

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



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THE FOURTH CONTENTIONS

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The ‘Contentions’ are little sparks, some luminous, others merely hot, which fly from the point where Islam’s sword is resharpened by its encounter with the anvil of modernity. They are not credal articles, or mystical aphorisms; they avoid dull linearity or affiliation to a system. Instead they test the power of speech to point out the paradoxes of our world, and to suggest the transcendence to which those paradoxes point. Like Traherne’s *Centuries of Meditation*, they are arranged in hundreds, each of which may very loosely centre on a theme.

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1. The Thou that can be known is not the eternal Thou.
2. The alternative to Calvinism does not need to be Jansenism.
3. The false Salafism: an optimism about the present which justifies a pessimism about the past.
4. All Islam offers is God.
5. From servant to savant; from *'aqedab* to *'aqidah*.
6. No liberation without libation. (*I charge you to be good to women.*)
7. *Shari'a* is a side of God's mercy. *Tariqa* is a sign of God's mercy. *Haqiqa* is a sigh of God's mercy.
8. He created Hell only that He might be called 'Merciful'.
9. 'Leave the *ghazal*, look into the *azal*.' (Rumi)
10. The *lubb*: humanity without nature is like nature without daylight.
11. No religion without love of the founder; no love of the founder without poetry. (Everyone should be the fruit of a *na't*-case.)
12. 'Die Bösen haben keine Lieder.'
13. *Hawa*: the wind of fancy.
14. *Adab*: we must re-member our bodies.
15. Judaism was not displaced by Christianity or Islam so much as it was displaced by Zionism.
16. Moderation in miracles: '*Enter houses by their doors.*'
17. Where there is no *iman* there is no theology.
18. The fact that we so regularly misunderstand each other is a proof of Islam's universality.
19. Those that mind the state must mind their state of mind.

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20. Our muniments are our munitions.
21. Maidens! Mey'den meydanlar medeniyyet'tir!
22. Islam provides hope; the *umma* provides fear. 'Whoever unites both wings shall fly.'
23. A theology which attributes the *jalal* to a failure of *jamal* must end in secularity.
24. To whom are the Mothers of Believers entrusted, after his death? Not to John, but to *themselves*.
25. It is better to be tolerant than to be terminated.
26. If Zionism is not a xenotransplant, why are there so many antibodies?
27. We need an Erasmus, not a Luther.
28. The next conquest must take place *south* of Poitiers.
29. *Halakhab*: Israel is the handmaiden of Judaism. Herzl: Judaism is the handmaiden of Israel.
30. Mars goes over; Venus goes through. Only when we know the destination can we begin to speak of equality.
31. *Jihad*: before drawing your sword, learn how to open your eyes.
32. Without eschatology there is only scatology.
33. Shi'ism: He was infallible, except in his choice of wives.
34. If you want truth to be accepted, you must be accepted. If you want to be accepted, proclaim what you can accept.
35. Punching buttons is *il don fatale* for the *fata*.
36. Holidays: they think their bodies are *solar-powered*.
37. *Takbirij* is no substitute for exegesis.

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38. Miss Aisha Featherstone-Pugh
Has problems performing wudu.
When splashing with water,
I'm sure that she oughter,
Take off her veil and her gloves too.
39. Does the infinity of God leave space for anything else?
40. The *kafir*: the baby turtle that forgot the sea.
41. One *turbe* for both the *duarum turbarum*.
42. We need nothing so much as proof of our own hypocrisy.
43. It is blasphemous to use religion as an excuse for one's lack of culture.
44. Religion should help us to include more, not less.
45. The judge of the art competition seeks only beauty in our portfolios.
46. The emasculation by email replaces quality with equality.
47. The false Salafism: a nostalgia that is not homesickness.
48. Optimism: the false Salafism is *pollarding*.
49. Suicide bombing is an extreme way of shooting oneself in the foot.
50. The more we have, the less we are.
51. The Christian Messiah is false because he brings calamity to the Jews. The Muslim Messiah is true because he brings their liberation.
52. Secular decadence is less ugly than religious decadence because only organic matter can really decompose.
53. Love of the saints is the proof of religion and of religiosity.
54. Nothing brings less ease than sloth.
55. The posterior has no posterity.
56. Zealotry: the fetishizing of the liminal.

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57. Where there is no division in vision there is vision even in division.
58. Secularity: Islam has got the bends. Islam: we are suffering from oxygen deficiency.
59. The West treats other civilisations like stroke victims.
60. Palestine: the burnt offering that atones for Paul's original sin.
61. How to rebridge the sexes? To reach the point of reconciliation? Only the logos can achieve this, and a logos that is *ungendered*.
62. *Kalam* is negative theology. Sufism is positive theology.
63. Moriah is the *mar'a*, the seeing-place. *'The heart denied not that which it saw.'*
64. Mind the Bible with your P's and Q's.
65. Atheism: the belief that water originates in the well.
66. Islam: the transformation of nature into culture.
67. If you can't beat them, be joined by them.
68. Gender: the equator is only equitable if we include the sea. (*Ave maris stella!*)
69. There is no secular masculinity.
70. Even Hind was not ultimately the hindmost.
71. Heuristics: the ideal ear is the idea without the Id.
72. Popular *taqlid* sounds like four-part harmony. Popular *ijtihad* is cacophony.
73. England needs Priestley's other oxygen.
74. Without determinism there can be no miracles.
75. Wrath is finite; mercy knows no end.
76. The way forwards is only the way back.
77. Good architecture is to promote thankfulness.

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78. Give thanks for the tangible, that you may give thanks for the intangible.
79. Global warming is from the gases of our indigestion.
80. The alternative to *tasawwuf* is wool-gathering.
81. Nothing is more dangerous than the ego wearing the robes of the spirit.
82. Nomocentrism exists only to exclude egocentrism.
83. Do not ask, 'Where is God?', but ask, 'How am I?'
84. Learn from the Law in the saint alone.
85. Religion is the recognition of beauty.
86. Only the Messiah can write history as the promised palindrome.
87. The American for erotic is erratic.
88. The Other calls us forth through the other.
89. Ideology must not be self-critical; religion must be.
90. We cannot progress until we can stand still.
91. The Turks were even more catholic than the Anglicans.
92. Utopianism was the *Jabiliyya* of the 20th century.
93. We must be the legatees of the Legate.
94. Laziness is its own chastisement.
95. The *umma* decays before the *shari'a*, the *shari'a* before the *haqiqa*. The *haqiqa* never decays at all.
96. Those that follow a religion that cannot create a civilisation will create a civilisation that cannot follow a religion.
97. *Halakhab* without *halaqab* is a vulnerable linearity.
98. Is it willpower that frees us from our wilfulness?

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99. Initiation is to realise the lightness of the Law.
100. Modernity is the teaching of perfect misunderstanding.