

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Quilliam Press

THE SECOND CONTENTIONS

Sh. Abdul Hakim Murad

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 Second Contentions

1. Beware the darkness in the grey areas.
2. To blame others for our misfortunes is always a victory for the *nafs* .
3. We should not do as we like; but we should like what we should do.
4. There is no true engagement without detachment.
5. It is only when you truly don't care what people think that you truly don't need to care what people think.
6. What the heart needs is the periodicity of the crescent, not the uniqueness of the cross. (Chagall, *White Crucifixion* .)
7. The companion before the road, and the road before the destination. But without the destination there is no road, and without the road there is no companion.
8. Religion that seeks to be no more than a time capsule is likely to be claustrophobic.
9. *Gbulumw* is not an excess of piety, it is a lack of it.
10. Isaac: the monad. Ishmael: the nomad.
11. True religion invites us to become better people. False religion tells us that this has already occurred.
12. Our faces are a prediction.
13. The ultimate was not he that endured his own suffering; it was he that endured the death of his family. (*I am with the broken-hearted*.)
14. A Sufi is anyone who knows that *fiqh* means understanding.
15. Extremism is tolerable because it is always transient.
16. Trying to be loved is not the best way of becoming lovable.
17. The most useful person for the Umma is the true *mujtahid*; the false *mujtahid* is its worst enemy.
18. The miracle of mundanity . (Rembrandt, *The Holy Family* .)

The Second Contentions

19. Failure is God's punishment for exoterism .
20. We need less self-righteousness and more self-knowledge.
21. The fact that the Sunna does not demand imperfection does not mean that it demands perfection.
22. *al- Hajju bnjja* .
23. The gender gap is a minor third.
24. *Suluk* is a *sostenuto* , not a tenor clef.
25. Without *fiqh* there is only opinion.
26. Sufism is the way of God wherever Islam is the way of God.
27. Islam is the way of God wherever Sufism is the way of God.
28. The *hijra* was the only exodus into extroversion.
29. Extremism should preoccupy us only when it becomes the cause as well as the consequence of failure.
30. Pious repudiations of polyphony usually yield monotony rather than plainchant.
31. Beware the zeal of the uncertain. No-one is zealous for the Pythagoras theorem.
32. The Apollonian and the Dionysiac : where else are the two conjoined?
33. The believer sings louder than he speaks.
34. Without acculturation faith is naked.
35. The best way to make *fiqh* complicated is to teach that it is simple.
36. Beware the *Shari 'a* of the Cheshire Cat : able to bite but not to nourish.
37. Idolatry is worse than atheism.
38. Muslim solidarity can never force us to lower our standards.
39. The existence of the fair sex does not justify the existence of an unfair sex.

The Second Contentions

40. Everyone is a cradle Muslim. The *mysterium iniquitatis* is a post-natal complication, not a genetic fault.
41. Josephus is less dangerous than Bar Kochba .
42. To the extent that God is corporeal He is demonstrably absent.
43. The new creed: there is no islam but Islam, and Muhammad is the messenger of Islam.
44. Where the roots are weak, the branches are stiff. Where the roots are firm, the branches are supple.
45. Maidens! The alternative to Lerchenau is not always a Rosenkavalier.
46. There was a young man who blamed Fate
For the fact that he prayed Fajr late
"How frightfully odd
Of Almighty God
To wake me at quarter past eight!"
47. The semitic semiotic: not making an idol of *tawhid*.
48. An error of the age: the claim that God has blinded His falcons.
49. Your career should be like prayer in congregation: if a space opens before you, step into it.
50. To believe that every virtue in a disbeliever is a manifestation of the Divine ruse is a manifestation of the Divine ruse.
51. Censorship of the press is less subversive than censorship by the press.
52. Television is hellish vision because it robs us of the sense of truth.
53. No pure purism pushes people into impurity.
54. No revival is an alternative to culture.
55. It is no surprise that modernity arose in a religious civilisation whose central tenet was the absolutising of the relative.

The Second Contentions

56. Those who wish Islam to be feared and not loved cannot claim the prophetic *kerygma* in mission.
57. To be reminded of the greed of others and the poverty of the self is to be reminded of the poverty of others and the greed of the self.
58. Make *Hayy* while the sun shines. ('Sleep is the brother of death'.)
59. Female modesty is no excuse for sloth.
60. It is better that the injustices of others should stand than that our own injustices should stand.
61. Our covenant does not supplant; it prunes and fertilises.
62. Ishmael was the only survivor of the *Pequod*.
63. The dove and the spider: nature only spares those who spare it.
64. It is better to keep the enemy hull-down on the horizon than to fight him at close quarters.
65. The doctrine of ' *ada* demands the existence of a defensible secular explanation of nature. Such an explanation thus becomes a mercy. Without it, there is only anomie and alienation.
66. The illusion of causality is a divine mercy, which veils rigour, which in turn veils Mercy.
67. Only a few can see that God's rigour is compassion.
68. Dogma: less is more.
69. The justification of alcohol: those without self-control must pay for the pleasures of those with self-control.
70. The Madina verses prove those of Mecca.
71. Judaism: the deferral of decisiveness. (George Steiner)
72. The élites want everybody to be nobody.

The Second Contentions

73. There is no gratitude without a sense of beauty, and no humility without a sense of gratitude.
74. Seek, and you will be found.
75. God's only sameness is in His signs.
76. Homosexuality insults women by equating sterility with fertility.
77. It is better to appreciate what you do not have than to have what you do not appreciate.
78. Beauty is the most literal of metaphors.
79. Where there is love there is immanence.
80. Laxity is not the only form of decadence.
81. The slightest reduction of God makes Him vanish.
82. *Khalwa* is quarantine.
83. Demonising the Other is from the harshnesses of the self.
84. Only the very bad or the very good are polygamists.
85. A canon of self-scrutiny: false religion feels more like a wound than a bandage.
86. The greatest achievement of the ego is to make virtue unattractive.
87. If religion is too big for us, we should be careful which parts we choose.
88. The permanent conversion table: the addition must equal the square of what is subtracted.
89. The front line has grown too long.
90. Power can be servitude. (*'I am your most high Lord'* .)
91. Our failings are the only cause of our unhappiness.
92. Foucault: the West's frustration is that its discourse on sex does not lead to a conclusion.

The Second Contentions

93. The weaker the homework, the stronger the ideology. The stronger the homework, the stronger the *din* .
94. Hermeneutics are no longer about his women.
95. Everyone nowadays is *Qadi al-Qudat*, Judge of Judges.
96. Before we reform the forms, we must be conformed to the Forms.
97. Only when the mind is free of limitation will we seek no station of annihilation.
98. Exoterism is mediocrity.
99. Marriage: pay and display? Or the primacy of privacy?
100. Feuerbach : theological epistemology is anthropology. The Sunna : anthropology is theological epistemology.