

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



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# THE ELEVENTH 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 Eleventh Contentions

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1. Augustine: man's deformity. Ishmael: his deiformity. (Defy, don't deify.)
2. Peace without justice is not peace at all.
3. A *faqih* in first class? And pigs will fly ...
4. The Dajjal will only be king when only the blind are left in the valley.
5. British Islam: 'We came as rebels, and found ourselves to be heirs.' (Gershom Scholem)
6. The *Liber Asian* is the reconciliation between Edom and *Juda-yi Ism*.
7. Your greatest liability is your lie-ability.
8. No-one is more extroverted than the contemplative saint.
9. Modernity: an accelerating attempt to shovel matter into the growing hole where religion used to be.
10. The *Liber Asian* vs. the Manu Mission: a woman may be Arahāt on Arafāt.
11. Arabdom is not congenital.
12. Jesus said 'Allah', not 'Deus.' ('Say: *Allah!* and leave them plunging in their confusion.')
13. We are designed to fall to our knees.
14. Remember: you once knew the whole Qur'an.
15. *Wara'* is the shift from fear to hope.
16. Only if the body is the temple of the spirit does the veil not belong to the high priest.
17. We do not lack a rib, we lack a lung.
18. Islam, not the Cross, is foolishness to the Greeks.
19. Redefine religion, but do not derefine it.

## The Eleventh Contentions

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20. If worship is the purpose of creation, then the Founder is the purpose of creation.
21. Anthropomorphism is gender-biased.
22. Theology is the quest for the least silly definition of God.
23. Love, not Reform, establishes the dignity of 'autonomy'.
24. *Ma'ruf* and *munkar* are defined by the *fitra*.
25. Forget not the Other in the Brother.
26. Revelation is the opposite of the cluster bomb.
27. Zionism: God's sword unsheathed against Jerusalem.
28. Those who look for sin often strengthen it.
29. *Nafs* is a comedian. So enjoy your Sufism!
30. The *fitra* tells us that nature is a medicine. The *Sunna* allows us to take it.
31. See things coolly. You will not think more clearly by worrying that you worry.
32. Who were more anti-Western: the Taliban, or the Buddhas of Bamiyan?
33. Islam is the learning of mercy.
34. Islam is the crown of the poor.
35. Approach the teacher as the comet approaches the sun.
36. Third World Christianity: worship a white man, and be saved from your past!
37. Jesus did not oppose Rome, and so Rome chose him for its god.
38. If you have not seen the saint, you have not seen the *Sunna*.
39. Being heretics to the Monoculture requires both courage and style. But we should have room for those who have neither courage nor style.
40. People will not come closer to you if you hit them.

## The Eleventh Contentions

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41. To learn truth is always to relearn. To lapse into falsehood is not always to relapse.
42. ‘What can I say – it must have been the will of God.’ (Mikhail Gorbachev)
43. Use words in your preaching only if absolutely necessary.
44. Academic Islamic Studies is as foolish as it is because we are as foolish as we are.
45. ‘For Allah created the English mad – the maddest of all mankind.’ (Kipling)
46. The hijab: ‘a display of modesty’!
47. The teacher exists to teach you the importance of what you have transcended.
48. The Sephardi and the Mizrahi mean something. But what does the Ashkenazy *mean*?
49. Maidens! Choose him that uses his ears more than his eyes.
50. The road to God is paved with laughter at the self. The road to Hell is paved with laughter at others.
51. Edom, then Ishmael: the superfetation of *Juda-yi Ism*.
52. Learn that you are the merest shadow of Another’s act; thus you will learn humbleness, which is the beginning of understanding.
53. The world without hell is the word.
54. A heretic never claims to be a heretic, he claims to transcend orthodoxy.
55. Veils without turbans? Coronets without crowns?
56. Augustine is a *jihadi*.
57. The false Salafism: from catechism to cataclysm.
58. ‘All true Reformers are by the nature of them Priests, and strive for a Theocracy.’ (Carlyle, on Knox)
59. Do not think that anything has any purpose other than to point to God.

## The Eleventh Contentions

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60. Idolatry, at best, is the unbalanced fixation on an Attribute.
61. Religious leadership is an opportunity to be frightened of God.
62. Do not say: Do you agree with me? but say: Do we agree?
63. Sufism: don't think that you can dive without lowering yourself.
64. Mockery is for pouring upon *kufr*, not upon people.
65. Wisdom consists mainly in the ability to recognise human weakness.
66. God's mercy is not limited; but He is not limited by His mercy.
67. For each *karama* that takes you forward, there are ten which will take you back.
68. Only those who know themselves to be unworthy are worthy.
69. If you do not sanctify the dawn, the day will not sanctify you.
70. Against Modernism: between signs and science there is neither rhyme nor reason.
71. Islamism: untie your camel, and trust in God.
72. Her voice is part of her *awra* only when it is part of her aura.
73. Lust before lustrations. Fast before frustrations.
74. If you suffer from listlessness, make a list.
75. Edom: In terms of the *Parousia*, there have been too many Years of Grace. In terms of salvation history, there have not been enough.
76. The God of Jesus was not the Jesus-God.
77. The caliphs' prayers ended with *Hamidun Majid*.
78. If you put the Sunna before mercy, you have lost both.
79. 'Nihilism is the uncanniest of all guests.' (Nietzsche)
80. If you are good, pretend to be bad. If you are bad, don't pretend to be good.

81. To grow in the spirit, and not to grow in the need to pretend not to be what one is, is a contradiction that closes the Way.
82. 'If European education is the death of maternity / Then death is its fruit for the human race.' (Iqbal)
83. The Ka'ba has a positive charge; we are negative. *Dunya*, however, is an efficient insulator.
84. He who knows himself, knows Islam.
85. Man is the proof of God. The man of God is the proof of religion.
86. Do not fear any extremist; fear the consequences of his acts.
87. Do not be complacent. Most people judge religions by their followers, not by their doctrines.
88. Only parasites respect flukes.
89. Only through tradition are we an *umma semper reformanda*.
90. Scripture defines mercy, but is not an alternative to it.
91. Justice may never be the consequence of wrath; but it may be its right assuaging.
92. Do not believe the confessions of tortured texts.
93. Being at ease in the company of scholars is a proof of faith.
94. Nobility is the aptitude for seeing beauty.
95. To slouch, and to suck one's pen, are signs that one has never read Scripture.
96. If their defences are strong, it is because you have not used the weapon of mercy.
97. Let the next hours be an apology for the *sunna* prayer. Let the *sunna* prayer be an apology for the *fard*. Let the *fard* be an apology for separation.
98. In the fight against the Monoculture, the main sign is the *hijab*, and the main act is the Prayer.

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99. It's quite a hard thing to respect  
A God who our prayers would accept,  
We splash and we preen  
Then we fidget and dream,  
So proud to be of the Saved Sect.
100. 'May I not prove too much of a skunk when I shall be tried.' (Wittgenstein)