

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



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THE NINTH 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 Ninth Contentions

1. *Adab* is nothing but a preparation for prayer.
2. Feminism has one virtue: it shows that the West is still capable of certainty.
3. Sunnism is built on *manaqib*, Shi'ism on *mathalib*.
4. Do not play politics with sacred politics.
5. If there is no *dhikr*, there is no self-restraint. If there is no self-restraint, there is no beauty. If there is no beauty, there is no *dhikr*.
6. Tradition is the puddling-clay of faith.
7. 'I do not permit priests to concern themselves with politics.' (A. Hitler, *Tischgespräche*.)
8. Our patience is the awaiting of delights for us. His patience is the awaiting of delights for us.
9. If you seek amusement, seek it in the absurdities of *kufr*.
10. Genesis: all's well that ends with a well.
11. Unless there is Paradise, eros is a trick.
12. Be a good Muslim and you won't want to lie. Be a very good Muslim and you won't need to lie.
13. His name in our age is *al-Sabur*.
14. A faith that is only a social consequence will mainly be concerned with its own social consequences.
15. Tolerance is no substitute for holiness.
16. So you want to get your own back? Remember, *it isn't your own*.
17. Life is a minefield only if we always say 'Mine!'
18. Does modernity produce fewer manners than womanners?
19. We have not grown out of the Shari'a, we have shrunk out of it.

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20. Govern the Self before you govern the Other. Govern the Other in order to govern the Self.
21. Edom: God can fully save the world *only in one way*.
22. *Taskbir* is usufruct, not a title deed.
23. Religion desires to change the age. The age desires to change religion.
24. Politics is one cell within the body of Islam. If it grows unduly, it is a cancer.
25. The reading of Scripture is sufficient; but we are not sufficient readers.
26. Should we distinguish the shadows from the light? If so, how?
27. The *asbab* are merely the user-interface.
28. To turn the other cheek is to look away.
29. Are there still miracles? Is God still the Omnipotent Bestower?
30. Extremism: just say know.
31. Incarnation: the finite can contain the Infinite.
32. Bowing to Mecca does not always require bowing to the East.
33. In practice, ‘remembering God’ can only mean ‘remembering the Covenant.’
34. Everything today is inscribed with FINIS.
35. There is no inaction, so long as consciousness remains.
36. ‘Whoever has me as his Mullah, then Ali is his Mullah.’
37. ‘Like us in all respects, except for sin.’ To *know* one’s sinlessness: is this not to be *unlike* us in all respects?
38. The New Age: the flight of the alone from the Alone.
39. Farsi literature: *tashyi’-i isharat tashyi’-i janazat bud*.
40. The only safe bank is the Sadaqa Bank.

41. Each sin is a consequence.
42. They think to cut the medieval flowers, but what they leave behind is stubble, not the green shoots of Spring.
43. We claim the whole of the truth for ourselves, but not to have monopolised it.
44. To know the saint is to know the age.
45. Only movers are *shakirs*.
46. There are times when He 'breathes'; there are also times of intensified Scrutiny.
47. They are not the solution; God is the solution.
48. Radha is Majnun; Krishna is Layla. (The *Liber Asian* vs. the Manu Mission.)
49. Each gender was created only that the other might give thanks.
50. Don't get even. ('God is *witr*, and He loves the *witr*.)
51. Without long commentaries, it would be easy to throw the book at people.
52. We can curse, or we can be discursive.
53. We prefer bigamy to duplicity.
54. The Mothers of the Believers: the most believable women in History.
55. Islam is horizontally patriarchal and vertically matriarchal.
56. Modernity's undoing: the person is only a mask. To this there are only two replies.
57. Religion, like a garden, is more resilient than a fortress.
58. Extremism has no enemy save those it claims to defend.
59. Modernity: *homo ludens* trying to turn *homo religiosus* into *homo faber*.
60. A wail is the most transparent of veils.

61. *Jaza' at-talaqi yawm at-talaqi.*
62. Do not let a false radicalism diminish your desire for a radicalism that is true.
63. Islam: inlet heaven.
64. A man who would marry a feminist is not worth obeying.
65. The purpose of society is to produce saints.
66. If the imam slips, consider him a victim of amazement.
67. But for God's mercy, we would have the governments we deserve.
68. Christianity is responsible for the suffering of the Jews, because it was Christianity that veiled Jesus from them.
69. The Yawning Gulf: the building of a desert.
70. Atheism: all faith is idolatry.
71. Do not trust those who readily close their eyes.
72. *Juda-yi Ism*: Ishmael is the *rodef*. Ishmael: *Juda-yi Ism* is the *radif*.
73. Preaching: this is an age for *rukbas*, not for *'aza'im*, and for conservatism, not for liberalism.
74. Praying through someone is not praying to someone. Praying because someone is praying is praying to someone.
75. He has not believed who has not felt the weight of the turban.
76. Only those that reject the life to come can build the False Temple.
77. Your property belongs to you if you belong to God. If you belong to Satan you belong to your property.
78. Irritation is from sin.
79. Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is not Israel.
80. Islamism is the fretful oud.

81. Antinomy is the kohl of faith.
82. Today's believer is a disbeliever in most of what the disbeliever is a disbeliever in.
83. Unless you are a saint, mistrust the clearest voices.
84. The surest toleration is illiberal.
85. Fear not the wind: it will bear your kite high.
86. The true hearth is gratefulness. (Abraham: *'Lord ...'*)
87. The cause of modern panic is non-referentiality.
88. Under Urizen's reign, tomorrow we shall be skilled or killed.
89. 'Progress and catastrophe are two sides of the same coin'. (Hannah Arendt)
90. Literalism is literally a type of *tabrif*.
91. Fun is serious.
92. The Alone wishes to save us from loneliness. 'Come to the prayer!'
93. Those that are wedded to the science of this generation may be orphaned in the next.
94. Autodidacticism: the *falsafi* falsifies; but the Owaisis are oases.
95. The awakening has become a wake.
96. Which is the bigger prison: Islam in the eyes of modernity, or modernity in the eyes of Islam?
97. Islam liberates because it is rooted in our natures.
98. Celibacy is an anticipation of hell, for there is no eros there.
99. 'May God us keep / From single vision and from Newton's sleep' (Blake).
100. Faith is a tender shoot; water it with works, parch it with apathy.

