

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Quilliam Press

# THE FIFTH 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. 'Islam is not Islamism - never forget this - but the latter operates in the name of the former, *and this is the grave question of the name.*' (Derrida)
2. Maimonides made the Mishnah out of the Talmud; Sayyid Sabiq made a Talmud out of the Mishnah.
3. Some drink deeply at the Fountain of Life; others merely gargle.
4. Political Islam? It would be a good idea.
5. Because of self there is suffering.
6. *De coeli*: alterities are only nominal. *De terrae*: realities are only nominal.
7. Terrorism is to *jihad* what adultery is to marriage.
8. Truth is stronger than faction.
9. Formalism is an excuse.
10. Exoterism offers only literalism or liberalism.
11. The idolator is he who takes symbols literally.
12. Against Urizen's shield, bullet points avail more than the sword.
13. After the *khalaf* there is only the Mahdi.
14. Culture builds the ceiling of religion higher.
15. Beware the word that is an excuse for not making *dhikr*.
16. Compliance is no excuse for strictness.
17. Prefer the *rukhsa* when it leads to recollection. Fear the *azima* when it leads to turbulence of the heart.
18. Literalism is defensible on all levels save the sacred.
19. Tradition: esoterism is subject to the exoteric. Reform: the esoteric is subject to exoterism.
20. The failures of exoterism are not usually the victories of esoterism.

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21. True humanism: the Real is known only through *mu'amala*.
22. Exoterism cannot see that nothing is strong enough to limit His self-disclosures.
23. Self-knowledge without Divine knowledge? Divine knowledge without self-knowledge?
24. Paradise is occupied mainly by the stupid and the Sufis.
25. The Law upholds the Umma better than the Umma upholds the Law.
26. Uncertainty is only superficial.
27. Modernity: the nuclear winter of the Reformation.
28. A *madhhab* is a grammar of the Law.
29. For ignorance to submit to knowledge, the many must submit to the One.
30. Scripture provides the consonants, and culture the vowels, of a sacred civilisation.
31. Being hard is the soft option.
32. The existence of God is proven by existence. The existence of existence is proven by the one for whom it exists.
33. Heresy is the gad-fly that makes the horse trot.
34. Detachment from the need to conform is perfect only when it yields perfect conformity.
35. Literalism: have you seen him that worships God on a *harf*?
36. Without the *batin*, the *zahir* is an idol.
37. The lower cannot cause the higher, but it can be adequate to receive it.
38. Only those who dislike formalism can bear it.
39. No meditation without mediation. No self without the *Zulf*.
40. Those that sell Tornadoes shall reap the whirlwind.

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41. Religion is not what we do, but what we mean.
42. The Prophet carries all of great Islam.
43. *Les Lumières? Mais nous sommes la derrière-garde!*
44. Liberals make mercy colder than justice.
45. A god is any site of independent volition.
46. The Sutra is a *zunnar*. The Sura is for the *abrar*. (*'Say: my Lord enjoins justice.'*)
47. The impermanent cannot be devoid of suffering.
48. The internal, not the external, reaches the eternal.
49. The formalist is the corpse of an angel.
50. Modernity: 'a world full of Christian ideas gone mad.' (Chesterton.)
51. Prayer shows us what we truly desire.
52. Never trust a leadership position you find convenient.
53. Popular culture dwells in deep pockets.
54. *Tajdid* involves liposuction, not resurrection.
55. The *zulf* is the truth of the Self. The *Dhat* is the truth of the That.
56. The Liber Asian trumped the Manu mission.
57. Morality means more-reality.
58. Modern Islam: triumphalism without a triumph.
59. It is better to flourish as a second-class citizen than to be threatened as an equal.
60. Conformity can be more radical than alienation.
61. *Jabiliyya* is 'knowing no other way'.
62. *Fiqh* is a sword for Theotormon.

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63. Stridharma? *Allahu astar*. Karma? *Allahu akram*.
64. Only the sage has the right to be spontaneous.
65. Inequality is from the *nafs* alone.
66. Do not number *fiqh* among your worldly concerns.
67. The hope for radical success is normally a sign of Westernisation.
68. Error is its own punishment.
69. To claim that beauty is decadence is decadence.
70. The Affective to the Traditional: the Mosaic becomes a mosaic.
71. *Islam* is a frame. *Iman* is a claim. *Ihsan* is the Name.
72. The body cannot overcome the *nafs*, because the *nafs* is bigger than it.
73. Formalism: to esteem his fingers over his soul.
74. The *durud* is all our theology, and all our spirituality.
75. Be wrathful against error in its depriving, not in its difference.
76. The true king admits the beggar first.
77. Let us pray, O Lord.
78. God is only absent from creation when we are too.
79. *Ijma'* records unity in order to supply it.
80. Truth is proven in the diversity of saints.
81. The body exists that we might grow wings.
82. Nothing is difficult, except in our thoughts.
83. *Hijra* today means the move from the cenobitic to the idiorhythmic.
84. Maimonides showed that Jesus was indeed a redeemer.

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85. The shallow always dries up.
86. The last was also the comprehensive.
87. The world has shrunk, but so have we.
88. *Tawakkul*: the lock, as well as the key, is a revelation.
89. Only the Liber Asian can free Oothoon from Bromion.
90. Despair is the only grounds for despair.
91. An movement is Islamic to the extent that it truly succeeds.
92. Today it is hard to achieve *zuhd* through poverty.
93. Levinas offers only *juda'*-ism. (*Ma be-falak bude-im ...*)
94. That *anima* came from Amina. That *harth* brought forth the heart.
95. Warm the hearth, that there might be gratefulness.
96. America is Rome. Europe is Athens. Islam is Jerusalem.
97. The Church is the bride of Christ'. But he was too generous to be a monogamist.
98. Bassa Selim always gets the loudest cheers. (*Save him that comes to God with a sound heart.*)
99. If you seek light, avoid the narrow view.
100. The *ahl al-hadith* have only four *madhbabs*.