

Karion Istomin and the Trinity of Wisdom: God, the Sovereign, and the Poet. Praise of Wisdom in the Panegyric to Petr Alekseevič (1683)¹

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Аннотация: *Карион Истомин и Троица Мудрости: Бог, Государь и Поэт. Похвала мудрости в панегирике Петру Алексеевичу (1683 г.).* Статья доказывает, что панегирик Кариона Истомина Петру Алексеевичу по случаю его 11-го тезоименитства — *Книга вразумление умного зрения и телесного делания в Божией мудрости* (1683 г.) — иллюстрирует такое длительное явление в восточнославянской культуре конца XVII—начала XVIII веков, как переход от средневековой идеи мудрости как чего-то, что Бог поместил в сердце человека, к античной и ренессансной идее мудрости как того, чего люди достигают путем активного постижения и изучения. Карион Истомин не только укрепил связи между Москвией и античной и европейской культурой, продолжая наследие предыдущего поколения поэтов, таких, как Симеон Полоцкий и Евфимий Чудовский, но и внес свой вклад в формирование нового представления о культуре как о человеческом достижении и новой роли поэта как основателя такой культуры.

Ключевые слова: Карион Истомин, панегирическая поэзия, мудрость, знание, *Книга вразумление умного зрения и телесного делания в Божией мудрости*, Петр Великий, роль поэта.

Wisdom is a recurring theme in the poetry of Russian author Karion Istomin (1640–ca. 1718). In his poetry, wisdom becomes the cornerstone of a notion of knowledge that affirms the necessity of earthly wisdom by considering it a projection of divine wisdom. Several scholars have observed the novelty brought about by Karion’s notion of wisdom. For instance, Lidija Sazonova notes that “Понятия мудрость и знание употреблялись им [Карионом, Е.С.М.] не только в специфически средневековом, теологическом смысле как путь к постижению бога, но уже и в новом — светском — значении в духе наступающих Петровских

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реформ” (Сазонова 1989, 50)². While emphasizing the political theme in Karion’s *Книга вразумление умнаго зренья и телеснаго делания в Божией мудрости* (Book of Understanding Intellectual Vision and Bodily Activity in God’s Wisdom, 1683), Paola Cotta Ramusino states that it represents “il passaggio da una concezione medievale, tradizionale, potremmo dire ‘monastica,’ del sapere, ad una concezione *bratskaja*, che accoglie anche elementi di una scienza più laica” (Cotta Ramusino 2002, 33)³. The process, she notes, began at the turn of the seventeenth century in Ukrainian poetry. L.A. Gricaj continues this reading of Karion’s work by reconstructing how, throughout the seventeenth century, we witness a “постепенный отход от православных канонов древнерусской культуры и появление личностного начала, что приводило к возрастанию значения просветительского элемента и связанной с ним назидательной, учительной литературы” (Грицай 2022, 242)⁴. In the present essay, I show how praise of wisdom is the foundation for the ideological and political discourse in the *Книга вразумление умнаго зренья и телеснаго делания в Божией мудрости* and how the definition of a novel, central role for the poet and the theme of education, of which Karion presents a modern plan, stems from the interaction between the Medieval, monastic and the early modern, lay notions of wisdom.

In the *Книга вразумление умнаго зренья* the two notions of wisdom coexist, one conceiving of wisdom as something that God has located in the human heart through the action of the Holy Spirit — an idea common in traditional Orthodox spirituality — and the other conceiving of wisdom as something that humans can achieve through study and exercise — following Classical ideas as revived by Renaissance thinkers. By inscribing human wisdom within divine sapience, Karion enhances earthly wisdom and frees it from centuries-long association with pagan culture. By doing so, Karion promotes a novel role for knowledge in culture, for the poet at court, and for the state in society, continuing the legacy of the previous generation of poets — mostly, Simeon Polockij and Evfimij Čudovskij. In this way, Karion contributes to establishing the notion of culture as self-consciousness and as a personal endeavor and the task of literature as the expression of such culture. These notions further imply a renewed attention to history and current reality as the context on which education is based.

Karion’s statements on wisdom appear throughout his didactic texts, from *Едем* (Eden, 1693), to *Грамматика* (Grammar, 1694) and *Домострой* (Domestic Or-

² “The concepts of ‘wisdom’ and ‘knowledge’ are used by him [Karion] not only in the specificall Medieval, theological sense as the path of approaching god, but already in the new — secular — meaning, in the spirit of the upcoming Petrine reforms”. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are by the article’s author.

³ “the shift from a Medieval, traditional, we could even say ‘monastic’ conception of knowledge to a conception that is typical of the *fraternal schools*, which includes also elements of secular science”.

⁴ “gradual withdrawal from the Orthodox canons of ancient Russian culture and the appearance of an individualistic principle, which led to the expansion of the ‘enlightenment’ element and of the edifying, didactic literature connected with it”.

der, 1696). However, the *Книга вразумление умнаго зренья* deserves particular attention. In it Karion elaborates on the inherent connection between wisdom, knowledge, and study, which he justifies philosophically and on political grounds. Moreover, in the panegyric Karion connects the celebration of knowledge to the figure of the poet, who is presented as a new type of man of culture who carries out an educational and cultural role at court, assisting the sovereign — showing Karion to be deserving of the nickname suggested by Sazonova as the “певец мудрости” (Сазонова 1989, 43)⁵.

1. A Multi-Layered Composition

The *Книга вразумление умнаго зренья* testifies to a key step in the affirmation of the genre of the panegyric in East Slavic culture. Panegyric poetry was inaugurated in Muscovite Rus' by Simeon Polockij in the second half of the seventeenth century and developed by his pupil, Sil'vestr Medvedev, as well as by Karion, Sil'vestr's friend and brother-in-law. Susanne Strätling and Olga Strakhov note the difference between Sil'vestr's *Божию милостию великой государыне царевне и великой княжине Софии Алексеевны, всея великия и малыя и белыя России* (To the Great Carevna for the Grace of God and Grand Duchess Sofija Alekseevna, Monarch of All Great and Small and White Russia, 1682) and Karion's *Книга желателно приветство мудрости* (Book of Welcoming Greeting of Wisdom, 1682–1683). Whereas Sil'vestr in the former praises the regent by turning the name Sofija into an allegory for wisdom through the etymologization of her name, Karion in the latter deepens the allegory by developing the idea that “мудрость” is a “наука”, which in turn-of-the-century Rus' means a realm of knowledge (Strätling 2005, 65, 77; Strakhov 1998, 51). The difference between the two poets lies not merely in the different use of a figure of speech, but in the distinct ways in which each understands the idea of wisdom.

Karion meant the manuscript, *Книга вразумление умнаго зренья и телеснаго делания в Божией мудрости*, consistent with Jurij Tynjanov's study of eighteenth-century poetic and oratory practices, for public reading at court (Тынянов 1977, 228–230). This practice was followed by the gift of the manuscript to the future Car'; its private reading was intended to foster reflection and to strengthen awareness of the interaction between wisdom and political power (Сазонова 1987, 103–126). As Strätling points out, the motif of wisdom is central throughout the *Книга вразумление умнаго зренья* (Strätling 1998, 153–160), where it acquires a new meaning and serves as the basis for the poet's request to Petr Alekseevič to promote the development of knowledge and education.

The *Книга вразумление умнаго зренья* has a rather complex structure, as revealed by the history of its composition. Karion started composing the poem after the death of Fedor Alekseevič on 27th April 1682, when the nobles' assembly decided not to proclaim Ivan Alekseevič as Car' due to his sickly health and unfitness

⁵ “singer of wisdom”.

to rule and proclaimed Ivan's younger half-brother, Petr Alekseevič, Car' instead. Later, however, Ivan Alekseevič was proclaimed co-Car' through the support of an adverse court faction headed by his sister Sofija, and Karion composed the second version of the poem that features references to the two brothers' coregency⁶. Karion started composing the panegyric for Sofija when she became regent on 27th October 1682; this poem shares stanzas and themes with the other panegyrics that he was writing at this time. When the struggle for power came to an end, Karion completed the panegyric to Petr Alekseevič, to whom he presented it in 1683, on the occasion of his name day⁷. A later, not autographed version of this panegyric⁸ is dated to circa the 1720s; scholars seem to agree that this 918-line version of the panegyric corresponds to the one that was gifted to Petr Alekseevič in 1683. Building on Bogdanov's, Sazonova's, and Cotta Ramusino's discussions of the nature of these texts and on their relationship with the panegyric to Sofija, in the current essay I consider Karion's panegyrics to Petr Alekseevič written in 1682 and in the 1720s as variants of a single text (Богданов 1983, 245–56; Сафонова 1993, 148; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 26, 37, 81).

2. A Panegyric at the Crossroads between Lyric, Historical, Political, and Didactic Poetry

The *Книга вразумление умнаго зрениа* follows the progression of the idea of sapience as a divine gift that gradually roots itself in human experience and historical reality and acquires political and didactic traits. Meanwhile, as the genres of literary poetry are not yet established in the cultural system, the poetic voice is stratified and delineated through a variety of functions — from the historical to the political, and from the lyric to the didactic. The composition starts with a frame introduced by the poet in which three speakers, God (lines 11–156), the Virgin Mary (lines 203–92), and Petr Alekseevič's mother, Natal'ja Kirillovna (lines 331–520), take the floor in turns⁹. God, the Virgin Mary, and Natal'ja

⁶ Preserved in: ГИМ, Чудовское собрание 302, ff. 30–39vv., 46–48v.

⁷ Preserved in: ГИМ, Чудовское собрание, 302, ff. 41–44.

⁸ Preserved in: РНБ, F.I. 905. This is the redaction of the panegyric to which I am referring throughout the present article. While I have consulted the original manuscript in 2019, I am quoting the transcription included in Cotta Ramusino 2002.

⁹ We can explain the presence of Natal'ja Kirillovna beside God and the Virgin Mary with the fact that there are “основания, позволяющие считать, что инициатива обращения к предложенной Коменским концепции максимально доступного, в т. ч. невербального ознакомления 3–5-летнего ребенка с системой основных представлений о мире принадлежала молодой царице Наталии Кирилловне. Мать царя Петра и бабушка царевича Алексея, в свою очередь, могла уловить суть идей великого чеха именно благодаря тому, что в Кремлевском дворце был накоплен богатейший опыт образного дошкольного обучения детей, прослеженный по источникам с первых царевичей и царевен Романовых” (reasons leading us to believe that the initiative to appeal to Comenius' proposed concept of the most accessible [learning tool], including the non-verbal acquaintance of a three-to-five-year-old child with the system of basic representations of the world belonged to the young Carica Natal'ja Kirillovna.

Kirillovna are summoned by the poetic speaker to address the young Petr Alekseevič, teaching him important aspects of the concept of wisdom through monologues and prayers. This theatrical aspect structures the thematic progression of the panegyric, namely the sequence of distinct sections, connecting the various texts and shaping a sacred representation that emphasizes the solemnity of each speaker's message. Theatricality, combined with the repetition of concepts and exhortations, highlights the dynamism, dialogism, and ritual of the composition. In the second part of the *Книга вразумление умнаго зренья* (lines 521–880), the poet speaks in his own voice, in the first person, and about the idea of wisdom, and addresses Christ, Petr Alekseevič, the Rus'ian people, God, the Virgin Mary, and the apostle Peter. Finally, in the lines 881–918, the poet gives Petr Alekseevič himself the chance to say a prayer to his protector, the apostle Peter, claiming his role as a poet and a wise man.

When speaking of wise men, the speaker is, in fact, referring to himself; hence, we can consider his statements as implicit meta-literary declarations. From this standpoint, God, the Virgin Mary, and Natal'ja Kirillovna do not act as *dramatis personae* but as expressions of the lyric voice that converge to represent the lyric persona as a poet and a wise man. This multitude of authoritative voices helps Karion to build the authority of his lyric voice and the reliability of his message, as the hierarchical movement from God to the poet mirrors the relationship between divine and earthly wisdom. In this way, Karion's *Книга вразумление умнаго зренья* showcases the original path through which Rus'ian poetry defined the importance and public function of the poet.

In the opening, the lyric speaker manifests himself at the linguistic level through direct speech to his addressee, Petr Alekseevič. This is what Jonathan Culler calls "lyric address", an element that is "fundamental to lyric" (Culler 2015, 199). Lyric address "gives the poem a character of event" and makes it an "in-presence" text, which means that it presents "an event in the lyric present, the moment of address" (Culler 2015, 188, 207). Karion uses lyric address as a tool to locate the poet and his readers in the present, establishing the speaker's relationship with his interlocutor Petr Alekseevič. The lyricist manifests himself also through perlocutionary acts, utterances by which the speaker intends to provoke a reaction in the addressee (Austin 1975, 101–7). Indeed, throughout the composition the voice repeatedly praises wisdom and Petr Alekseevič in order to provoke a reaction from him. The fact that the poem is an epideictic speech, namely a discourse through which the voice praises or reproaches against something or someone, also highlights the presence of the poetic voice and shapes the composition as lyric¹⁰.

The mother of Car' Petr and grandmother of Carevič Aleksej, in turn, could grasp the essence of the ideas of the great Czech precisely because in the Kremlin there was accumulated a wealth of experience in the preschool figurative education of children; Богданов 2005, 469).

¹⁰ This is a view of the lyric that was taught in the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, where Simeon Polockij, Karion's literary predecessor, studied. The practice of the lyric in the Academy was based on Horace's *Ars Poetica* (The Art of Poetry), which identified the goal of the lyric as to teach (*docere*) and to please (*delectare*) (Horace 1926, 447). See also: Siedina 2017.

The voice in the panegyric establishes his presence not only as a lyricist and a wise man but also as a chronicler and a witness who perpetuates the memory of past Car's — Car's who reigned in favor of wisdom. In this way, the chronicler-witness inaugurates a commonplace that will characterize subsequent East Slavic panegyrics: honoring rulers through commemoration of the deeds of their predecessors. This corresponds with Marina Kiseleva's observation that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers who composed panegyrics to celebrate members of the royal family expressed an interest in the "человек, конкретный, со своим именем и временем рождения [...] и смерти" (Киселева 2011, 224–5)¹¹. This contributes to the epideictic function of Karion's poem because recalling the wise actions of past rulers leads to the praise of wisdom and of the monarchs who continue in their predecessors' tradition.

The poet also takes on a political role and functions as Petr Alekseevič's advisor by exhorting the young man to cultivate wisdom and to foster the spread of education in the country. In this exhortation, the poet-advisor affirms the theoretical foundation of political absolutism, affirming its divine origin and creating "il primo esempio in ambito russo di *speculum principis*" (Cotta Ramusino 2002, 50)¹². In so doing, Karion certainly referred to other East Slavic moral and educational texts such as the *Степенная книга* in the *Житие* of Oľga (*Book of Royal Degrees in the Life of Oľga*); the *Повесть Петра и Февронии* (*Tale of Petr and Fevronija*); and the *Тестамент, или завет, Василия царя греческаго к сыну его Лву* (*Spiritual Testament of Greek Emperor Basil to His Son Leo*), which was published multiple times throughout the seventeenth century and reprinted in 1680 by the Verchnjaja Tipografija established by Simeon Polockij (Cotta Ramusino 2002, 31, 40–51)¹³. Nevertheless, in the *Книга вразумление умнаго зренья*, Karion realizes something innovative: the one who gives Petr Alekseevič advice is the poet himself. Karion's action is rooted in the recently established tradition of Muscovite Rus', in which the role of the poet was identified with that of the tutor¹⁴. Indeed, Karion, despite never being officially appointed court tutor, was a didactic figure for Petr Alekseevič and his son Aleksej Petrovič¹⁵. When in the panegyric Karion

¹¹ "concrete people, with their names, dates of their births and [...] deaths".

¹² "the first instance in the Russian setting of a 'Mirror for Princes'".

¹³ Throughout the panegyric, Karion refers to the Biblical books focused on the concept of wisdom — Proverbs, Wisdom of Solomon, and Sirach — and cites Genesis, Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Gospels, following the East Slavic tradition.

¹⁴ "Lo zelo didattico fu parte integrante del sistema filosofico e istanza fondamentale dell'attività di tutti gli scrittori di questa cerchia (di Polockij): essi si sentivano portatori di una superiore civiltà letteraria, filosofica, morale e politica, e investiti della sua diffusione come di una missione" (Brogi Bercoff 1996, 233) "Didactic zeal was an integral part of the philosophical system and a fundamental application of the activity of all writers belonging to this circle (of Polockij): they perceived themselves as the bearers of superior literary, philosophical, moral, and political civilization and as invested with the mission of spreading it".

¹⁵ To Aleksej Petrovič, Karion dedicated a primer in 1696, which conceptualized the style of teaching anew. It features images to facilitate the learning of children, "whose perceptions were taken to be different than those of an adult" (Okenfuss 1980, 22). Its content was furthermore

exhorts Petr Alekseevič to act concretely in support of education, Karion even goes beyond the established role of educators and presents a political project for education in Rus'. Indeed, in the seventeenth century education was highly valued and young people were encouraged to undertake it: "diffuso nella letteratura didattica è l'invito a studiare e applicarsi in gioventù" (Bragone 2008, 180)¹⁶. Karion's mentor, Simeon Polockij, already combined the Orthodox approach to education with the Humanistic attitude coming from Poland and the West, inspired by the ideas of John Amos Comenius (1592–1670) (Богданов 2005, 201–2). Simeon, however, still proposed a type of education that takes place in the familial sphere and is aimed at shaping a good Orthodox citizen (Грицай 2022, 242–5). In the *Книга вразумление умнаго зренья*, Karion moves beyond generic encouragement to study and the notion of learning as aimed primarily at religious education. He suggests that education is the government's task and that poets are tasked with helping to organize education. Karion expresses his proposals with poetic enthusiasm, revealing his deep involvement in this issue and his certainty that the deeds of both the sovereign and the poet, as well as those who share their understanding and spread wisdom, are necessary to the state.

The connection between rulers and wisdom has a long-standing tradition, which Karion renews in such a way that marks a change in sensibility and mentality. Ernst Curtius points out that ascribing wisdom and martial fortitude to sovereigns is a commonplace dating back to Classical antiquity and continuing through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Curtius 2013, 173–8). The *Книга вразумление умнаго зренья* is not centered on celebrating the sovereign's military virtues, but on wisdom, which becomes the poem's real protagonist. In this way, the panegyric fosters a new cultural model and system of values. The function of the man of wisdom that Karion elaborates in the panegyric is as essential for the state as the function of the sovereign. This enables the poet to speak in the first person. The keystone of the poet's argument is line 585, "Много бо мудрых спасение миру" (Cotta Ramusino 2002, 157)¹⁷. We may consider this line the panegyric's thematic clue because it expresses the composition's main idea, bringing together its pedagogic, political, and historical themes; it is an almost literal quote from the Wisdom of Solomon 6: 24: "A multitude of wise men is the salvation of the world, and a sensible king is the stability of his people." This statement reflects the poet's view of the positive effects of wisdom, of which God reminds us in His speech:

no longer based on the Bible but on the world surrounding the child. The same association between images and concepts, as well as the earthly — and even bodily — context, occur in the occasional poem *Книга Любви знак в честен брак*, which Karion wrote to celebrate Petr Alekseevič's first marriage to Evdokija Lopuchina on 27th January, 1689, as Kiseleva points out (Киселева 2011: 284–304).

¹⁶ "the invitation [for students] to study and to apply themselves in their youth is widespread in didactic literature".

¹⁷ "Many wise men are the salvation of the world".

От уст ея правда ходит,
 Закон милость она плодит.
 Гражданство та населяет,
 Суд праведен сотворяет.
 Кротит бѣды и напасти,
 Прогоняет злыя страсти (lines 67–72; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 91)¹⁸.

In these lines, Karion reminds us that wisdom conveys truth, which, in the Christian tradition, corresponds to the transcendent power that lies at the core of the universe's rational order. Wisdom is simultaneously connected to grace and to the laws that it generates, thanks to which civil life becomes possible. In this way, Karion affirms the biunivocal relationship between truth and grace and between an idea and its realization, a foundational principle for Orthodox faith that is also reflected in his didactic methodology and in the structure of his manuscripts¹⁹.

The *Книга вразумление умнаго зрениа* thus combines features of lyric, didactic, political, and historical poetry that allow Karion Istomin to root the poem in the present. The identity of the lyric self as a poet and a wise man, pedagogue, chronicler, and historian presents him as the most suitable person to address Petr Alekseevič in order to praise the value of wisdom and to support the new model of education.

3. From the Sky's Lights to the School's Rooms

Karion's praise of wisdom reveals his theological and philosophical thought. This praise begins with God's exhortation, encouraging the young Petr Alekseevič to take the path of wisdom, and, following a strict hierarchy, speeches by the Virgin Mary, Natal'ja Kirillovna, and finally the poet himself ensue.

God is the first to exhort Petr Alekseevič to pursue wisdom. God introduces Himself and affirms His all-reaching, all-creating power, addressing Petr Alekseevič and encouraging him: "приимеши мудрость свѣта" (line 20; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 84)²⁰. This motivation brings clarity of mind and righteousness of action: "Возми мудрость сыне Петре, / она мраки всѣ перетре" (lines 23–4; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 86)²¹. Wisdom is such a crucial good that God gives it to all humans together with life: "Мудрость и жизнь всѣ даваю" (line 30; Cotta

¹⁸ "From its [wisdom's, — E.C.M.] lips comes the truth, / it generates law and grace. / It spreads the sense of citizenship, / it produces righteous judgment. / It lessens troubles and misfortunes, / it drives away evil passions".

¹⁹ Indeed, Karion accompanied his didactic texts and occasional poems with illustrations created by court artists who strove to make visible the concepts expressed in his writing. This didactic methodology, theorized by John Amos Comenius, was practiced at court, as Bogdanov, Kiseleva, and Okenfuss show (Богданов 2001, 212–3; Киселева 2011, 286–300; Okenfuss 1980, 24–28). So in his texts Karion expresses the ideal of wisdom on the intellectual, writing, visual, auditory, and physical levels (Okenfuss 1980, 22–30).

²⁰ "accept the wisdom of the world".

²¹ "Accept wisdom, son Petr, / it dissolves all darkness".

Ramusino 2002, 86)²². In exhorting Petr Alekseevič, God even clarifies how He communicates wisdom to humans: “Даждь сыне мнѣ твое сердце / Отверзай его ми дверце” (line 15; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 84)²³. Later on, Petr Alekseevič echoes God’s summons: “Господи Боже всѣх еси создатель, / в благо мудрости людем дарователь” (lines 159–60; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 99)²⁴. This God-gifted wisdom is divine, as the Virgin Mary affirms: “Саму мудрость есмь носила, / Христа царя есмь родила” (lines 267–8; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 111)²⁵; and as Petr Alekseevič’s mother, Natal’ja Kirillovna, reiterates: “Мудрость убо есть Иисус сын божий” (line 431; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 135)²⁶. Unlike the pagan notion of wisdom, Biblical wisdom is characterized by fear of God, as Natal’ja Kirillovna conveys to her son: “Начало тоя страх святыи господен” (line 368; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 120)²⁷. Although these statements have clear Biblical origins, Karion situates wisdom in a specific setting and makes it the crux of God’s relationship to Petr Alekseevič²⁸. Hence, receiving this divine gift is for Petr Alekseevič a sign of election that elicits a reverential, thankful dread towards its source, God.

Together with wisdom, sovereigns receive power from God, who tells Petr Alekseevič, “Дах ти Петре царский венец”; “Аз поставих тебе царя”; “Аз ты возлюбих, / царство ти вручих” (lines 14, 61, 99–100; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 85, 90–3)²⁹. These lines also combine the Biblical reference to the Wisdom of Solomon with a specific reference to Petr Alekseevič³⁰. In Rus’ the Biblical idea of the divine origin of political power was renewed when, after the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, Moscow assumed the role of heir to Byzantium and of the Third Rome, incorporating “ancient notions of the emperor as a god that had become part the official cult of the Roman Empire [and that, — E.C.M.] were reworked

²² “I give life and wisdom to everyone”.

²³ “Give me your heart, son, / open its door to me”.

²⁴ “Lord God, you are the creator of everything / the giver of wisdom to the people to their advantage”.

²⁵ “I carried wisdom itself, / I have given birth to Christ, the King”.

²⁶ “For wisdom is Jesus, the son of God”. In the New Testament, Christ is called “God’s wisdom”, for example, in Matthew 11: 19, Luke 11: 49, 1 Cor. 1: 24–30, and Ephesians 3: 10.

²⁷ “The beginning [of wisdom, — E.C.M.] is the sacred fear of the Lord”. We read in Sirach 1: 14 and Psalms 111: 10: “To fear the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” and “Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”.

²⁸ Here are a few Biblical references to this notion of wisdom echoed in the panegyric: wisdom is “a breath of the power of God, / and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty” and “a reflection of eternal light” (Wisdom of Solomon 7: 25, 26). “All wisdom is from the Lord” and “It is He [the Lord] who created her [wisdom, — E.C.M.]” (Sirach 1: 1, 9). “The Lord gives wisdom” recurs in Proverbs 2: 6 and 8: 22, Jonah 38: 36, and Daniel 2: 21. Finally, wisdom is taught “in my secret heart” in Psalms 51: 6.

²⁹ “I gave you, Petr, the Car’s crown”. “I made you Car”. “I loved you, / I put the realm in your hands”.

³⁰ Wisdom of Solomon 6: 3: “A multitude of wise men is the salvation of the world, and a sensible king is the stability of his people”.

in terms of Christianity” in Byzantium (Uspenskij and Živov 2012, 11). The notion of Moscow as the Third Rome acquired special political meaning during the rule of Aleksej Michajlovič, who “strove in principle for a rebirth of the Byzantine Empire with its center in Moscow as a universal monarchy that would unite all of the Orthodox into a single state” (Uspenskij and Živov 2012, 13). The panegyric by Karion also expresses the idea of the deification of the Car’, as the following lines in the panegyric suggest: “Радуйся царю свѣтило веселися, / ты бо в чистотѣ зоря нам явися. / Озаряй свѣтѣ всего царства страны” (lines 741–3; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 173)³¹. Similar comparisons of the Car’ to the sun had recurred in Simeon Polockij’s *Орел российский* (Russian Eagle, 1667): “Ты же, о Солнце славна Руска рода” (Полоцкий 2015, 224)³². Such a poetic portrayal of Aleksej Michajlovič is consistent with the official portraits of the Car’ as the sun, which, in turn, are reminiscent of the visual representations of God in some of Gurij Nikitin’s icons (Лихачев 1992, 210–1).

From the double gift of sapience and power stems the educative function of the Car’. Indeed, Karion has God tell Petr Alekseevič that, together with power, he is assigned a task: “тщись ей поучати. / Да правиши моя люди” (lines 32–3; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 87)³³. The sovereign must carry out God’s command through the spread of wisdom. This exhortation to teach wisdom introduces a novelty with respect to the Biblical text. In Sirach 6: 33–4, for example, wisdom is presented as an almost physiological phenomenon that is transmitted from the older to the younger generations: “If you love to listen you will gain knowledge, / and if you pay attention, you will become wise. / Stand in the company of the elders”. The same idea recurs in the Orthodox tradition, for example, in the texts by Epifanij Slavineckij (d. 1675), who underlined the importance in education of modelling behavior: “Будь (для детей и рабов) твоих таков, каким хочешь, чтобы был для тебя владыка” (Грицай 2022, 240)³⁴. The verses in Sirach portray the transmission of knowledge in oral societies, in which students do not learn through the study of written texts but through example and repetition of what they hear (Ong 2012, 31–76). In contrast, Karion wrote the *Книга вразумление умнаго зрениа* at the moment when, in Muscovite Rus’, the idea of knowledge as rooted in solitary study and reading starts to establish itself.

After Nikon’s reforms, the 1666–7 Church Council saw the dispute between the supporters of the foundation of schools and their opponents as this topic reflected each faction’s idea of the Orthodox Church (Борданов 2001, 283). Daniel Waugh documents how, at the end of the century, “[o]ral transmission of knowledge continued to be essential for most of the population” (Waugh 2014, 47), and Gary Marker (2020, 91) concurs with Ol’ga Košeleva affirming that “there were

³¹ “Rejoice, Car’, be happy, luminary, / you appear to us in the clarity of dawn. / O light, enlightening the countries of all the Cardom”.

³² “And you, o sun of the glorious Russian people”.

³³ “strive to teach it [wisdom, — E.C.M.], / In order to govern my people”.

³⁴ “Be (for children and slaves) such as you want the Lord be for you”.

virtually no formal schools in Muscovy until very late in the seventeenth century, and that learning was conducted in more intimate or informal settings between tutors and learners; this type of learning was carried out in the form of ‘apprenticeship’ (*učeničestvo*). Meanwhile, in the second half of the seventeenth century, the Verchnjaja Tipografija and the Slavic-Greek-Latin Academy were founded in Moscow. Irina Pozdeeva notes that the seventeenth century was characterized by attempts to spread literacy in Muscovy and that, between 1652 and 1700, c. 35 percent of the publications by the Moscow Typography were didactic, which amounts to more than half a million copies (Поздеева 2016, 57, 154, 206, 213). Hence, Karion’s desire to establish an educational system that was institutional, efficient, and centered around the newer modalities of transmission of knowledge, was part of a larger, ongoing phenomenon.

Despite the lack of explicit references to writing and reading, the way in which Karion explains the importance of education leads us to think that he is expressing support of this type of knowledge. For instance, he uses the verbs “философствовать” and “восфилософствуешь”, which mean “to philosophize” (lines 417, 716; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 150, 169). Whereas in traditional texts this verb, a clear loan from Western languages, had a negative connotation, suggesting pagan culture and a rationalistic type of learning, in the *Книга вразумление умнаго зренья* it is used in a positive sense. Throughout the panegyric the poet emphasizes the role played by study and books in learning wisdom; such an emphasis simultaneously is an ideological statement, a suggestion for political action, and a reference to the Great Schism³⁵. The poet has God exhort Petr Alekseevič to apply himself to acquire wisdom:

Аще в юны твоя лѣта,
 Приимеши мудрость свѣта. / [...] /
 На ню царю восклонися,
 В юных тою удобрися.
 Отрок еси ты разумен
 путь мудрости есть не труден (lines 19–20, 77–80; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 85, 91)³⁶.

The other speakers, the Virgin Mary and Natal’ja Kirillovna, also encourage Petr Alekseevič to move “в мудрость науцъ” (line 183; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 103)³⁷. The Virgin Mary suggests: “Тѣм же начни мудрость ссати / яже может правду дати. / Умудрит тя из юных лѣт”; “Люблю дѣтей учащихся”; and “Ей усердно ты учися” (lines 219–21, 255, 263; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 107, 109,

³⁵ In the years 1666–1667, the opposition of the Old Believers to the reforms carried out by the authorities of the East Orthodox Church led to the раскол, also known as the Great Schism. One of the debated themes was education, namely whether books or tradition were the source of truth and understanding.

³⁶ “Since you are in your youth, / accept the wisdom of the world. / [...] / Bow to it [wisdom, — E.C.M.], Car, / in your young years feed yourself with it. / You are an intelligent boy, / the path of wisdom is not difficult”.

³⁷ “toward the wisdom [that leads, — E.C.M.] to science”.

111)³⁸. Natal'ja Kirillovna recommends something similar: wisdom “Поинстинѣтя имать просвѣтити, / учащагося имати умудрити” (lines 379–80, Cotta Ramusino 2002, 127)³⁹. The opposition between darkness and light is a recurring commonplace in religious texts that Karion's friend, Sil'vestr Medvedev, also employed in his panegyric to Sofija Alekseevna (Strätling 2005, 80–3). However, in the *Книга вразумление умнаго зренья*, Karion uses this image to introduce the new concept of wisdom as “наука”, or science, which indicates wisdom as a human achievement acquired through study.

Karion clearly states that wisdom ought to be acquired through a master's teachings and by individual study in an appropriate environment, like a school:

В мудрости рости,
Учится прости.
С рабы твоими,
В лѣтех равными (lines 111–4; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 95)⁴⁰.

Karion presents to Petr Alekseevič an educational system that is institutionalized; learning no longer takes place exclusively in intimate or informal settings. He explicitly mentions educational institutions: “схолы” and “храмы”, which is a metonym for buildings (lines 472, 489; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 139, 141)⁴¹. He then affirms that “Прежеланно есть гдѣ премудрость пасется” and asks Petr Alekseevič that “устроится наука свободна”, that is, science is not described as a completed achievement, but needs to be established day by day (lines 571, 614; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 155, 159)⁴². In this way, Karion is not only reconciling the ideas of divine gift and human achievement, but also proposing that study and application are fundamental to realize the divine plan. Human deeds contribute to enacting God's will through acquisition of wisdom and creation of state educational institutions. As Karion observes, “Мнози [...] суть тоя желателни, / богосвѣтимых наук приятелни” (lines 621–2; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 161)⁴³.

4. The Wise Man as a Hero of the New Times

Karion continues his reflection on the nature and role of wisdom by locating his project in precise historical circumstances, that is, he deals with contemporary issues and events. As the poem progresses, the lyric voice overcomes its role as

³⁸ “So start to sip wisdom, / which can give you the truth. / It will make you wiser starting from your youth.” “I love children who study.” “Study it [wisdom, — E.C.M.] zealously”.

³⁹ “will truly enlighten you, / if you study to become wiser”.

⁴⁰ “In wisdom you grow, / heed the teaching. / With your servants, / equal to you in age”.

⁴¹ “schools”. “temples”.

⁴² “the place where wisdom grazes is much desired”. “free science is instituted”.

⁴³ “Many want it [wisdom, — E.C.M.], / [those who are] favorably disposed towards the sciences enlightened by God”.

atemporal expression and interpretation of Biblical wisdom and becomes a witness and chronicler of the actions of seventeenth-century Muscovite sovereigns in regards to wisdom.

The work of the sovereign is supratemporal because of the long-lasting seeds that it plants in the kingdom's cultural soil but is also temporal insofar as it accomplishes change through each Car's individual actions. The speaker is aware that effective actions need to build on knowledge of the past: "К БЫВШЫМ ЖЕ ДѢЛАМ пристати удобно" (line 501; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 141)⁴⁴. Because of this, the speaking voice acts as a guarantor of memory, reminding Petr Alekseevič of the actions carried out by the Car's who preceded him. So, in the *Книга вразумление умнаго зрениа*, single episodes in each sovereign's life build on each other to define a consistent policy. Together the sovereigns, including Petr Alekseevič, embody what Ernst Kantorowicz calls the king's "political body", which, as opposed to his physical self, is invisible and incorruptible and passes from one ruler to the next in endless succession (Kantorowicz 2016, 87–192). The lyric voice brings together all the sovereigns in this eternal genealogy; they are united by shared wisdom. About Aleksej Michajlovič the poet affirms:

Строил государь ко божией воли,
в научение восхотѣвшим schoли,
Тако бо царю наука сладися,
яко сын его ваш брат ей учися.
Благий Алексий царевич прекрасный, / [...] /
В учении он сице взя охоту,
яко да вскорѣ узрит ю доброту (lines 471–5, 477–8; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 139)⁴⁵.

The lyric voice speaks of wisdom as a virtue that guides current and prospective Car's and illustrates this statement with reference to history, human nature, and divine plans. Thus, we are told that another son and the successor of Car' Aleksej Michajlovič, Fedor Alekseevič, "Тщися науку в царствѣ вкоренити, / хотящим людем разумы острити. / [...] / Храмы многия той для поставил" (lines 485–6, 489; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 141)⁴⁶. Fedor Alekseevič was educated by Simeon Polockij and continued the goal of his father of cultivating the new learning (Богданов 2005, 12–3). Karion's lines refer to the fact that Car' Fedor Alekseevič — who was educated by Simeon Polockij and continued the goal of his father of cultivating the new learning (Богданов 2005, 12–3) — signed the

⁴⁴ "It is appropriate to pay attention to past actions".

⁴⁵ "The Sovereign built, following God's will, / schools to teach those who desired it, / and, as knowledge was appreciated by the Car', / so did his son, your brother, study it. / The good Aleksej, the wonderful Cesarevič, / [...] / had such desire for learning / that he quickly began to see its goodness".

⁴⁶ "Attempted to establish learning in the kingdom, / to have people who desire it sharpen their minds. / [...] / He built many temples for this".

charter for the foundation of the Slavic-Greek-Latin Academy, located in the Zaikonospasskij Monastery in Moscow, which was organized during the regency of Sofija Alekseevna by the Lichud Brothers⁴⁷. Karion describes the new education as an endeavor to which generations of sovereigns have dedicated themselves and which constitutes the main reason why they deserve praise.

Opening schools to spread wisdom constitutes what Karion and poets in Simon Polockij's circle consider a new type of laudable action, one that safeguards the public good and guarantees the sovereign's glory. We can apply to Karion's panegyric the principle that Giovanna Siedina has noted about epic-panegyric celebrations in Ukrainian Neo-Latin literature, in which the *heroicum carmen* "era chiamato ad andare oltre la celebrazione di 'res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella'" (Siedina 2012, 245)⁴⁸. This type of poetry gives a new "preminenza [...] alle virtù morali rispetto alla forza militare e alle sue conquiste" (Siedina 2012, 268)⁴⁹. In the seventeenth-century Muscovite court, Karion may be said to advocate a new kind of heroism, fostering the advancement of wisdom. As a reward for actions promoting wisdom, Karion guarantees the same honors that military virtues secure, as God tells Petr Alekseevič: "Враг твоих главы удобь сокрушиши, / вси же языцы тебѣ покорятся" and "Будеши в славу в российском народѣ" (lines 151–2, 381; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 99, 127)⁵⁰. These lines, reminiscent of the Book of Wisdom 6: 21⁵¹, include both a *captatio benevolentiae* and Karion's hope to affect Petr Alekseevič's action in favor of culture.

The notion of the heroism of knowledge implies carrying out extraordinary actions and overcoming the obstacles that prevent their realization. Several passages in the *Книга вразумление умнаго зрениа* express this idea. For example,

⁴⁷ At the Academy, men of culture taught courses on grammar, poetics, rhetoric, philosophy, theology, as well as Greek, Latin, and Polish, following the educational model established at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy that was based on the trivium and quadrivium. The division of disciplines into trivium and quadrivium dates back to Classical philosophy, especially Plato, and became the organizing principle of the subjects studied during the late Middle Ages, when the first universities were founded in Western Europe. The arts of the trivium include grammar, logic, and rhetoric, while those of the quadrivium include arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy.

⁴⁸ "was meant to go beyond the celebration of the 'heroic deeds of sovereigns and leaders and the sad things about wars'".

⁴⁹ "prominence [...] ascribed to moral virtues rather than military force and conquests". This is consistent with the notion of poetry taught in the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when "la poesia doveva contribuire all'educazione di uomini devoti, incoraggiando la virtù e dissuadendo dal vizio [...] La via migliore per raggiungere questo scopo era la rappresentazione di azioni umane esemplari" (poetry had to contribute to the education of pious men, promoting virtues and dissuading from vices [...]) The best way to achieve this goal was representing exemplary human actions; Siedina 2012, 244).

⁵⁰ "You will easily defeat the heads of your enemies, / and all the peoples will subject to you". "You will be glorious among the Russian people".

⁵¹ "Therefore, if you delight in thrones and scepters, O monarchs over the peoples, honor wisdom, so that you may reign forever".

on the current state of culture Karion writes: “До днесь наука не окрѣпѣваше” (line 493; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 141)⁵². Rational learning and teaching encountered strong opposition in Rus’. The tension between inner and external knowledge existed already in late sixteenth-century Rus’, when Joann Vyšens’kyj (ca.1580–ca.1625) maintained that it would be better not to know the alphabet, provided that the individual could get close to Christ (Успенский 1988, 123). Until the turn of the eighteenth century, grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy — which was often branded as sophistry — were considered heretical because they were associated with paganism and corrupt Latin culture; their goal was often identified as external understanding that provided superficial and unnecessary knowledge (Успенский 1988, 123). This type of knowledge was juxtaposed to the Orthodox view of genuine inner understanding. This position was built on 1 Cor 3: 19⁵³, from which stems the view that no compromise is possible between worldly culture and divine truth⁵⁴. Yet, by this time, men of culture were composing the first spelling books, which testify to the evolution undergone by the conception of the two cultures. As Maria Cristina Bragone testifies, in the older spelling books “l’allievo imparava poche regole grammaticali, riguardanti soprattutto ortografia e prosodia, le preghiere fondamentali con qualche nozione di base di religione” (Bragone 2008, 12)⁵⁵. In contrast, in a manuscript spelling book which Evfimij Čudovskij wrote around 1678–1680 we find a “traduzione russa svolta probabilmente da Epifanij Slavineckij, di *De civilitate morum puerilium* di Erasmo da Rotterdam, compendio di norme comportamentali e di etichetta destinato ai giovani allievi” (Bragone 2008, 20)⁵⁶. This shift indicates that elements of Latin culture were becoming established in Muscovy, mainly through the mediation of Polish-Ruthenian culture, and fostered the development of the new educational system.

In this context, as Gricaj notes, Karion is preoccupied not only with “внутреннее духовное воспитание ребенка, но и внешнее воспитание, приобщение его к мирским знаниям и наукам” (Грицай 2022, 247)⁵⁷. By combining both currents of culture and education, Karion posits himself as the defender of an educational system inspired by Western models as adapted to the cultural tradition

⁵² “Science hasn’t grown stronger until now”.

⁵³ “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God”.

⁵⁴ Instances of such a worldview are the condemnations of earthly knowledge by Basil of Caesarea in the first homily of the *Hexaemeron*, by Gregory of Nyssa in the homilies on the *Song of Songs*, and by Gregory of Nazianzus in the *Fourth Invective Against Julian*. In East Orthodoxy, Kirill of Turov (1130–1182) recalls the teachings of the Biblical Proverbs according to which it is better to cultivate humility than to nurture wisdom.

⁵⁵ “the pupil learned a few grammatical rules concerning mostly orthography and prosody, the main prayers, and some foundational religious notions”.

⁵⁶ “a translation into Russian, probably by Epifanij Slavineckij, of Erasmus’ *On Civility in Children*, a compendium of behavioral norms and of etiquette destined for young students”.

⁵⁷ “the inner spiritual education of children, but also their external education, their introduction to worldly knowledge and science”.

of Muscovite Rus'. Karion for instance observes: "Наука добръ здѣ ся становила, / но за случаи паки уступила. / Потребно есть ю паки паки звати" (lines 507–9; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 143)⁵⁸. The idea of "наука", which in these lines is understood as knowledge resulting from human investigation and study, became established in Rus'. However, it did not go unchallenged, as Karion testified. He noted that elsewhere the attitude toward wisdom was different: "через ню глаголют в чужеземствѣ смѣло" (line 506; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 143)⁵⁹. Such awareness leads him to hope that "безученен чин в россах побѣдится" (line 610; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 159)⁶⁰. To this end, it is necessary that the Car' takes action. This is what the Virgin Mary tells Petr Alekseevič: "являй мудрость в россах дѣлом" (line 226; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 107)⁶¹. In the poem's second part, when the poet himself speaks, he exhorts the Car' "о учени промысла сотворити", to make sure "учителям людем искушенным", and to introduce "си вѣщи учителны" (lines 567, 580, 625; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 155, 157, 161)⁶². Karion advocates that the project of instructing the younger generation, as carried out by the heroes of the new time, needs state support in the form of educational structures, funding, and good teachers — basic requirements of any educational system.

5. The Poet as a Mirror and a Flute

In celebrating the action of spreading wisdom and rooting it in the here and now, the lyric voice individualizes his presence as a poet. Indeed, a voice rooted in a specific historical moment develops, in which the speaker is not only witness and chronicler, but also protagonist. The lyric speaker is involved in the promotion of wisdom in Rus' and shapes his own role in the process.

The lyric voice first describes the role of wisdom in determining an individual's self-awareness. Karion affirms that through wisdom "самого ся познаеш" and "В первых сами ся кто есмы визнаваем" (lines 419, 437; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 144, 147)⁶³. Wisdom helps to make "конец всѣх дѣл извѣстно", to delve into human mortal nature, and to achieve "спасение миру" (lines 430, 585; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 133, 157)⁶⁴. Indeed, while the individual "здѣ живя страхом содержится", through wisdom he behaves correctly and "В свѣте же свѣт [...] узрят, / [Даже если] волны грѣхов бурят" (lines 518, 87–8; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 143, 93)⁶⁵. From this it follows that "Любяй же мудрость самого ся лю-

⁵⁸ "Science established itself well here, / but sometimes it also yielded. / It is necessary to call for it more and more".

⁵⁹ "through it [wisdom, — E.C.M.] they boldly speak in foreign lands".

⁶⁰ "the ignorant order will be defeated among Rus'ians".

⁶¹ "reveal wisdom to the Rus'ians through action".

⁶² "to create the skill of teaching". "teachers are cultured people". "these learned things".

⁶³ "you will know yourself". "We first recognize who we are".

⁶⁴ "the end of all things known". "the salvation of the world".

⁶⁵ "is filled with fear when he lives here". "On earth will see the light, / [even though, — E.C.M.] the waves of sin will rage!"

бит” (line 375; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 121)⁶⁶. Hence, wisdom is a means for salvation and self-knowledge that generates such self-awareness that the individuals become able to express themselves: “Она [...] даст всякому си гласу” (line 541; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 147)⁶⁷.

The lyric persona markedly enters the composition and speaks in the poem’s second part (lines 521–880). Paola Cotta Ramusino maintains that the panegyric’s structure is “basata sul rispecchiamento (*zercalo*) piuttosto che sulla voce dell’autore, che rimane invece nascosta” (Cotta Ramusino 2002, 40)⁶⁸. Karion certainly employs the strategy of instructing Petr Alekseevič through the words of selected authoritative figures. However, in addressing Petr Alekseevič, Karion shapes an exclusive connection between the “I” that embodies the lyric voice of the court poet and the “you” that represents young Petr. This emerges in the prayer to Petr Alekseevič:

Се величеству твоему вѣщая,
главу худѣйш аз к стопам приклоняя.
Во слушание склони ми ушеса,
молю царска ти благая очеса.
Изволи милость сотворити мнѣйшу,
рабу твоему монаху худѣйшу (lines 545–50; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 147)⁶⁹.

Such phrases as “miserable man”, “least of men”, “your servant”, and “wretched monk” are part of the Muscovite ceremonial speech between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries that regulated political, administrative, and court communication (Poe 1998, 591–5). Simeon and the poets in his circle adapt this type of speech to the literary *milieu*, as Simeon’s *Приветствие* (*Salutation*, 1672) shows. In the *Книга вразумление умнаго зрениа*, the declaration of humility “served the interests of both the Car’ and his servitors [in this case, the poet—E.C.M.]: it elevated the status of the former and provided a mechanism by which the latter could respectfully request the grand prince’s aid” (Poe 1998, 608). By adopting this communicative strategy, Karion shows himself to be rooted in a specific historical context; he claims social status as court poet and educator and advances his request: “Incline your ears to me to listen”. It is thanks to the humble tone of his words that the lyric voice can affirm both that wisdom entails self-consciousness and that, because of this, he is aware of his identity and of his function in society and state. Further, the poet’s role as educator is key for the growth of the young ruler, as we see in one of the lyric voice’s most explicit statements in the prayer that is addressed to Christ:

⁶⁶ “Those who love wisdom love themselves”.

⁶⁷ “it will give everyone their own voice”.

⁶⁸ “built on reflection (*zercalo*) rather than on the author’s voice, which remains hidden”.

⁶⁹ “In announcing this to Your Highness, / I am a miserable man, bowing to your feet. / Incline your ears to me to listen, / I pray your good royal eyes. / Please have mercy to this least of men, / to your servant, the wretched monk”.

Твои мя руки создаста цѣвницу,
 премудрых ти дѣла возгласителницу.
 Но враг оглуши лестными звизданми,
 и ум помрачи грѣховны гаданми.
 Имам от нужды и уста безгласна,
 не могу пѣти пения ти красна.
 Тѣм яко вѣси и хоцещи спаси,
 в красный ти чертог вниди ми возгласи (lines 525–32; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 145)⁷⁰.

In these lines, the lyric voice also uses the first-person pronoun to refer to himself while metonymically presenting the poet as a “flute”. The “I” becomes a concrete instrument in Christ’s hands as one who “proclaims [Christ’s] wise endeavors”; yet as a weak man he is “speechless” and unable to “sing [...] beautiful songs”. He is aware that “the enemy”, or the devil, silences him and “darkens the mind with sinful thoughts”. These statements also express the “declaration of humility” that is a *topos* in much religious verse, although Karion situates it within an ethical and metaphysical framework (Curtius 2013, 407–13). Here, the lyric subject expresses his need to develop a relationship with God to be able to sing: “Call me into your beautiful palace”. By equating himself with a musical instrument who is animated by Christ’s hands and whose task is to communicate to his audience that they must embrace wisdom, the voice enacts the Classical association of lyric poetry with music and playing. In light of this task, the voice’s request not only expresses Karion’s own desire to become a court poet, but it is also framed as an action that spreads God’s word for the good of humanity.

Karion delineates a trinity in which each member plays a specific role: God creates wisdom and inspires the poet; the poet sings and gives thanks for the inspiration coming from God and under the protection of the sovereign; and the ruler encourages wisdom to spread and realizes God’s word as sung by the poet⁷¹. A series of bipartite relationships is established: the tie between *God and the poet* is realized through the word; the one between *God and the sovereign*, realized through power; and the relationship between *the poet and the sovereign* is realized through the spread of God’s word. Wisdom is necessary “Да будет людем очи просвѣщати”; Petr Alekseevič is “Озаряй свѣтъ всего царства страны”; Jesus is the “свѣта творителю, / несвѣтимыя тмы просвѣтителю”; and poets are illuminated by light, which they proclaim (lines 510, 743, 775–6; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 143, 173, 175)⁷².

The poet comes to play a central role in the poem, as God Himself asserts:

⁷⁰ “Your hands made me a flute, / proclaiming your wise endeavors. / But the devil silenced [me—E.C.M.] with flattering sounds, / and darkened the mind with sinful thoughts. / Out of necessity my mouth is speechless, / I cannot sing beautiful songs to you. / Therefore, please save me as you know how to and can, / call me into your beautiful palace”.

⁷¹ Sazonova considers the relationship between the poet and God in the chapter: “Поэт—переводчик слов и помыслов Бога” (Сазонова 2006, 118–29).

⁷² “So that it will illuminate people’s eyes.” “the light that enlightens the countries of the whole Car’dom”. “creator of the world, / who sheds light on lightless darkness”.

Царству бо краса,
 мудрых словеса.
 Из них же дѣла,
 мудрость подаа (lines 117–20; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 95)⁷³.

By “ornament” Karion does not mean an external embellishment, but an accomplishment for the betterment of the reign. Wisdom stems from the wise men’s words-ornaments, which indicate the proper path to follow. The poet presents himself as the mediator between divine and human wisdom, as the repository and the spreader of God-given wisdom, and as an essential support for the sovereign’s efficient government.

6. Conclusion

In the *Книга вразумление умнаго зрениа и телеснаго делания в Божией мудрости* Karion Istomin expresses the Orthodox conception that God the Pantocrator is the principle of wisdom, from which everything else stems and which coincides with God Himself. Karion’s goal of educating young Petr Alekseevič, whose tutor he would have liked to be, on the benefits of wisdom becomes the priority. Karion aims to teach Petr Alekseevič that humans can achieve wisdom through will, study, and practice. Inspired by God, the poet is the wise man who understands how the world functions and what action is necessary for the “salvation of the reign”. It is the Car’, motivated by God and educated by the poet, who must devise a concrete plan of action to spread and preserve wisdom. In advocating for the support of education, Karion affirms a notion of wisdom which is typical of the early Enlightenment, justifies the sovereign’s absolute power by virtue of his reforms, and enables the poet to carry out his social role (Hamburg 2016, 264–66, 277, 311–7, 360).

Throughout the panegyric, Karion emphasizes the role of human dedication, good teachers, and state schools for the progress of wisdom. Wisdom allows people to acquire knowledge and self-awareness and to grasp the “разумну правдивость” (lines 448, 618; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 161)⁷⁴. The poet prays to God that He will open the “разума оконце” because “без разума всюду скудно” (lines 794, 320; Cotta Ramusino 2002, 177, 117)⁷⁵. The poem is structured around the connection between wisdom, reason, and light which dispel “lightless darkness”. These ideas and terminology suggest that Karion’s work can also be considered an anticipation of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, which, as several scholars have attested, had deep religious roots⁷⁶.

⁷³ “The words of wise men / are an ornament to the reign. / The wisdom that flows from them [words—E.C.M.] / is translated into deeds”.

⁷⁴ “rational truth”.

⁷⁵ “window of reason”. “without reason everything is miserable”.

⁷⁶ Among the recent works on the religious roots of the Enlightenment in Europe, see: Sorokin 2011; McNelly, Kerry 2018. On the issue as it relates to Muscovite Rus’ and the Russian Empire, see: Цалина 2004, 301–13; Levitt 2009; Wirtschafter 2014; Ivanov 2020.

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