Discussions of Western influence during the reign of Peter often have concentrated solely on the emperor and his close associates. Peter is portrayed as a ruler trying to bring Russia into contact with European ideas and technology and opposed by a clergy and upper gentry devoted only to the preservation of their privileged role in society. This image was raised to the level of an ideology by Feofan Prokopovich and V. N. Tatishchev, and played a dominant role in the writings of N. M. Karamzin, the "juridical" or "state" school of the nineteenth century and most Soviet historians of the post-Pokrovskii period. It is certainly true that the dominant force in the Westernization of Russia was the centralized state headed by Peter and his successors. But the defenders of autocracy had no monopoly on Western ideas, and in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the conflicts among the leading groups in Russian society were marked by a systematic use of Western political thought completely new in Russian history. We can find in the reign of Peter and his immediate successors two uses of Western forms of argument and goals to attack the values and institutions of both Muscovite autocracy and Petrine absolutism. Patriarch Adrian and Stefan lavorskii used the Catholic notion of two powers in an attempt both to carve out a separate sphere of authority for the church and to assert the church's superiority to the secular power. D. M. Golitsyn and his supporters in 1730 employed the secular ideas of the popular origin of political power and of a contract between government and people to challenge autocracy and propose an oligarchical and potentially constitutional form of government. The theorists of the Petrine state responded to the quasi-papal challenge of Adrian and Stefan by borrowing Protestant natural law ideas of the prince's leadership in religious matters and the subordination of the institutional church to a place within the governmental structure. They also refuted the secular challenge of limited government by using Western notions of sovereignty and the political contract to defend the permanent transfer of all political power to the ruler. From this perspective, the formulation of a new non-Orthodox ideology for the Russian emperor appears less a bold innovation than a response to the challenges which Western ideas were posing to the Muscovite autocracy.

Traditional Muscovite political thought rested on the notion of the Orthodox religious polity first stated by the emperor Constantine and his bishop, Eusebius of Caesarea, and reasserted by defenders of imperial power throughout the history of the Byzantine state. These Byzantine writers maintained that the emperor had supreme religious as well as political responsibilities within his realm and that he was not subject to control by either the church hierarchy or any other human institution.1 In Muscovy the abbot Joseph of Volokolamsk (d. 1515) restated this position by arguing

that the prince should be as concerned with church affairs as with secular government
and that he must take the lead in persecuting heretics, whether they be found among
"simple people" or among churchmen.\(^2\) Joseph referred favorably to Theodosius,
Justinian and other emperors who had dealt firmly with priests, bishops and patriarchs
and had imprisoned and even executed those tainted with heresy. Joseph’s argument
was extended by Metropolitans Daniil (1522-1539) and Makarii (1543-1564) and be-
came the official position of the church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
Tsar Aleksei (1645-1676) sometimes spoke of himself as though his commands repre-
sented the will of God, and he eventually ousted Patriarch Nikon (active 1652-1658)
on the presumption that the monarch was the head of the ecclesiastical as well as the
civil administration. The Josephite defense of Christian monarchy was also repeated in
the "Ivan-Kurbiskii" correspondence which may have been a product of the seventeenth
century.\(^3\) Muscovy fully accepted the Byzantine belief that the monarch should inter-
vene in the affairs of the church when this became necessary to root out heresy, and
Muscovite autocracy came under attack only when it failed to preserve the faith of the
Orthodox polity or when the maintenance of that faith ceased to appear the primary
task for which the political community existed.

I

The first challenge to the ideal of Muscovite autocracy grew out of a combi-
nation of certain non-absolutist elements in Byzantine thought with the defenses of
papal supremacy common to Catholic political theory. From the time of the icono-
clast controversies of the eighth and ninth centuries the Byzantine hierarchy had chal-
lenged imperial pretensions by arguing that the church’s mission gave it the right to
decide basic questions of dogma and to preserve its institutional structure and its mo-
nastic properties.\(^4\) In the late medieval West papal apologists set forth a political inter-
pretation of a series of scriptural passages in order to justify extensive involvement of
the spiritual authority in worldly life. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) turned an
ambiguous reference in St. Luke to "two swords" into an assertion that "both swords,
namely the spiritual and the material, belong to the Church" and that both are to be
"employed in her service" even though only the first is to be "wielded by her own
hand. . . ." "For the two swords are Peter’s, to be drawn whenever necessary, the one
by his own hand, the other by his authority."\(^5\) Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) main-
tained that Christ’s statement to Peter about binding and loosing had made Peter and
each of his successors the "vicar of Jesus Christ" and a figure "lower than God but
higher than man, who judges all and is judged by no one. . . ."\(^6\) Innocent also stated
that with the command "Feed my sheep" Christ committed his flock to Peter and to

\(^2\) Vladimir Val’denberg, Drevnerusskiia ucheniiia o predelakh tsarskoii vlasti (Petrograd,
\(^4\) See, for example, Ernest Barker, Social and Political Thought in Byzantium. From Jus-
\(^5\) Brian Tierney, The Crisis of Church and State 1050-1300 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.,
1964), p. 94.
\(^6\) Ibid., p. 132.