

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



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THE EIGHT 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 Eight Contentions

1. We have turned the *Sunna Theologica* into a *Sunna Contra Gentiles*.
2. Women are either refuges or refugees.
3. But for Sufism, religion would be just another form of self-esteem.
4. The false Salafism: an unsuccessful flight from complexity.
5. Faith is not a given, it is given.
6. If you would know God's view of the age, see how the blessing of nature has been received.
7. There are the slim, and there are the mu-slims.
8. Faith may be measured by the number of verses that soften one's heart.
9. Today's Umma deserves the Law as imposed by those who do not deserve it.
10. Modernity: a way of drowning in nothingness.
11. Failing to pray for faith is a sign of lack of faith.
12. He was exemplary for all four castes.
13. Modernity has not healed our pain, it has only dried our tears.
14. Islam cannot be a way of being modern; but it can be a way of being Western.
15. Freedom of information? What information?
16. Today we identify the *abbar* by the *akbbar*.
17. We are all sceptics – it is usually the age which determines whether we are sceptics about Gift or Chance.
18. Let us hope that their shout does not bring on the Shout.
19. The *mujtahid* does no more than turn the soil.
20. If your morale is built on the Umma, beware. If it is built on God, rejoice.
21. The *usuliyyun* have been replaced by the *usuliyyun*.

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22. Dreams do not illustrate the *nafs* so surely as daydreams.
23. Do not wonder at the Arab's love of emotion. Has not everything else been taken away from him?
24. 'One who has mercy on the cruel will in the end be cruel to the merciful'.
(*Kobeletb Rabbah* 7)
25. The false Salafism: to make progress, we need to start at the beginning every day.
26. The bigger the intention to compress the biggest truth into the smallest community, the smaller the credibility of Providence.
27. Never before has praise from a sultan been so insulting.
28. The principal task of the Jewish people today is to befriend Islam.
29. 'Dialogue' comes easily to us, since Islam is the best of Judaism and the best of Christianity.
30. Scripture to Law is as a vessel, not a manual.
31. Has the *Liber Asian* deprived Eve of her priority in the *felix culpa*?
32. Islamism is the Frankenstein of Frankistan.
33. The false Salafi should disbelieve in angels.
34. The *sunna* is our epistemology.
35. *Ikhlas*: She should be *mutahajjiba*, not *muhajjaba*, and her opposite *mubarraja*, not *mutabarrija*.
36. Capitalism: the law of the jungle that destroys the jungle.
37. Preferring *rida* to *riba* is the choosing of the milk over the wine.
38. Remember, today, everyone is weak.
39. Urizen's lie: gender is an accident, not an essence.
40. Ummatolatry: from Islam to Izlam.

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41. Islam thinks dyadically; Islamism thinks dialectically.
42. Persianisation enhanced *tafarrus*.
43. The pleasure of false Salafism: the exegete stands above, not below, the ulema.
44. A paradox: the showing of light is usually covert.
45. Sufism is the belief that we should not act against the political interests of Islam.
46. Mecca: he will come.
Jerusalem: he was here.
Medina: he is here.
47. Islam's heart is ethical; the West's skin is ethical.
48. Which is greater: His patience, or your impatience?
49. Do not equate *wara'* with fastidiousness.
50. Criticism is infectious.
51. Orthodoxy, like heterosexuality, is a corporeal, majoritarian mode of being.
52. 'The true soldier is an enemy to the beast in man.' (Montgomery of Alamein.)
53. 'Let's close our eyes and see what happens.' (Jimmy Greaves, Seoul 2002.)
54. Heaven/Earth cannot be a same-sex relationship.
55. Christ is the Hodegetria.
56. Fear of death marks the difference between modern and Islamic art.
57. 'He who binds to himself a joy, doth the winged life destroy;
He who kisses the joy as it flies, lives in eternity's sunrise.' (Blake.)
58. Ibn Taymiya: God has receded from created being.
Jahm: God is a formal omnipresence of being.
The sunna: God is the ground of all being.
59. The ability to perform *ijtihad* makes the scholar less judgmental, and vice-versa.

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60. The Middle Nation lies between the monastic and the monistic.
61. Ethics is the treatment for our exile from God.
62. It is the Muslim, not Islam, that cries out to be reformed.
63. The function of the Caliph is to defend people's lives, not to interfere with them.
64. Modernity offers more and more ways of being the same sort of thing.
65. We are too busy being right to have time for God.
66. Tragedy begins with Homer, not with Moses.
67. The creator's subject-object relation is the syzygy of *tanzih* and *tashbih*.
68. They make a desert, and call it democracy.
69. One is to rejoice at non-membership of the culture that is Earth's enemy.
70. Unlike the Christians we see Heaven even when we look down. (*He created heavens and earth bi'l-Haqq.*)
71. Infallibility is divine, because of its absoluteness; and is therefore given only in respect of that which is divine.
72. Gaia is not *ghaya*, it is matrix.
73. Once we cried out *hawqalas*, now we cry out 'How callous!'
74. The false Cynic: Nietzsche only embraced a horse when he was mad.
75. Islam is God's effort to give us the easiest possible way of being traditional.
76. The frontier between seen and unseen moves in time, so why not in space?
77. 'Everything in the world is yours, until and unless you try to grab it and keep it for yourself alone.' (Pickthall.)
78. It is time to rise from the emotion-bath, and recall where we left the *libas al-taqwa*.

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79. We must not pray in order to name ourselves; we must name ourselves in order to pray.

80. Belong, not short.

81. The verse of women: '*And they prefer others to themselves, though theirs be the greater need.*' (59:9)

82. The point of false Salafism is the claim that there is only *ta'rib* or *taghrib*.

83. The saint is the father of deception, for he perfectly emulates the veil of the *asbab*.

84. 'Sexual display is pure conformism.' (Germaine Greer.)

85. The saint is a mediator to the extent that he demonstrates the omnipotence of God.

86. The right are never gauche.

87. God is not a reality to be explained; He is the explanation of reality.

88. Unless one has the Islam of the Name, one has only the name of Islam.

89. The Enlightenment's falsest promise was the development of strong autonomous personalities.

90. Without *El*, all is indefinite.

91. Only *El* can turn the Word into the world.

92. What has the Christian to do with his toes?

93. Truth is already present, in all its splendour.

94. Only when distant from God do we crave what is distant from God.

95. In deciding whether a desire is a vice, consider whether its satisfaction is honourable.

96. The *fiqh* does not require hagiography to be hajji-ography.

97. Religion has only one door, whose name is Repentance

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98. The alternative to the Whine is the Wine. (*Qawmun li'l-kalam, wa-qawmun li'l-mudam'*)
99. Jesus was humanly perfect; Christ was inhumanly so.
100. Only religion allows people to be magnificent without egotism.