

***Faith and Culture in the Nonconformist Context of Leningrad in the 1970s:
Challenges of Religious Conversion and Samizdat Journal #37***

Abstract:

The paper will study works published in Leningrad's Samizdat *Journal #37*, the main focus of which was the relationship between faith and culture. The written organ of Leningrad's Religious-Philosophical Seminar (1974-81), *Journal #37* (1976-80) represented one of the most known and popular examples of samizdat literature among Leningrad's nonconformist intelligentsia. During the 1970s, its numerous members – young poets, writers, artists, and thinkers – converted to Orthodox Christianity in their searching *for the real meaning of life*. Through the process of religious conversion they faced two challenges: a) to neglect further cultural, artistic, or intellectual work as a sinful act; b) to accept the new role of being a believer and to continue cultural, artistic, or intellectual creativity in order to propagate a personal understanding of one's beliefs. Their personal understanding of beliefs, however, was often based on individually constructed religious systems, modernism, or syncretism which placed them in a position opposed to Orthodox Christian theological tradition as well as led them to ecclesiological isolation. Discussing the challenges faced by the young neophytes, Tatiana Goricheva, one of the members of the editorial committee of the Journal (herself an Orthodox Christian convert), wrote various articles in *Journal #37* defending two important objectives: a) to continue with creative work and use inherited talents; and b) to relate personal creativity and repentance, which should constantly and dynamically affect all aspects of a believer's life.

Thus, this study analyzes the content and methodology presented in thematically important articles published in the Journal in order to illuminate the traditional Orthodox

theological understanding of the relationship between faith and culture as experienced and defined in the context of Soviet nonconformist intelligentsia. The study itself intends to involve Orthodox theologians to begin an exploration of topics related to a person's comprehension of faith and its kinships with creativity.