this topic, not only abroad, but also in Latvia itself. Today this movement is in many respects outdated and its role in the society is rather marginal. For the young generation *Dievturība* is attractive mainly because of its folklore activities and the religious dimension is sidelined. In spite of the current problems of this movements and problems regarding the position of *Dievturība* in Religious studies or its connection to the neopaganism and *New Age* it is no doubt about importance of *Dievturība* for the Latvian culture, history and modern society.

Key words

Dievturība, religion, Latvian folklore, Latvian mythology, Ernests Brastiņš, Jānis Veselis, neopaganism