

# Filip Ćorlukić's Hermeneutics and Exegesis in his Translation of the Qur'ān

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*“This Kuran is not intended only for Muslims, but for all people of good will, regardless of their religion, for all those who, for any reason, want to learn about the basics of Islam. Given that it is significantly easier to read it in this form, this book is especially intended for those who wish to get more actively involved in interreligious dialogue. It is in fact indispensable for them.”*

FILIP ĆORLUKIĆ, PREDGOVOR, *KURAN*, 7.

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*“With good intentions and an open heart, I did as much as I could and in a way I knew how. I hope that this great endeavor was not in vain and that the contemporary readers gained a clear, logical, correct and interesting presentation of the entire Qur’anic thought. In addition to being a religious work, Kuran is also a work of world culture.”*

FILIP ČORLUKIĆ, *ISLAM KAO RELIGIJA, KULTURA I CIVILIZACIJA, KURAN*, 432.

## Abstract

This essay outlines the main approaches that should be considered when engaging with the works of Filip Čorlukić in which he examines the Qur’ān. It addresses his engagement with the Islamic holy text through its translation and adaptation into the Croatian language, through comparative analyses of the Qur’ān and the Bible, through broader comparisons between Islam and Christianity, and through Čorlukić’s own distinctive and personal study of the Qur’ān. Particular attention is devoted to his scientific analyses, in which he seeks to reconcile “true” science with “true” religion, the texts of the Bible and the Qur’ān, the teachings of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and the principles of scientism and theism.

**Keywords:** Science, Islam, the Bible, the Qur’ān, evolution

## Introduction: Filip Čorlukić’s Contributions to Dialogue in the Post-Vatican II Era

From the early 1970s until the second decade of the 21st century, the name Filip Čorlukić (born in 1928 in Vrhovi near Derventa, Bosnia and Herzegovina, died in 2022 in Pula, Croatia) became familiar to two distinct scientific audiences in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia (or what were once the home countries of socialist Yugoslavia). The first

audience consisted of specialists in the natural sciences, particularly physics, chemistry, and biology, as well as related fields like parapsychology, which gained prominence during that time. During this period, Ćorlukić produced a significant body of work, built a readership, collaborated with other scientists, and gained a unique reputation. He was also recognized as an expert in paper production, the oil industry, and related industries. Following the business trends of the era, he worked in many non-aligned countries and traveled extensively. Alongside his scientific curiosity and awareness of contemporary theories—such as breakthroughs in DNA research—Ćorlukić was known for his adventurous and inquisitive scientific spirit. He explored the boundaries of human knowledge, questioning both the capabilities and limitations of science, while also engaging deeply with the philosophical questions science raises and those that science, in turn, poses to philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

It should also be borne in mind that Filip Ćorlukić was deeply familiar with European, and especially German, philosophical anthropology of his time, including its reflections on the human condition and its analyses of questions concerning the “human place in the cosmos,” to use Max Scheler’s (1874–1928) formulation.<sup>2</sup> Reading today Ćorlukić’s discussions of the human being in the Bible and the Qur’ān, in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, and especially in science, we are struck by the breadth of his learning, which he productively brought into dialogue with the works and theories of Arnold Gehlen (1904–1976), Eugen Fink (1905–1975), Erich Rothacker (1881–1965), Helmuth Plessner (1892–1985), and others. In his own distinctive way, Filip Ćorlukić engages with key questions of European philosophy from the late twentieth century and the first two decades of the twenty-first century concerning the capacities and limits of scientific understanding of the world. These intellectual efforts merit special attention and would warrant a separate, dedicated study.

A second scholarly audience familiar with Filip Ćorlukić and his work may be described as theological, Islamological, religious, Orientalist, and dialogical. Dialogue, in Ćorlukić’s case, referred primarily to religious encounters among the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Through his theories, studies, essays, and books, Filip Ćorlukić became known in these fields especially among scholars, clergy, and

theologians who not only held views similar to his own but also shared and exchanged them with him willingly and productively. Although Ćorlukić was not a theologian by training, his engagement with the Bible and the Qurʾān and *eo ipso* Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, was profoundly shaped by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). The Council strongly influenced his careful formulation of dialogical themes, as well as his growing openness and readiness to study religious traditions to which he did not belong by origin or by academic formation. In his Croatian translation of the Qurʾān from 2001, Filip Ćorlukić wrote the following dedication to the readers:

I dedicate this book to the hopes that we will enter the third millennium with more sincere efforts to realize the ideas of inter-religious dialogue and general ecumenism. In [the] Kuran, we were invited to realize such salutary gatherings back in the 7th century:

“O sljedbenici Knjige (Biblije, ranijih objava)! Dođite da se okupimo oko jedne riječi, koja je zajednička nama i vama...” (3:64). [O People of the Book! Let us come to common terms.]

Fourteen centuries later, we are invited to this same gathering by the Second Vatican Council.<sup>3</sup>

In terms of his dialogical engagement with the Qurʾān, Filip Ćorlukić also represents a particularly important and distinctive phenomenon within the shared Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, and Montenegrin linguistic and intellectual space. Through his translation of the Qurʾān into Croatian, Ćorlukić stands alongside Mićo Ljubibratić (1839–1889) and other translators of the Qurʾān in the Western Balkans. Unlike Ljubibratić, who was politically active during the final decade of Ottoman rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1868–1878) and the first decade of Austro-Hungarian administration (1878–1889), and whose Serbian translation of the Qurʾān was shaped by a clearly articulated national agenda, Filip Ćorlukić approached the Qurʾān primarily as a sacred text that confirmed

and complemented his scientific orientation, a position he articulated explicitly when he stated:

[The] Kuran certainly emphasizes more than other revelations the need to observe the magnificence of the world that surrounds us. In our modern language, it actually points us to scientific research. There are no miracles in [the] Kuran, because miracles are all around us. “Travel around the world...,” “observe the Sun and the Moon...” and much more besides are constant Kuranic messages.<sup>4</sup>

### Filip Ćorlukić: Life, Education, and Intellectual Trajectory

For the sake of clarity and accessibility, this essay limits itself to the most essential biographical information about Filip Ćorlukić, primarily as he himself presented it.<sup>5</sup> He completed his elementary education in his hometown of Vrhovi and attended secondary school in Derвента. He then continued his studies at the Faculty of Science of the University of Belgrade, where he graduated in physics. During both his secondary and university education, Ćorlukić demonstrated, alongside his interest in physics, a strong engagement with other natural sciences, especially chemistry and biology. During the 1960s and 1970s, Filip Ćorlukić worked in a range of companies, firms, and industrial combines associated with the military industry, the paper industry, oil production and refining, and related economic sectors. Available sources note that he “worked as a supervisory body on construction sites in non-aligned countries.”<sup>6</sup> The same sources indicate that in 1976 Ćorlukić was included in the register of scientific researchers in the Republic of Croatia. Over an extended period, he authored, among other works, the following books:

- *Mjerenje temperature u industriji (Temperature Measurement in Industry)*, 1966
- *Mjerenje protoka fluida (Fluid Flow Measurement)*, 1975
- *Kamo ideš čovječe (Where are you going, Man)*, 1983., 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1907
- *Tehnologija papira (Paper Technology)*, 1987

- *Isus, Mesija: istina, put i život: objedinjeni tematsko sinoptički prikaz kanonskih knjiga Evanđelja (Jesus, the Messiah: the Truth, the Way and the Life: a Unified, Thematic, Synoptic Account of the Canonical Books of the Gospels)*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1996, prepared by Filip Ćorlukić
- *Kuran: s vremensko-tematski raspoređenim poglavljima (The Qur'ān: with Chapters Arranged Chronologically and Thematically)*, 2001, prepared and commented by Filip Ćorlukić
- *Stipine priče i pjesme: biseri koji su u nevoljama izrastali (Stipe's Stories and Poems: Pearls Born of Adversity)*, 2007
- *Uzroci i rasap Jugoslavije (The Causes and Disintegration of Yugoslavia)*, 2010<sup>8</sup>
- *Moje sjećanje na minulo stoljeće (My Memory of the Past Century)*, 2015
- *Objedinjeno evanđelje: četiri knjige kanonskih evanđelja Novog zavjeta u jednoj, tematski objedinjenoj knjizi grafički sinoptičkog prikaza (The Unified Gospel: The Four Canonical Gospels of the New Testament in a Single, Thematically Integrated Volume with a Graphical Synoptic Presentation)*, 2016
- *Quo vadis homo: katastrofa ili savršenstvo?, (Quo Vadis, Homo: Catastrophe or Perfection?)* 2016.

Some insight into Filip Ćorlukić's political views can be gained from an interview he gave to *Nacional* on June 19, 2016.<sup>9</sup> Based on everything that can be learned from his writings and public statements, Ćorlukić emerges as a humanistic intellectual: a man with pronounced anti-war convictions, a deep love for humanity and nature, and a particular fascination with flora and fauna. In his own distinctive way, he believes in God as “the creator and sustainer of all of us,” and, accordingly, he contemplates the Universe in its many forms and dimensions. Although he does not address all of these themes explicitly in his *Nacional* interview, they are developed throughout his books, which are consulted in this essay. In the interview itself, however, Ćorlukić draws attention to his views on contemporary geopolitics, reflects on the Second World War, emphasizes his undisguised Bosnian patriotism, and offers a critical

assessment of the Dayton Agreement. He also refers to Pope John XXIII as a “modern pope” and praises his efforts as one who “encouraged dialogue and solidarity regardless of religion, which was revolutionary.”<sup>10</sup> These remarks reveal the positive influence of the dialogical spirit of the Second Vatican Council on Ćorlukić: a worldly intellectual open to faith in God and committed to dialogue among different religions, sacred texts, and worldviews.

It goes without saying that the author of this essay on Filip Ćorlukić lacks the expertise required to engage adequately with his technical works on paper production, fluid dynamics, oil processing, or methods of measuring “temperature pressure” in industrial plants, among other specialized topics. For this reason, Ćorlukić’s oeuvre is approached here in a deliberately reductionist manner: only those works that can be meaningfully understood and assessed are discussed. Accordingly, for the purposes of these pages, the book *Kamo ideš čovječe* (*Where are you going, Man*),<sup>11</sup> later published in an expanded edition under the title *Quo Vadis Homo: Katastrofa ili savršenstvo?* (*Where Are You Going, O Human: Catastrophe or Perfection?*),<sup>12</sup> occupies a central place, alongside his Croatian translation of the Qur’ān (*Kuran*), which is frequently referenced throughout this essay.<sup>13</sup> These two works are especially important because they allow for a clear and coherent reconstruction of Ćorlukić’s views on the human being and humanity, the world and history, religion and faith, believers, sacred texts, and “divinely inspired” scriptures, as well as their interpretation.

It is regrettable that Filip Ćorlukić’s writings on the Gospels fall outside the scope of this study, especially since *Glas Koncila* also responded to some of these works.<sup>14</sup> Although it would be possible to comment on Ćorlukić’s “evangelical” views, on this occasion it seems both preferable and more appropriate to refrain from entering into these discussions, whether those advanced by Ćorlukić himself or by *Glas Koncila*. We remain confident that this “intra-Catholic” dialogue has reached, or will ultimately reach, a constructive and satisfactory conclusion. Despite the fact that Ćorlukić’s book *Kamo ideš čovječe* was written with scientific rigor, its first edition, published in 1983, had to be presented as a work

of “science fiction.” Dušan Čalić (1918–1993), a high-ranking Communist Party official in Croatia during the 1970s and 1980s, provided what might be described as ideological support for the book’s publication by contributing its foreword. In that text, Čalić stated the following about the book:

The originality of Filip Ćorlukić’s work is reflected in the fact that Ćorlukić derives his explanations from the interpretation of the basic principles of understanding Existence in general, analyzing the oldest religious texts and comparing them with the working principles of complex computer systems. In doing so, he started from a series of assumptions, which served as starting points in further analyses.<sup>15</sup>

Although he assessed the book from a “Marxist point of view,” Čalić nonetheless recommended it, emphasizing that Ćorlukić’s work offered extraordinary inspiration. In this way, Čalić’s ideological framing proved instrumental in enabling the book’s publication and in helping it reach both its audience and its subsequent reputation.

## Science, the Bible and the Qur’ān in the Filip Ćorlukić Intellectual Horizons

What follows is an introductory discussion of Filip Ćorlukić’s core starting points concerning science, the Bible, and the Qur’ān.<sup>16</sup> His book *Kamo ideš čovječe* (*Where Are You Going, Man?*) is of particular importance here, as it clearly articulates Ćorlukić’s humanistic outlook. This fact is underscored by his dedication of the book to “the idea of the United Nations.”<sup>17</sup> In practical terms, *Kamo ideš čovječe* brings the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Qur’ān into a single dialogical framework shaped by humanistic aspirations and goals, while also engaging the scientific currents of the period that this humanist carefully studied, valued, and appreciated. Filip Ćorlukić not only affirms but repeatedly demonstrates that the Qur’ān is not in contradiction with either the Old Testament or the New Testament. To avoid perceived contradictions among these

three sacred texts, he insists on a holistic approach that promotes integrative readings and brings to light their shared themes and overarching narratives. Accordingly, when arguing for the existence of a connected “cosmic biological community” within Existence,<sup>18</sup> Ćorlukić explicitly states that he will draw both on the Genesis of Moses and on the Qur’ān:

We will choose only the most complete text, the text on the creation of the world of one religion that came to be in historical time. That is the *Genesis* by Moses, written for the first time some three and a half thousand years ago. Not only *Genesis*, but all five books by Moses will be the basic framework for our analysis. Other known texts will be added as necessary to supplement and clarify the biblical texts. Very often the much newer *Kuran* will serve as an extremely useful supplement; *Kuran* was written 1400 years ago and, unlike other religious texts, it has survived to this day completely unchanged. In order to avoid confusion and remarks that this analysis is some kind of a mixture, I should note that *Kuran* acknowledges the Bible, and that the Hebrew and Christian texts of the Bible, as well as *Kuran*, can be considered a single text.<sup>19</sup>

Filip Ćorlukić also makes clear that his point of departure for demonstrating a single, comprehensive theme shared by the Bible and the Qur’ān (God, world, human being, and existence), received by humanity from the depths of the blue sky, is not theology. Rather, he locates this starting point in science, or in the sciences in which he places his trust. *Kamo ideš čovječe* opens with several of Ćorlukić’s key premises, formulated through deliberate simplifications, which he presents as a conscientious educator and teacher seeking to inspire confidence in his readers, whether pupils or students. In order to show that a Singular Cosmic Mind truly speaks to humanity and communicates with it, and that the Bible and the Qur’ān, among other “divinely inspired” texts, are the result of this Cosmic Mind addressing humankind, Filip Ćorlukić turns to the example of computers and the programs embedded, installed,

and stored within them. Yet, as he emphasizes, computers are creations of the human brain. And Ćorlukić states:

Today everyone agrees that the human brain is the pinnacle of development in the solar system, while for those who believe that there are no other intelligent beings in the universe, the brain is the pinnacle in the whole universe. But how is the human brain built, how does it arise and develop? The human brain, as well as all the organs in the human body, is made according to the plans and instructions contained in the DNA molecules! Everything is “written” in a newly fertilized cell. Is the peak of development the human brain itself or is it our biological programming chain that instructs the construction of the brain?<sup>20</sup>

In an accessible and receptive manner, Ćorlukić explains how the functioning of DNA (i.e., the “biological programming chain”) may be understood by drawing attention to contemporary technological applications. He points out that modern technology allows us to see clearly what a program stored in a computer is, in much the same way that DNA is stored in living beings, and how both the program and DNA are manifested and realized “externally.” In this context, Ćorlukić states:

[The] technological and economic optimization of production is carried out by computers in many plants today. Humans create programs, prescribe conditions and determine what is important for optimal work [...] Today there are fully automated factories. Production is managed by computers, while device operators in the classic sense of the word do not exist [...] In a sugar refinery, paper and pulp mill, or oil refinery, there are a number of completely separate plants. Each of these plants can be considered a technologically rounded whole.<sup>21</sup>

Ćorlukić notes that there is one “central computer” behind many of these separate plants in some production and industrial sectors:

The central computer receives information about the operation of individual plants from the plant computers and, based on this information, adjusts the operation of the plants. The central unit does not “take into account” all the details of the operation of individual plants, but only monitors and processes the information that is essential for the optimal operation of the entire factory. The operation of individual plants - to a certain level of autonomy - is managed by plant process computers, while individual parameters (pressure, temperature, etc.) are independently maintained by adequate automatic regulators, but again based on the default values they receive from their plant computer.<sup>22</sup>

We do not betray Filip Ćorlukić’s theoretical intentions if we say that he deliberately opts for metaphors, such as that of a “central computer,” in order to introduce his readers, in a heuristic manner, to reflections on God and the world, God and the Universe, or God and creation. Ćorlukić employs conceptual tools characteristic of his professional background as an engineer, constructing rich “valleys of metaphors” through which he seeks to explain the “essence of things.” He should not be reproached for resorting to deliberately evident simplifications, such as “The operating of a computer processor can also be compared to the operating of the programmer of an automatic washing machine. Both devices perform their tasks in a pre-programmed sequence.”<sup>23</sup>

Slowly but steadily, Filip Ćorlukić guides the reader from the realm of machines and computers toward God the Creator and His abundant creation of countless worlds and creatures, all ordered according to a “pre-set program”:

Emergence, growth and development of living beings on Earth occurs according to a very complex and elaborate program. Occasionally, changes happen, new characteristics appear, which later remain, so we are talking about the development from the simplest to increasingly more complex forms. This “program” has been going on for millions of years.<sup>24</sup>

For Filip Ćorlukić, there is no doubt that the DNA molecule occupies a central place in all living organisms. This “famous molecule” of DNA exists within living beings independently of their will. Ćorlukić explains:

The programming device, the device corresponding to the washing machine programmer, is the famous DNA molecule in which it is programmed what and how everything should be, down to the smallest details, but with a number of alternative possibilities. This means that in the living cell of every organism there is a series of complete development programs. In modern computer technology, the equipment itself (meaning all technical devices) is called “hardware” in English. The arrangement and system of “pressed buttons” represents, in fact, the content of the program text, or biotechnical instruction. Today, those projects, instructions and programs are typically called “software.” Thus, every living cell has “software” and “hardware” (program and equipment).<sup>25</sup>

For Filip Ćorlukić, the all-pervasive domain of DNA is by no means limited to planet Earth and its millions of living beings. He maintains that DNA is connected to the entire universe or, in the language of contemporary physics, to the multiverse:

In this work [*Kamo ideš čovječe*] we briefly wanted to draw the reader’s attention to the level and directions of contemporary thinking about the space biological community. If we accept such a thesis, then what follows is that our famous “programming chain” - the DNA molecule - is in fact programmed for the entire universe, or at least for our galaxy. A unique cosmic program for the development of the living world - from amoeba, then transitional forms, all the way to rational beings!<sup>26</sup>

These statements by Filip Ćorlukić are sufficient to indicate his intention in this and in his other books devoted to the “great secrets of the Universe,” or to that Universal Reason which stands behind it and gives

direction to all processes of unfolding, existence, and transformation. The matter of the world does not stand alone, just as a washing machine cannot set its own program. It hardly needs to be emphasized that, within philosophy and theology, from patristic thought to the Islamic *mutakallimūn* (systematic theologians), the so-called “cosmological proof” of God’s existence has long been articulated and developed.

The very existence of constellations and, beyond them, clusters of constellations leads to the conclusion that God exists and that He is. Whether such cosmic structures reveal God or instead conceal Him is a different and far more difficult question, comparable to the optical puzzle of how light fills every pore of a colorless jar while remaining light, just as the jar remains a jar. By contrast, some Islamic mystics have suggested that the cosmic void itself is God’s greatest “invention,” or act of creation. According to this view, God first created the void (an incomprehensibly vast emptiness) and then, or perhaps simultaneously, impressed within it, through His omnipresent omnipotence, creatures that flow and move, bound together in intimate interconnection.

Filip Ćorlukić is fully aware that his casuistry, drawing on DNA, software, hardware, and related analogies, constitutes a valuable form of “theoretical construction,” articulated in language in order to approach the mystery of why the Universe is, or rather, how the Universe is. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, numerous scholarly and scientific hermeneutics of the Bible emerged, giving rise to an extensive body of literature. In a similar way, scientific hermeneutics of the Qur’ān developed both in the Islamic East and in the West. Yet it has repeatedly become clear that sacred texts, in a sense, escape and elude the scientizing mind, just as the world itself continually presents that mind with new disguises, new veils of *māyā*. We never fully know which of these veils are genuine, or whether all of them are. In this respect, Filip Ćorlukić’s works can themselves be understood as carefully crafted engagements with these veils of the sacred text and with the messages conveyed through the veils of *verbum Dei*.

In his translation of the Qur’ān into Croatian, Filip Ćorlukić was searching, one might say, for a kind of DNA within this foundational text of Islam. He was delighted when he encountered the Qur’ānic analyses of

Rashad Khalifa, “an Egyptian biochemist working in the United States.”<sup>27</sup> Khalifa’s research belongs essentially to the field of statistical linguistics and is applied directly to the Arabic original of the Qur’ān. According to Khalifa, the secret structure of the Qur’ān is centered on the number nineteen. Ćorlukić was fascinated by this discovery and commented on it as follows:

First of all, *Kuran* has 114 chapters, and this number is divisible by 19 - which may just be a coincidence. All chapters (except one) are preceded by the same sentence, the so-called “seal,” i.e., *basmala*. The number of letters in this sentence in Arabic is 19! This then reduces the chance of coincidence. It is not known whether in the past 14 centuries anyone came up with the idea of the number 19 as some sort of code, but if so, it was practically impossible for them to engage in wider and more complex checks. However, Dr. Rashad had computers at his disposal and used them extensively. Here we will very briefly present the results of some of his research.

The text of the above mentioned seal in our language reads: “U ime Boga, Sveopćeg Dobročinitelja, Milostivog!” [In the Name of God—the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful] These same words are found many times in the entire text of *Kuran*: name – 19 times, God – 2698 times, Sveopći Dobročinitelj [Universal Benefactor] – 57 times. All these numbers are divisible by 19, which practically excludes the possibility of coincidence!<sup>28</sup>

Filip Ćorlukić understands the “scientific interpretation of the Qur’ān” as a process analogous to the “scientific interpretation of the universe.” In several of his books, he seeks to prepare both himself and his readers for the idea that the wonder of science and the wonder of religion should be brought together in revealing the miracle of Existence. His Croatian translation of the Qur’ān was also undertaken with this aim in mind. In this translation, Ćorlukić divided the Qur’ānic text into thematic sections, such as: (A) the invitation to Muḥammad to reveal;

(B) responses to events and promises; (C) the end of the world and the reckoning; (D) prophets; (E) testimonies; (F) ecumenical interpretations of earlier revelations; and others. What emerges clearly from these translation efforts is a scientific classification of Qur'ānic discourse according to themes. This is an approach that, in English Orientalist scholarship, is described as "the thematic rearrangement of the Qur'ānic chapters."<sup>29</sup>

If we follow the direction in which Filip Ćorlukić guides his readers, it becomes clear that, in *Kamo ideš čovječe*, he accepts evolution in nature just as readily as he accepts evolution, on other planes, between the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Qur'ān. As Ćorlukić himself states: "The brain developed [evolved] according to a typical system of upgrading new elements and expanding capacities."<sup>30</sup> In this perspective, the human brain functions as a kind of central computer processor within the human being. Ćorlukić illustrates this idea through numerous examples of the human body's responses to its environment, such as the secretion of glands, the functioning of blood circulation, and similar physiological processes. The following passage from his writing is typical:

The organism as a whole has its own special sensors, with which it monitors specific events in the surroundings. These are sensors for sight, hearing, smell, touch, pain and temperature. If there is real or possible danger, then a whole preventive defense system is activated. The superficial vessels are constricted (and the person turns pale), so that in the event of injury there is no great loss of blood. The muscles are supplied with an increased amount of blood (the heart beats faster), in which the content of nutrients is automatically increased, so that, in case of need, it is possible to confront the danger more effectively, or to run away. Meanwhile, the brain can assess the situation and order appropriate measures to be taken. If a wolf suddenly jumps out in front of a person in the forest, then the person can defend itself or run away. However, the alarm can also be false. If a rabbit jumps out instead of a wolf, the person will still be scared, the preventive automatic protection will work in the same way, but

as soon as the brain realizes that there is no danger, everything returns to the default state.<sup>31</sup>

With this, Ćorlukić gradually leads us to the question: And what about the entire Universe or Multiverses? Are they one unit that has, somewhere in the back, but also here and everywhere, something that unifies, some “central computer,” in Ćorlukić’s words, that connects and consolidates everything, just like brain unites everything in human organism? Ćorlukić’s answer is affirmative, and from time to time in his writing, he both gives and hints at such answers:

Maybe all this is, in fact, much broader than we think. DNA molecules contain programs for construction of the brain. Why could they not also participate in some way in the process of thinking and imagining? Plants have no brain at all, yet they still live very complex lives. Today, there is growing evidence that plants communicate, not only among themselves, but they also react to events in the living world in general. Although the brain is the executive organ of “thinking,” it may not be the only one participating in it.<sup>32</sup>

With this passage, Ćorlukić confronts us with a series of questions: whether, behind our cognitive, intuitive, emotional, and imaginative capacities (as well as those present in the plant and animal worlds) there exists another force, another “central processor of the universe.” In other words, do the multiverses in which we exist unfold and persist according to programs that were installed in them in advance?

As we can see on many pages of his books, Ćorlukić believes that the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Qur’ān, in their way, not only point to these premordial and eternal programs in the Universe, but in a way are also their expression, and even an effectively worded information about them. In the chapters “Programi živoga svijeta”<sup>33</sup> (Programs of the living world), “Polazišta”<sup>34</sup> (Starting points), “Postanak svijeta”<sup>35</sup> (Genesis of the world), Filip Ćorlukić makes this very clear, even when he refers to the Indian Vedas: “We will also just mention that according to

the oldest Indian Vedas, Light represents the eternal expression (manifestation) of the Absolute. There is only the transformation of the Absolute in manifestation, and that is a permanent process.”<sup>36</sup>

## The Qur’ān as the Universe in Words

It is now necessary to turn more directly to Ćorlukić’s understanding of the Qur’ān and to his use of its passages, always within the broader context of his scientific interpretations of the world. At this point, two important remarks should be made in order to clarify Ćorlukić’s starting assumptions in his reception of the Qur’ān. First, for Ćorlukić the Qur’ān is a “book” or a “message of continuity.” In his view, there are no sharp contradictions between humanity’s great religious texts and the Qur’ān, which he understands as “the last Testament to humankind.” In this regard, the following passage by Ćorlukić is particularly instructive:

Choosing only the oldest and most original [for the book *Kamo ideš čovječe*], and disregarding all subsequent additions and influences, all old myths, all starting ideas of different religious philosophies merge into one single short message. From the Sumerian epic about demi-god king Gilgamesh and all the way to *Kuran* - all of it merges into such a logical whole, that even the most fantastical assumptions begin to appear as reasonable conclusions.<sup>37</sup>

From this perspective, Ćorlukić’s Croatian translation of the Qur’ān and his book *Kamo ideš čovječe* appear as a single, coherent whole, one that reads the messages of the Qur’ān alongside those found in the ancient religious traditions of India, China, Iran, ancient Greece, and the Middle East. In this regard, Filip Ćorlukić deserves recognition for his skillful linking of ancient (indeed, one might say eternal) religious texts and messages with the holistically conceived insights of contemporary science, insights that enable human beings to orient themselves meaningfully and to be guided toward paths of wonder through the sciences themselves!

A second important feature of Filip Ćorlukić's views and theoretical approach is his understanding that there are four fundamental scales of Existence. As he states, Ćorlukić understands Existence as unfolding across four fundamental levels:

- a) The basic form of Existence is energy.
- b) The "contraction" and specific organization of energy produces the second level of Existence: matter.
- c) The particular organization of matter and energy gives rise to the third level of Existence: life.
- d) The special organization of living matter creates the foundation that, under certain conditions, enables the manifestation of Reason, which constitutes the fourth and highest level of Existence.<sup>38</sup>

Starting from this sequence: Energy, Matter, Life, Reason Ćorlukić maintains that "in the universe there exists a unified, general Reason in some form."<sup>39</sup> He further claims that this "cosmic Reason is in a constant state of expansion and development,"<sup>40</sup> that the "universal cosmic program is programmed into the DNA molecule,"<sup>41</sup> and that "development is ongoing everywhere in existence and throughout the universe wherever the necessary conditions arise."<sup>42</sup> Human brains, in this view, are "respective elements of Cosmic Reason."<sup>43</sup> Moreover, he argues that "active interventions on Earth [by the Cosmic Reason] began in the period that the Bible [and the Qur'ān] describe as the appearance of Adam,"<sup>44</sup> and finally, that "ancient texts and myths were transmitted to us, in one way or another, by representatives of the Cosmic Reason."<sup>45</sup>

As will be discussed later, Filip Ćorlukić understands the angel, or *malak*, Jibrīl (Gabriel) to be a significant member of these representatives of Cosmic Reason.

All that has been said thus far is a kind of preparation for us to consider the outlines of an "exegesis and hermeneutics of the Qur'ān," which Filip Ćorlukić offered in a comprehensible and logical way. Regarding the very phenomenon of the revelation of the Qur'ān to the

Prophet Muḥammad, (in the chapter *Kuran* in his book *Kamo ideš čovječe*) Ćorlučić points out that “in a state of trance, Muḥammad lost connection with the environment.”<sup>46</sup> Moreover:

Communicating, or receiving messages [of the Qur’ān], was usually not achieved through a direct conversation with Jibrīl, whom Muḥammad saw in his visions only a few times. However, as for the very method of receiving messages, Muḥammad was told that Gabriel

[...] *po Božijoj zapovijedi stavio tebi na srce Kuran* [...]

[He revealed this (Qur’ān) to your heart by God’s Will]

(Q. 2:97)

In order to strengthen the claims about the origin of *Kuran*, it is said:

*Donio ga je Ruhul-kudus od tvoga Gospodara* [...]

[The holy spirit has brought it down from your Lord]

(Q. 16:102)

Or

*Njega je dostavio Er-Ruhul-emin na tvoje srce...*

[which the trustworthy spirit (Gabriel) brought down]

(Q.26:193-194).<sup>47</sup>

Ćorlučić describes the phenomenon Qur’anic revelation as follows:

People surrounding Muḥammad saw something divine in his trance, while his enemies - and he had many in the beginning - saw in it signs of possession, similar to the trance of sorcerers. The most important thing for Muḥammad was what was said to him in a trance state. The messages came from God, and the very words were spoken by the voice of an angel on behalf of God.<sup>48</sup>

In several passages of the chapters he devoted to the Qur’ān, Ćorlučić shows, in his own distinctive manner, that the Islamic holy book itself bears witness to the core or essence of Existence. The Qur’ān, in his

view, proclaims and discloses the truth of Reality, essentially conveying the same message that was revealed to Moses in the Torah and to Jesus Christ in the Gospel. This is precisely what Ćorlukić argues:

The purpose of revealing *Kuran* is clear. It in no way constitutes the creation of a new religion or the preaching of a new truth. *Kuran* entirely accepts that which was revealed starting from Moses to Jesus, while not accepting certain later interpretations of those revelations. Above all, *Kuran* primarily interprets the earlier revelations and corrects those elements that, according to this view, were subsequently altered by human intervention.<sup>49</sup>

In his hermeneutical and exegetical approach to the Qur'ān, Ćorlukić follows a line of interpretation that was dear (and still is!) to Muslim modernists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: namely, the view that the Prophet Muḥammad did not come in order to perform miracles, but rather to proclaim a profound trust placed by “aliens,” or by the transcendent, in human reason:

Muhammad's action significantly differs from the action of earlier prophets. There is no trace of miracle work. It appears that aliens have stopped using the psychological shocks induced by miracles. The fact is that it was miracle work that most often led in unintended or misguided directions. The very manner of revealing the Qur'ān underscores the wish to avoid miracles.<sup>50</sup>

Ćorlukić emphasizes the integrative nature of the Qur'ān regarding the religious figures of Judaism and Christianity. Ćorlukić points out this integrative “position of Muhammad in that [this was] Jibrīl's [Gabriel's] last intervening action.” He mentions the many lines of the Qur'ān that are characterized by their worldliness:

“Svi ljudi bili su samo jedan narod...” (Q. 10:19)  
[Humanity was once nothing but a single community]

Svaki narod ima svoj rok... (Q. 7:33)

[For each community there is an appointed term]

I prije tebe smo slali ljude, kojima smo objavljivali isto što i tebi... (Q. 21:7)

[We did not send (messengers) before you (O Prophet) except mere men inspired by Us]

Recite: ‘Mi vjerujemo u Boga i ono što nam je objavljeno i što je objavljeno Ibrahimu (Abrahamu), Ismailu (Izmaelu), Ishaku (Izaku), Jakubu (Jakovu) i potomcima njihovim i vjerujemo onom što je dao Musau (Mojsiju) i Isau (Isusu)... Mi ne pravimo razlike između ni jednog od njih...’ (Q. 2:136 & 3:84).

[Say, (O believers,) “We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us; and what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and his descendants; and what was given to Moses, Jesus... we make no distinction between any of them...”]

Filip Ćorlukić was delighted with the completeness and integrativeness of the Qur’ān, or rather, the inclusiveness of the Qur’ān. After reading such passages of the Qur’ān, Ćorlukić said: “Everything is clear [from these verses of the Qur’ān]. In contrast to previous revelations, this time the alien Jibril revealed the contents of the whole, part by part, for 23 years.”<sup>51</sup> Regarding the Qur’ān, Filip Ćorlukić claims that this holy book persistently “emphasizes the continuity of revelations and the uniqueness of ideas that have been revealed since ancient times until Muhammad.”<sup>52</sup>

Ćorlukić suggests, albeit indirectly, that the completeness of the Universe is manifested in its submission to God. In this sense, he is particularly drawn to the very term *Islām*, which literally means “submission to God,” and he accordingly understands the Qur’ānic call for humanity to be “submitted to God.” As most Muslim philosophers and theologians would affirm, Ćorlukić grasped the meaning of *Islām* correctly in its literal sense. Using his own conceptual language, the “alien Jibril” (the angel Gabriel) asks of God’s messengers, and of their peoples and communities throughout history, nothing more than this submission to

God. It should be emphasized that the expression “alien Jibrīl (Gabriel)” should not be understood as implying a “spaceman” or extraterrestrial being; such an interpretation was never intended by Ćorlukić. With this clarification in mind, we may turn to the following passage in which Filip Ćorlukić interprets the Qur’ānic verse calling humanity to communicate with God through Islām, to express Islām before Him (“Kod Boga je prava vjera samo islam...” Q. 3:19) [Certainly, God’s only Way is Islam]:

So what is Islam? Is it something different [compared to Judaism and Christianity]? Does this ayah cancel out all the numerous ayahs that speak about its continuity? According to the interpretation of the translator of *Kuran*, Dr. Čaušević, Islam means: entering into true peace and embracing it. A follower of Islam must live with God and people in complete peace, giving everyone what they deserve and what must be given to them. Well, is this not put differently in the first and second commandments, which Jesus claimed to be fundamental and the most important? Is this not the same Rule of Conduct, which Buddha, Zarathustra, Akhenaten, and even the ancient Gilgamesh preached in their own words? Islam is not a different religious philosophy, just an Arabic term for the way of conduct preached by all the prophets before Muhammad.<sup>53</sup>

It is useful to end this part of the essay with Ćorlukić’s remarks that reveal his insistence that the messages of the Bible and the Qur’ān, as well as other ancient religious texts, are in a way, to put it metaphorically, the DNA supported by Cosmic Reason (or “Cosmic Community,”<sup>54</sup> as Ćorlukić puts it). This gives everything meaning and sense, and even - when it comes to humans - moral purpose. Heavenly books, heavenly texts, arrive to morally revive people. These moral revivals of humanity cannot occur without the “intervention of aliens.” As Ćorlukić said:

All interventions by aliens, and even the extreme interventions of biological selection and destruction of the least successful kinds, always came down to turning a half-human into a human,

a reasonable and social being in the broadest sense of the word. Apart from destruction, which the aliens stopped using a long time ago, there are only [moral] incentives left. There, at the level of reason, automaticity is powerless. The most important among numerous suggestions and persuasions is the endeavor to accept the Planetary and Cosmic Rule of Conduct, which the Bible calls 'love' and the *Kuran* 'Islam'. That is a line, a rope that has been thrown to us.

*I svi se držite Božjeg užeta, vjere islama [predanosti Bogu] i ne razilazite se u razne grupe.* (Q. 3:103) [And hold firmly together to the rope of God and do not be divided].<sup>55</sup>

## Ćorlukić's Translation of the Qur'ān into Croatian

The publication of Ćorlukić's translation of the Qur'ān in Croatian in 2001<sup>56</sup> did not surprise those who knew about the scientific commitments and achievements of this learned intellectual, cosmopolitan and engineer. All that has been said in this essay thus far is, in a way, Ćorlukić's commentary on the phenomenon called the Qur'ān. Once again, Filip Ćorlukić was delighted by the messages of the Second Vatican Council, especially its dialogic implications and the recognition that Jews, Christians and Muslims believe in the same, one and only living God! From the mid-sixties, Ćorlukić began studying world-famous religious texts, the Avesta, the Vedas, the Bible, the Qur'ān etc., then the Talmud and the Hadith. He also studied the extensive commentary and hermeneutic literature about these "divinely inspired religious scriptures." There is not enough space here to show all the European and Western sources Ćorlukić used in his analysis of the Qur'ān, but it is important to mention one English translator of the Qur'ān - John Medows Rodwell (1808-1900).<sup>57</sup> Namely, Ćorlukić found Rodwell's translation of the Qur'ān interesting because of his effort to include in the translation the chronological sequence of surahs or chapters in the revelation of the Qur'ān.

Classical Muslim commentators were familiar with the organization of the Qur'ān according to the sequence of revelation in historical time. However, there is a sacral / sacred Qur'ān (*al-qur'ān al-muta'abbad*),

which is an eternal Qurʾān, as it is written on the heavenly ‘Tablet Carefully Preserved’ (*Tabula Secreta*). That is, the Qurʾān that is not arranged according to the chronological order of revelation, but rather its Arabic original is the one in the *Tabula Secreta*, the one that a *ḥāfiẓ* knows by heart. The Qurʾān arranged by people “according to the time sequence of revelation” contains the identical words and sentences as the Eternal Qurʾān. The difference is entirely in the form, the first collection of the Qurʾān is read chronologically (or one could say historically), and the second collection of the Qurʾān is read as if one were closely reading the Carefully Preserved Heavenly Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ - Tabula Secreta*).

Why did Filip Ćorlukić opt for a chronological arrangement of the chapters in his translation of the Qurʾān into Croatian? From the literature on the Qurʾān - Islamic as well as Judeo-Christian-European and Western - Ćorlukić learned about the complex problems in understanding the Qurʾān if a person reading the Qurʾān in its Arabic original, or in its translation, is not familiar with the temporal development of themes within the Qurʾān. Those intellectuals who have “philosophical inclinations” say that this is about finding the temporal “development of ideas in the Qurʾān” if the Qurʾān is read according to the chronological order of the revelation of its surahs. Of course, for traditional Muslims, the Qurʾān is not a philosophical book, and it is thus not a compendium of ideas in the philosophical sense of the word. Be that as it may, this discussion about the need for temporal arrangement of the chapters of the Qurʾān is still ongoing in what could be called the hermeneutics and exegesis of the Qurʾān in Europe and the West.

In addition to the first characteristic, marked by chronology, of Ćorlukić’s Croatian translation of the Qurʾān, another important feature worth noting is the terminology, nomenclature, or conceptual apparatus he employs throughout the book. Ćorlukić keeps in mind the broadest possible Croatian readership, seeking to make the Qurʾānic text linguistically accessible while also striving to present the Qurʾān as an intelligible and acceptable book for his readers.

Turning now to sociolinguistics, Ćorlukić either develops or offers his own “Croatian adaptation” of the translation language used in the *Kuran*. There are many examples. For instance, Ćorlukić translates the

Arabic syntagm *yuqīmūna al-ṣalāta* in Croatian as “mole se” [they pray] (i.e., those who believe in God “pray to God”).<sup>58</sup> Typically, the literature on Islam written by Bosniaks uses “obavljaju *namāz*” [they perform *namāz*] for the aforementioned syntagm *yuqīmūna al-ṣalāta*. Of course, *namāz* is a Persian word meaning prayer. “Obavljati *namāz*” [performing *namāz*] entered the Bosnian language more than five centuries ago. But in the Croatian language, *namāz* is a less familiar word, so Ćorlukić opts for “mole se” [they pray] or “obavljaju molitvu” [they offer prayer]. However, Bosnian Muslim translators of the Qur’ān believe that *namāz*, when referring to “communicating with God,” has a higher status than *molitva* [prayer]. The Persian word *namāz* (and the Arabic word *ṣalāt*) is, in a way, in the Islamic Weltanschauung the highest form of communication with God by humans. Furthermore, *namāz* and *ṣalāt* also have the intention of God communicating with people. The semantics of the word *molitva* [prayer] does carry such a broad “mystical meaning” (at least among Bosnian Muslim translators of the Qur’ān). Ćorlukić treats the word *zakāt* in almost the same way. In Islam: the mandatory giving of wealth to the poor, the needy, those trapped in debt bondage, etc. Of course, using the word *tax* to translate *zakāt* would be very clumsy, but, in essence, *zakāt* in Islam is a type of compulsory giving of money or material assistance, for example in grain, fruit, food, clothing, to the poor! *Zakāt* is primarily given or distributed to the poor in money, but it is not uncommon to give *zakāt* in kind. Ćorlukić decided to translate the word *zakāt* (in Bosnian this word is often written as *zekjat*) as “milo-dari”<sup>59</sup> [alms]. Elsewhere, however, it is evident that Ćorlukić translates the word *zakāt* as “doprinos” [material contribution]. Thus, the syntagm (surah 2:42) *wa-aqīmū al-ṣalāta wa-ātū al-zakāta* is translated: “Molite se, i dajte [materijalni] doprinos...”<sup>60</sup> [Pray and make material contribution]. At times, however, Ćorlukić translated the word *zakāt* as giving or gifting,<sup>61</sup> while parts of the Qur’ān that in the Arabic original read *aqīmū al-ṣalāta*, Ćorlukić translated into Croatian as: “Klanjajte se svome Svedržitelju [Bogu].” [Worship your Pantocrator (God)].

Ćorlukić opts for ‘Svedržitelj’ [Pantocrator] to translate the Arabic Qur’anic word *rabb*, in order to avoid the common word ‘Gospodar’ [Lord] that is very common in many Bosnian translations of the Qur’ān

when translating the word *rabb*. Throughout his translation, Ćorlukić is more or less consistent in translating *rabb* as “Svedržitelj” [Pantocrator]. The influence of European translations of the Qur’ān on Ćorlukić is evident here. For instance, in his translation of the Qur’ān, *The Message of the Qur’ān*,<sup>62</sup> Leopold Weiss (*alias* Muhammad Asad) translated the Arabic word *rabb* into English as *Sustainer* (*Uzdržitelj*, *Uzdržatelj*), and not as *Lord* (*Gospodar*). Ćorlukić believed that in Semitic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) the relationship between God the Lord and man the servant (or slave) did not exist. Rather it was a relationship between the ‘Svedržitelj’ [Pantocrator] and ‘Uzdržitelj’ [Almighty] (God) on one side, and the worshiper, or *službenik* [servant] on the other. Consistent with his decision to translate ‘*abdullāh*’ with the syntagm “Božji službenik” [God’s servant], Ćorlukić translates Īsā al-Masīḥ’s (Jesus Christ’s) cry: *Innī ‘abdullāh!* – from surah Maryam/Mary as follows: “Ja sam službenik Božji” [I am a servant of God].<sup>63</sup>

In his translation, or *Kuran*, Ćorlukić thus wanted to emphasize the meaning of *Islām* as *devotion* to God, which he wrote about extensively in his book *Kamo ideš čovječe*. In addition, in *Kuran* Ćorlukić sought to ensure the readability of his Croatian translation of Islam’s foundational text, while at the same time conveying the receptiveness and expressive appeal of the Qur’ānic style through his Croatian adaptation. Consider the opening surah in the Qur’ān in Ćorlukić’s Croatian translation:

U ime Boga,  
Sveopćeg Dobročinitelja,  
Milostivog!  
Tebe Boga hvalimo,  
Svedržitelja svjetova.  
Sveopćeg Dobročinitelja,  
Milostivog, Vladara Dana sudnjega.  
Tebi se klanjamo i od Tebe pomoć tražimo.  
Uputi nas na pravi put,  
na put onih kojima si milost Svoju darovao,  
a ne onih koji su protiv sebe izazvali Tvoju srdžbu,  
niti onih koji su zalutali!<sup>64</sup>

In a large number of translations of the Qur'ān, the word *rabb* - which Ćorlukić translates as *Svedržitelj* [Pantocrator] - is translated as *Gospodar* [Lord]. Ćorlukić believed that in the translation of the Qur'ān, when rendering the word *rabb*, one should not include the meaning of *the rule of God* on Earth, in the Universe and elsewhere. In other words, what should be emphasized is God's *mercy, care, compassion, love*. Perhaps Filip Ćorlukić's most daring move in his translation is, for the sake of the comprehensibility, his opting for biblical names in the translation of Islamic names contained in the Qur'ān. This, in Ćorlukić's translation *Hārūn* is *Aaron*, *Mūsā* is *Moses*, *Yūsuf* is *Joseph*, *Ibrāhīm* is *Abraham*, *Ishāq* is *Isaac*, *Ya'qūb* is *Jacob*, *Yūnus* is *Jonah*, *Nūḥ* is *Noah*, *Maryam* is *Mary*, *Zakariyyā* is *Zachariah*, *Īsā* is *Jesus*, etc. Through these decisions, Ćorlukić aimed to ensure the readability of his work for a readership that is culturally Christian (or more specifically Catholic) and accustomed to biblical names, nomenclature, and terminology. It should also be noted that Ćorlukić translated the Qur'anic term *al-kitāb* ("the Book") as *Bible* whenever the context made clear that the Qur'ān was referring to *al-kitāb* in the sense of the Bible, whether the Old or the New Testament. Translating proper names from the Arabic original of the Qur'ān is always accompanied by certain dilemmas, and it is ultimately up to the translator to decide whether or not to employ biblical equivalents. The editors of *The Study Quran*,<sup>65</sup> published in the United States and produced entirely by traditional Muslims and Muslim converts, chose to use biblical names throughout the text whenever it was clear from the Qur'ān that the figures or terms in question had direct counterparts in the Bible. One effect of such translation strategies is the emergence of a kind of "congenial" and mutually intelligible reading of the Bible and the Qur'ān. We are fully convinced that this was precisely the intention Filip Ćorlukić had in mind.

## The Theology of Ćorlukić's Translation of the Qur'ān

Although it can be established that the translator Filip Ćorlukić was drawn to the study of the Qur'ān by what he perceived as the "non-theological" character of Islam's foundational sacred text, no translation of

the Qurʾān can entirely avoid a certain degree of “theologizing” the text. For this reason, the theological particularities of Ćorlukić’s *Kuran* will be addressed here in a preliminary manner. Anyone who has engaged seriously with the Qurʾān soon discovers that its language, discourse, and narratives readily lend themselves to various forms of “theological navigation,” as well as to translational shifts that may move away from the text’s initial or original intention. To illustrate, albeit only briefly, the kind of hermeneutical challenges involved, let us cite a single example from the Qurʾān. Surah *Yāsīn* (36:35), in Arabic reads:

*Li-ya’kulū min thamarihī wa-mā ‘amilathu aydihim.*

This Arabic original can be translated in two basic ways:

“Neka ljudi jedu od plodova koje dariva Bog, i od onoga što sami svojim rukama priprave!”<sup>66</sup> [Literally: Let people eat from the fruits that God gives, and from what they have prepared with their own hands!]

“Neka ljudi jedu od plodova koje dariva Bog, a te plodove ljudi nisu svojim rukama pripravili!” [Literally: Let people eat from the fruits that God gives, but these fruits were not prepared by people with their own hands!]

The Arabic particle *wa* in the original text, and in this particular Qurʾānic passage, may be translated either as a coordinating conjunction (“and”) or as a disjunctive or adversative conjunction (“but”). As is evident, reading version A affirms human diligence, activity, and creativity: in the production and cultivation of fruit, human beings cooperate with God by irrigating gardens, orchards, and fields. Reading version B, by contrast, offers an interpretation that firmly asserts that everything lies in God’s hands and that human beings play no role in the fruits God provides other than to consume them. There are thousands of such passages in the Qurʾān in which the original text allows for a wide range of translational solutions and interpretive possibilities. A specific hermeneutical discipline, known as *qirāʾāt al-Qurʾān* (the readings of the Qurʾān), or variant readings of the Qurʾānic text, is devoted precisely to this multivalence. It is therefore the responsibility of Qurʾān

translators to preserve the integrity of the text, that is, to avoid distorting it theologically, philologically, or exegetically. It is worth recalling, in this context, that the first Catholic translation of the Qurʾān into Latin (1143), produced by Robert of Ketton (*Robertus Ketenensis*), is marked by deliberate distortions of the Qurʾānic original. A recent study by Óscar de la Cruz Palma, entitled “*Robert de Ketton, traditore...*” (“Robert of Ketton, Traitor...”),<sup>67</sup> revisits this translation by playing on the well-known Latin adage *traduttore, traditore* (“translator, traitor”).<sup>68</sup>

Naturally, once this point is made, the most important question immediately arises: who determines what the “original intentions of the Text” actually are? There are many possible answers, yet within Islamic hermeneutics and Qurʾānic exegesis it is generally maintained that these original or initial intentions are determined by the Islamic tradition itself: understood broadly as a pious, religious, ritual, philological, theological, theosophical, and mystical tradition.

In *Kamo ideš čovječe*, as well as in the extensive essay “Islam kao religija, kultura i civilizacija” (“*Islam as a Religion, Culture, and Civilization*”)<sup>69</sup> and in his other writings on Islam and the Qurʾān, Ćorlukić presents himself as an author who approaches the foundational text of Islam with boldness and seriousness, writing in an engaging style and with evident knowledge grounded in scientific inquiry. In short, he demonstrates that he is a figure worthy of presenting himself as a translator of the Qurʾān into the Croatian language. As has already been noted, Ćorlukić approaches the Bible and the Qurʾān as a unified work of what he calls a “Semitic religious genius.” In his view, the Qurʾān does not reject the profound teachings and testimonies of the Bible; rather, it confirms and transmits them. Moreover, the Qurʾān appears as a text that safeguards what is understood to be a divinely revealed heritage prior to the seventh century, from the time of ʿĪsā al-Masiḥ (Jesus Christ). Ćorlukić is fully convinced that the biblical legacy of the Ten Commandments is equally a Qurʾānic legacy, that the moral and ethical teachings of the Bible blossom anew in the Qurʾān. Consequently, in Ćorlukić’s formulation, the Qurʾān emerges as both the primary inheritor and interpreter of the Bible, as well as of the monotheistic Divine Tradition which, renewed and strengthened, continues to convey to humanity knowledge of God, the

Universe, and Existence. This, in essence, constitutes the theology from which Ćorlukić proceeds in his translation of the Qur'ān. Everything else that appears in the *Kuran* (that is, in his Croatian translation) presents the realization or implementation of this theology. The following translations of two Qur'anic passages illustrate the translator's careful effort to render the monotheism of Islam faithfully:

Bog je jednoća, osim Njega nema Boga. Vječni je i Živi! Ne obuzima ga ni drijemež ni san. Njegovo je ono što je na Nebesima i ono što je na Zemlji. Tko je taj koji bi se mogao kod Njega zauzimati, osim s Njegovom dozvolom?<sup>70</sup>

[Literally: God is oneness, there is no God except Him. He is Eternal and Living! Neither drowsiness nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who could possibly intercede with Him without His permission?]

Bog je svjetlo nebesa i Zemlje. Primjer Njegova svjetla je kao udubina u zidu u kojoj je svjetiljka; svjetiljka je u staklu, a staklo se pričinja kao blistava zvijezda, koja se pali iz blagoslovljenog maslinova stabla – ni istočnog, ni zapadnog – čije ulje skoro da svijetli i ako ga vatra nije dohvatila. Svjetlo nad svjetlom! Bog vodi Svojoj svjetlosti onoga koga odluči, i Bog navodi ljudima primjere. Bog znade svaku stvar.<sup>71</sup>

[God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. His light is like a niche in which there is a lamp, the lamp is in a crystal, the crystal is like a shining star, lit from (the oil of) a blessed olive tree, (located) neither to the east nor the west, whose oil would almost glow, even without being touched by fire. Light upon light! God guides whoever He wills to His light. And God sets forth parables for humanity. For God has (perfect) knowledge of all things.]

Indubitably, Ćorlukić's translation is both clear and inspired. By introducing the word "jednoća" [oneness], i.e., that God is - *jednoća* [oneness],

Ćorlukić relies on his knowledge of physics, those disciplines of physics that state that all Existence, that entirety of Being, is at the same time united in one continuous tonality of existence. Essentially, *Božanska jednoća* [God's oneness] - to use Filip Ćorlukić's terminology - permeates all Being, all Existence. In Islamic philosophy this is called *tawhīd* (*jednoća, jedinstvo Božija*; in English *the Oneness*, in German *die Einheit*, etc.). The long-ago discovery of the Sufis of Islam about the relationship between God and the Multiverse was mentioned above; namely, the Sufis claim that light permeates the colorless jar, just as God exists Always and Everywhere in the world. Practically, in every pore of a colorless jar, light is present as oneness (wholeness!) that unites the jar. But, a jar remains a jar, and light remains light!

Moreover, as Islamic mystics have observed, divine light permeates even a colored jar, transforming pure, colorless light into colored light. This image suggests that between God's oneness (or God as wholeness) and Existence (or Being, or the Worlds) there unfolds an astonishingly rich and multifaceted cooperation! God is not separated from the world, yet He never becomes the world; He does not become what He creates! Indeed, Filip Ćorlukić should be congratulated and recognized for respectably conveying the mysticism of the Qur'anic text. This is also evident in his insistence to translate the Arabic and ancient Semitic word *Allāh* with the Croatian (and Serbian, Bosnian, Montenegrin...) word *Bog* [God]. Undeniably, Ćorlukić thus ensures for the Croatian readership of his *Kuran* an accessible comprehension and intimacy in their reading experience. Ćorlukić said:

We [Croats], like any other people, have our own word and term: *Bog* [God]. Why should we then write and say the Arabic word *Allah*, when the meaning is exactly the same, and the Qur'ān specifically says that it is the same God. In this way, by claiming that "Allah is the Muslim God," we are in danger of accepting this to be two different gods! Besides, in the Bible in Arabic, the word *God* is written in Arabic, i.e.,: *Allah*. The same goes for numerous names that are mentioned in the Bible and in the Qur'ān. These biblical names were accepted in a certain form in the entire

culture of the West, so it is logical that we also adopted these names which were adapted to the Croatian language - *Mojsije*, *Isus* and others. If these names were adopted into our language in this form, then writing the same names [in the translation of the Qur'ān into Croatian] in the Arabic variant not only goes against the rules of language, but it also seems confusing.<sup>72</sup>

This passage confirms Ćorlukić's wish, as a translator of the Qur'ān into Croatian, to prioritize accessibility in understanding this holy book. Ćorlukić did not specifically discuss the Arabic language of the Qur'ān as the holy language of Islam and Muslims in the texts that he provided in his translation as a commentary. This topic was generally left aside. Although the nomenclature, terms and names in Ćorlukić's translation of the Qur'ān remain affected by the long-term cultural influence of the Bible in the Croatian language, Ćorlukić's translation of the Qur'ān is readable in an "Islamic way," and a Muslim reader would not perceive *Kuran* by the translator Ćorlukić as a type of "Christianization of Islam and the Qur'ān."

Finally, in his translation choices, Ćorlukić opted for mild rationalizations of Qur'anic discourse. There are several instances of this approach. For example, when translating the ninety-sixth surah of the Qur'ān, '*Alaq*, Ćorlukić (like other translators) sought the most appropriate way to render the meaning of the word '*alaq*. Qur'anic commentaries emphasize that '*alaq* conveys the sense of "clinging" or "germination," such as a seed taking root and sprouting in fertile soil. For this reason, some interpreters suggest that the opening lines of this surah *iqra' bi-smi rabbika lladhī khalaq—khalaqa l-insāna min 'alaq* mean: "Read, (O Prophet), in the Name of your Lord Who created—created humans from a clinging clot..." Ćorlukić's translation of these lines (96:1-2) reads: "Objavljuj, u ime tvoga Svedržitelja koji stvara, stvara čovjeka od embrija!"<sup>73</sup> Literally: "Proclaim, in the name of your Almighty who creates, creates man from the embryo!"

As a man who was familiar with the basic principles of embryology, Ćorlukić believed that the Arabic-Semitic word '*alaq* should be translated as embryo. Of course, Ćorlukić is right. But other translation

solutions for this term (and for many others) are also valid, such as *zametak* [germ], *ugrušak* [clot], etc. Indeed, when it is said in the Qurʾān that God creates people from something that is *ʿalaq*, i.e., from something that is germinating in something, attached to something, then this means that the person itself is that *ʿalaq*. That is, a human being in its mother’s womb is attached to its mother by the umbilical cord, then, after birth, it is dependent on air with its lungs, then it is dependent on food, water, etc. At times, Ćorlukić also appears as a translator who is influenced by particular philosophical conceptual frameworks. Thus, he translates the word *al-šamad* from surah 112, which refers to God’s absolute independence, thus: “On je Vječni, Neprouzročeni Uzrok” [He is the Eternal, Uncaused Cause]. Here, it is worth recalling that neither patristic theology, nor the extensive debates of Muslim theologians (*mutakallimūn*), have never solved all the problems of defining the notion of an “Uncaused Cause.”

One distinctive innovation that Filip Ćorlukić introduced into the tradition of Qurʾān translation in the Western Balkans consists of brief signals or instructions placed in the margins of his translation—a kind of synopsis indicating the central point of the text on each page. Thus, the marginal note “Kažnjavanje vojske sa slonovima” (“Punishing an army with elephants”)<sup>74</sup> invites readers to reflect on how the small “flying creatures, Abābil,” dispersed the infantry that marched with elephants. “Kada dođe pobjeda” (“When victory comes”)<sup>75</sup> alludes to the continuing spread of Islam, or, more broadly, to the spread of devotion to the One and Only God. “Kada se sunce smota” (“When the Sun folds up”)<sup>76</sup> signals the Qurʾānic imagery of the end of the world, when the Sun will be rolled up, darkened, and extinguished. Other marginal cues serve similar interpretive functions. “Svakom prema njegovu ponašanju” (“To each according to his behavior”)<sup>77</sup> points to passages emphasizing that human actions on Earth are not in vain and that individuals are morally responsible beings. “Abraham razbija idolske kipove” (“Abraham breaks the idols”)<sup>78</sup> refers to the episode in which the monotheist Abraham confronts his oppressive polytheistic community, exposing their inability to recognize that the One and Only God is the Creator of all beings, and that respect for creation flows from this fundamental truth. The marginal question “Je li teže stvoriti vas [ljude, čovječanstvo] ili nebo?” (“Is it

harder to create you [humanity] or the sky?")<sup>79</sup> highlights the Qur'anic assertion that the creation of the Universe is a far greater act than the creation of human beings. There are several hundred such marginal notes in Ćorlukić's translation. Together, they serve as a practical and effective guide, helping readers grasp the messages of the Qur'ān as clearly and directly as possible.

## Concluding Remarks

Filip Ćorlukić's Croatian translation of the Qur'ān (*Kuran*) demonstrates that the universality of the Qur'ān is accessible even to intellectuals who do not possess a strictly defined vocation as Arabists, Orientalists, or Islamologists. Over several decades, Ćorlukić studied religions and religious phenomena, devoting particular attention to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These scholarly interests led him, through sustained and focused engagement, to examine Islam and the Qur'ān in depth. In 2001, his translation of the Qur'ān (*Kuran*) was published. It is, without doubt, written in beautiful Croatian: clear in idiom, accessible in expression, and marked by receptiveness and inspiration. Concerning his use of Croatian, Ćorlukić himself remarked:

Regarding the translation into Croatian I tried to consistently follow the logical Qur'anic approach: "To the Arabs in Arabic," and accordingly: "To us in our language." In addition to the strict "proofreading" of Čaušević's<sup>80</sup> and Korkut's<sup>81</sup> translations, I also strove to make understandable those parts of the text that were incomprehensible due to the linguistic clumsiness of the translator. In those cases where the meaning of a text by these two translators was different, I used the much better English translation by Muhammad Asad, and I chose the meaning given by two out of these three. If, perhaps, all three of them translated the same text differently, I then turned to mufti Ševko Omerbašić,<sup>82</sup> who knows the Arabic language well.<sup>83</sup>

In addition, Filip Ćorlukić's translation of the Qur'ān is accompanied by numerous supplementary notes, footnotes, and interpretive signals

placed in the margins across nearly four hundred pages. These translational cues function much like intertitles, enlivening the reading experience, lending coherence to the translated text, and highlighting the internal structure and interconnectedness of the Qurʾān. The decision to publish the translation according to a probable chronological order of the sūrahs further enhances its accessibility and significantly contributes to the book's readability. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Ćorlukić's translation underscores the idea that sacred texts are precious repositories of human identity and cherished values. Through his Croatian translation of the Qurʾān (*Kuran*), Filip Ćorlukić demonstrates that dialogue, including interreligious and interfaith dialogue, can be deeply fruitful, especially when one seeks to understand what coexistence with God looks like for others. We believe that Ćorlukić's translation will yet have its moment of renewed recognition, a second appearance in the public eye. It is with these hopes that I conclude this text, written in days that are bringing Muslims ever closer to the month of Ramadan.<sup>84</sup>

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- The Study Quran*, translated by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (editor-in-chief), Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph E. B. Lumbard i Muhammed Rustom, published by HarperOne, New York, 2015.

## Endnotes

- 1 This essay originated as a talk delivered in Bosnian at the International Scientific and Professional Symposium “Filozofija islama,” held on November 10 and 11, 2023, at the Islamic Cultural Center in Zagreb. The event was organized by the Majlis of the Islamic Community in Croatia, the Scientific Research Institute “Ibn Sina” in Sarajevo, and the Bosniak National Community for the City of Zagreb and Zagreb County. The essay was written and finalized between late 2023 and early 2024. During its composition, the author assumed that Mr. Filip Čorlukić was still alive, having heard years earlier from the retired mufti of Zagreb, Mr. Ševko Omerbašić, that Čorlukić had reached an advanced age and resided in a retirement home in Pula. It was only recently that the author learned of Čorlukić’s passing on December 18, 2022, in Pula, at nearly 95 years old.
- 2 Usp. Max Scheler, *Položaj čovjeka u kozmosu* [The Human Place in the Cosmos], preveli Vladimir Filipović and Sulejman Bosto, published by Logos, Veselin Masleša, Sarajevo, 1987.
- 3 Posveta, *Kuran s vremensko-tematski raspoređenim poglavljima*, priredio i komentirao Filip Čorlukić, izd. Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, Zagreb, 2001., 5. This book will hereafter be referred to as: *Kuran* (in italics).
- 4 *Kuran*, 424.
- 5 This information is based on what is written on the back cover of Čorlukić’s book *Kamo ideš čovječe*, Prosvjeta, Zagreb, 1983.
- 6 Cf. [https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filip\\_Čorlukić](https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filip_Čorlukić), Accessed on 21 January 2024.
- 7 The foreword for the 1983 edition was written by Dušan Čalić.
- 8 The preface (prologue) for this work was written by Asaf Duraković.
- 9 Cf. Tamara Borić, *Interview: Filip Čorlukić – O crkvi, religiji, državi, genetici, ratovima*, published in Nacional, 19 June 2016.
- 10 See Filip Čorlukić’s interview with *Nacional* (June 19, 2016).
- 11 Published by Prosvjeta, Zagreb, 1983.
- 12 Filip Čorlukić, *Quo Vadis Homo: Katastrofa ili savršenstvo?*, izd. Fokus komunikacije d. o. o., Zagreb, 2016.
- 13 *Kuran: s vremensko-tematski raspoređenim poglavljima*, 2001, priredio i komentirao (edited and commentary by) Filip Čorlukić.
- 14 In an interview for *Nacional* (June 19, 2016), Filip Čorlukić mentions that *Glas Koncila* criticized him because he had his own views on the “unified Gospel.” *Glas Koncila* (“*The Voice of the Council*”) is a Catholic weekly newspaper published in Croatia, closely associated with the Roman Catholic Church.
- 15 Dušan Čalić, *Predgovor, Kamo ideš čovječe*, 7.

- 16 Regarding Ćorlukić's interpretations of the Qur'an, it is useful to remember Maurice Bucaille and his book *Biblija, Kur'an i nauka* [The Bible, the Qur'an & Science] (*La Bible, le Coran et la Science*), cf. edition in Bosnian, Sarajevo, 2001.
- 17 Cf. Filip Ćorlukić, *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 5.
- 18 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 50.
- 19 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 70-71.
- 20 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 28.
- 21 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 30.
- 22 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 31.
- 23 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 31.
- 24 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 32.
- 25 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 33.
- 26 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 50.
- 27 *Kuran*, 414.
- 28 *Kuran*, 414.
- 29 Many works have been written about this, cf. Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, Bibliotheca Islamica, Minneapolis, 1994.
- 30 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 35.
- 31 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 35.
- 32 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 43.
- 33 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 44-50.
- 34 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 51-63.
- 35 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 67-71.
- 36 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 70.
- 37 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 19.
- 38 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 53.
- 39 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 53.
- 40 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 53.
- 41 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 54.
- 42 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 54.
- 43 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 54.
- 44 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 54.
- 45 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 54.
- 46 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 306.

- 47 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 306.
- 48 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 307.
- 49 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 309.
- 50 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 312.
- 51 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 314.
- 52 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 315.
- 53 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 317.
- 54 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 323.
- 55 *Kamo ideš čovječe*, 323.
- 56 That is *Kuran*: s vremensko-tematski raspoređenim poglavljima, priredio i komentirao Filip Ćorlukić, published by Nakladni zavod Matice Hrvatske, Zagreb, 2001.
- 57 The Koran, translated by John Medows Rodwell, published by Bantam Classic, New York, 2004.
- 58 *Kuran*, 273.
- 59 *Kuran*, 304.
- 60 *Kuran*, 276.
- 61 *Kuran*, 278.
- 62 Cf. Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān*, published by The Muslim World League, Geneva, 1964.
- 63 *Kuran*, 164.
- 64 *Kuran*, 26.
- 65 Cf. *The Study Quran*, translated by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (editor-in-chief), Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph E. B. Lumbard i Muhammed Rustom, izd. HarperOne, New York, 2015.
- 66 In his translation of *Kuran*, Ćorlukić opts for this reading, and his translation reads: "...da bi oni jeli njihove plodove, i od onoga što su proizvele njihove ruke..." (*Kuran*, 94) [Literally: that they may eat their fruits, and of what their hands have produced].
- 67 Cf. Óscar de la Cruz Palma, *Robert de Ketton, traditore: Manifestations of anti-Islamic Radicalism in the First Latin Translation of the Qur'ān*, published in: *The Latin Qur'ān, 1143-1500., translation, transition, interpretation*, edited by Cándida Ferrero Hernández and John Tolan, De Gruyter, Berlin, 2021, pp. 111-121.
- 68 Let us also briefly mention that the saying in French "belle infidèle" (*beautiful unfaithful!*) refers to translation. Namely, if the translation is beautiful, it is not faithful to the original, and if it is not beautiful, then it is faithful to the original.
- 69 Cf. Filip Ćorlukić, *Islam kao religija, kultura i civilizacija, pogovor Kuranu*, izd. Nakladni Zavod Matice Hrvatske, Zagreb, 2001., str. 391-432.

- 70 *Kuran*, 294.
- 71 *Kuran*, 359.
- 72 *Kuran*, 430.
- 73 *Kuran*, 20.
- 74 *Kuran*, 31.
- 75 *Kuran*, 32.
- 76 *Kuran*, 34.
- 77 *Kuran*, 37.
- 78 *Kuran*, 55.
- 79 *Kuran*, 69.
- 80 Mehmed Džemaludin Čaušević (1870-1938), a Bosnian translator of the Qur'ān.
- 81 Besim Korkut (1904-1975), a Bosnian translator of the Qur'ān.
- 82 Ševko effendi Omerbašić (born in 1945) was a mufti in Zagreb (Republic of Croatia) in the period 1990 – 2012.
- 83 *Kuran*, 430.
- 84 This essay was written between December 2023 and January 2024.