

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



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# THE SIXTH 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.

## The Sixth Contentions

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1. It is better to be a naïve believer than an intellectual bereft of intuition.
2. Fundamentalism is the belief that revelation forces us to be stupid.
3. Truth is too big to fit into our minds, but our minds are small enough to fit into Truth.
4. Faith is not faith unless it seeks understanding.
5. Only Saga City is large enough to be the place of the *din*.
6. Nothing is more risky than the thought that the world has been 'secularised'.
7. The Liber Asian frees us by subjecting our oppressors to God.
8. Adulthood is the choice of finitude before the Infinite.
9. *Mulk*: The flow of the Law or the flaw of the low.
10. Knowers know in the way that flowers flow.
11. 'Flagrant evils cure themselves by being flagrant.' (Newman.)
12. If God is not within, there is nothing to be within; if He is not without, we are without Him.
13. Conversion: the *bouquet* is not the *plaisir de la bouche*.
14. It takes courage to bear the consequences of cowardice.
15. The definition of extremism: any act that leads to extreme misfortune.
16. The solution is liberality, not liberalism, for liberalism takes more than it gives.
17. 'The election of Ronald Reagan was a miracle for Western civilisation'. (Edward Teller.)
18. God was the beginning, and He still is.
19. He is dead who does not feel the Qur'an move in his hands.
20. Arabic equals Sanskrit plus history, equals Greek minus tragedy.

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21. Creation is intransitive. *'Adam* is not a void.
22. The world is the coagulation of mercy; so we are required to be.
23. Life is vocation, not vacation.
24. Only by love is the Prophet seen.
25. The worst arrogance is the one that yields a sort of humility.
26. What can modernity tell those who dislike shopping?
27. The zealot is wrong, even when he is right.
28. The voracious cannot be veracious.
29. 'The pillars of Beauty are truth and purity, and whosoever would find the one must love the other.' (Nur-uddin Stephen.)
30. Only the guilt-edged makes us take stock.
31. We would change the world, did it not entertain us so.
32. The Ark is become a coffin. Aaron is become *aron*.
33. There is justice, and there is just-us.
34. Transaction, not trance-action. (*'al-Dinu mu'amala'*)
35. Islam is not set in stone; stone is set in Islam.
36. Revivalism is frequently a necrosis.
37. The worst ideology is that which courts failure as a guarantor of martyrdom.
38. An empire must be an umpire.
39. 'Prayer was instituted to satisfy woman's desire for asking.' (British Muslim proverb.)
40. The ulema must be as the tribunes of the plebs.
41. The purpose of holiness is the sanctification of God's name.

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42. The beginning of Islam is wonder at the world; its end is to be the wonder of the world.
43. 'Whoever thinks about repenting of a sin before he has even committed it is led thereby to fall into it.' (Imam al-Haddad.)
44. We are offering to the world a chalice for the soul, filled with our emotions.
45. The Green Man is Europe's ghetto of the arabesque.
46. Qutb was the master of polarisation.
47. The Truth can be lived; it cannot be thought.
48. Christology: where is his Torah-observance?
49. Sayyid Qutb travelled so far to the West that he fell off.
50. Religion is only worth doing when it is better than opera.
51. Sunnism on the Other: there is no non-Muslim truth. Fundamentalism on the Other: there is no non-Muslim truth.
52. The means are the ends.
53. Putting religion before family is impossible.
54. Beware him that would fail violently rather than succeed peacefully.
55. We do not lack a rib, we lack a lung.
56. Only if the body is the temple of the spirit does the veil not belong to the high priest.
57. It is better to be guilty of something than to be guilty of nothingness.
58. We are designed to fall to our knees.
59. Despair is the worship of necessity.
60. There is no unconditional love in an economy of salvation.
61. *Juda-yi Ism: HUWA* is the difference between *tahmid* and *tawhid*.

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62. What is the situation in which gratitude is inappropriate?
63. *Nación sin natación es atavismo.* (Calderón: *La honoria es de Dios*')
64. Discourtesy always resembles a failure.
65. The ethical is only possible where there is a sense of place. (*We have ennobled the sons of Adam, and carried them upon land and sea*')
66. Recidivism is ducks and drakes.
67. Islam = arithmetic  
Iman = reading  
Ihsan = writing.
68. The esoteric made exoteric becomes an exoteric argument against the esoteric.
69. *Wara'* today is the scrupulous avoidance of narrowmindedness.
70. Not every *idafa* is Arabic.
71. Circumcision is homeopathic.
72. The *putsch* is for the *put-perest*.
73. Islam in the West: there is isolation, or assimilation, or success.
74. He is the Alid who does not accuse him of lacking *rida*.
75. Without the saint, the accumulation of matter will kill us.
76. Formalism is just another variety of materialism.
77. That there is evil is good, but evil is not good.
78. Not every male superiority is female inferiority.
79. We are Muslims because we practice Islam, not vice versa.
80. 'Pride is the denial of the Truth'. (Hadith.)
81. Kerygma becomes paranoia when orthodoxy becomes ideology.

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82. The ruin of the heart lies in denying the desire for obedience.
83. The Messianic exists to indicate what we should not attempt.
84. The world will not rejoice until we deserve success.
85. Many wear the turban to prevent Allah from reading their minds.
86. The greatest subtraction is the claim that all addition is subtraction.
87. The formalist pulls the flowers upwards; the Sufi waters them.
88. Some look for vengeance, some look for repentance.
89. Tribalism flourishes where Truth is neglected.
90. Dialogue: from the It to the They to the You to the We.
91. Formalists prefer the political to the spiritual because their political failures are less extreme.
92. Islamism is Orientalist.
93. Without meaning there is only meanness.
94. Soul and body meet in actions. (*Thus is the resurrection.*)
95. Decadence is to protest more than to invite.
96. We know God through *takhalluq*. The ethical is the way.
97. Experience love before you contemplate the metaphors.
98. *Kufr* is the betrayal of love.
99. The limited love to limit, while the open love to open.
100. For which is He more to be praised: for His blessings, or for His forbearance in the face of our refusal to give thanks for them?