

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



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THE THIRTEENTH 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 Thirteenth Contentions

1. Whitehall: forget the gold dome on your prayer mat.
2. Riyadh is the garden of *Takfir*.
3. Today we grow up quickly, but into something childish.
4. You no longer have the privilege of the Umma's protection. ('*And upon God ...*')
5. You cannot grow out of your culture, but you can help it to grow.
6. It is better to engage fully with the Monoculture from a position of dislike than to engage partly with it from a position of admiration.
7. To give the newcomer the *rukbas* is *fard*. To give yourself the *azima* is Sunna.
8. The Arabs deceived the Turks. Lawrence deceived the Arabs. The British deceived Lawrence. Herzl deceived the British. God deceived Herzl.
9. The task of the intellectual is to atone for his complexity.
10. Improvisation? Edom sounds like the opposite of a mode.
11. Schneerson: Israel is a *goyische Staat*.
12. 'You can lead a horticulture, but you can't make her think.' (Dorothy Parker)
13. *Falah* is harvesting what God has done for you, not what you have done for God.
14. *Fiqh* gender disparities reflect her nearness to the *fitra*.
15. With God's secret gift, every hardship becomes easy. Without it, every ease becomes a source of hardship.
16. The real miracle is anything that is not perceived as a miracle.
17. *Hijab* is not self-respect: it is Self-respect.
18. Natural theology is the philology of matter.
19. Lord, forgive us their ignorance.

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20. Disregard my sins as you hear this prayer. And make this prayer that you disregard my sins.
21. The false Salafi is enraged because Sufism has been taken away from him.
22. 'I particularly like the idea that my paintings may say nothing.' (Magritte)
23. Why 'spirituality'? Because *muraqaba* makes the ritual into the spy-ritual.
24. You may hold open the furnace door; but it is God Alone who blows out the fires consuming your heart.
25. Twelvmism: *dhawban al-basha li'ttila' al-Molla*.
26. The Semitic is both emic and etic.
27. Women are not difficult; but they are difficult to understand.
28. Men are not easy; but they are easy to understand.
29. Total transcendence is immanence.
30. 'Terrorism and precipitate responses to it almost always produce the opposite of what is intended.' (Robert W. Funk)
31. The C of E: to forget that to be popular you must be unpopular.
32. The young must learn to be forgiving; the old must relearn zeal.
33. Islam is to be the oxygen of the West's metropoli.
34. *Tamhib* yields *tardid*; *taswif* yields *tamhid*.
35. Uncle Same: choice should be both legal and improbable.
36. Stolen prayers are the sweetest.
37. The *Liber Asian*: ignore thyself and love the Other through the other. The libertine: love thyself, and let the other veil the Other.
38. The *Liber Asian*: 'no sound is dissonant which tells of life.' (Coleridge)
39. The devil within you: vein glory.

40. Only God can save us from thinking that we are gods.
41. The scientist discloses matter, the jurist discloses ethics. But their shared beauty can only be disclosed by the Teacher.
42. *Takbir* is insincere when louder than *istighfar*.
43. By their selflessness they take you from yourself to Himself.
44. Show yourself yourself; then He will show Himself Himself.
45. The celibate priest is a Tertium Quid; slave of the Eutychian God.
46. Like solar prominences, the Koran's bibliotheophanies indicate the energy of its self-celebration.
47. What is forbidden, is forbidden only because of its banality. 'God is Beautiful, and He loves beauty.'
48. Islamism: the Holy Prophet *marching*.
49. Arab humiliation is usually the result of Arab pride.
50. The Teacher does not love the disciple because the disciple serves the Teacher. The Teacher loves the disciple because his service reveals understanding of the Way.
51. When the Teacher moves beyond the curtain of death, the signs become fainter; they are instructing you to watch for them more carefully.
52. Masculinity and femininity are the purest signs of God when without ego; when they are possessed by egotism they become the perfect tools of the Infernal.
53. The alternative to interiority is inferiority; but the alternative to the internal is not the infernal.
54. Antisemitic? The true Unitarian must be against Marcion.
55. She that uses her body to exploit is a suicide bomber.
56. If he is both familiar and unfamiliar, he is a Messenger of God.
57. Occidising will rust your heart. (Have mercy on Uncle Same!)

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58. Comfort and freedom are unnatural bedfellows.
59. The Shaykh's cosmic gift to you is the opportunity to serve him.
60. If you disobey the Teacher, you have told him of your admiration for the tiny.
61. It is better to be exterminated entirely than to give away the Holy Land.
62. Uncle Same is lord of the Monoculture. Allah is Lord of the Worlds.
63. 'The medium is the message' (Yahya Birt.) 'The body-subject hosts cognition' (Merleau-Ponty)
64. Pacifism? Better armed than armless.
65. Marry them both – but only if you wish God to judge you for your fairness.
66. The Sufi is he who makes God's slaves love the Law.
67. The *Rindan* do not despise God's Law, but if you make it ugly – hear their mockery!
68. If A'isha is irrational, then we are with Sarah, not Hagar.
69. Ours is the *Bez̄m-i Rindan*; our leader is al-Khidr!
70. Pay attention, and trust in God.
71. Know that your plans are written on water.
72. Misogynist? Hafsa held the future of the Book in her hands; A'isha held the *Sunna*.
73. Respect her to the extent that she intuits her status as *maz̄har*.
74. *Tariqa*: peer with peers to find a pir; a pir appears.
75. A pir is like a pier. Admire the sideshows; but remember: his end is His ocean's gate.
76. The Monoculture: everyone toes the line, saying: 'I am in a different place!'

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77. Edom has filled the Yawning Gulf with laughing-gas.
78. The world is the way it is because you are the way you are.
79. Edomite feminism: letting men see my thighs makes me free.
80. Your knowledge of your acts tells you that your home is Turbulence; your knowledge of your Lord tells you that your home is Paradise. *Manẓel-i ma kibriyast!*
81. 'Fear of God is knowledge enough. To be pleased with one's knowledge is ignorance enough.' (Bint Umm Hassan)
82. The Yawning Gulf: the cemetery of hope.
83. Israel will forever be the country of the future.
84. A long life? Each decade is half the length of its predecessor.
85. A saint is anyone who teaches you the meaning of *wudu*'.
86. The Ummi was the unequalled promoter of literacy.
87. The Liberal Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Zeitgeist.
88. A *tasbih* deals with *tasbih*. But for *tanzih*, there is nothing at all.
89. If you crave narrowness, crave a narrowness that is filled with mercy.
90. It is easier to preach on vengeance than on patience.
91. Respect the insights that can only be expressed by humour.
92. Pride is the crown of the ignorant.
93. Traditional Islam is not the replication of the positions of the ancients; it is to seek what they sought.
94. Look within, and what is outside you will become clear. Look around you, and you will understand yourself.
95. Arabs! Bright lights at *Fajr*, and loud loudspeakers, are errors that belie the Faith.
96. If you believe in peace, you will not believe in pacifism.

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97. In the rain of God's mercy, the believer is a duck, the infidel a cat.
98. All of Edom is in the Johannine Comma.
99. A little worship with sincerity is all of religion; abundant worship for the sake of one's image of oneself is nothing at all.
100. Modernity finds it hard to distinguish between rest and idleness.