

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



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# THE TWENTY-FIRST 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 Twenty-first Contentions

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1. The fundamentalist may visit the hammam, but he will forget to wash his face.
2. Know what you are alive for to be alive.
3. Meccanism dreams of results; the Saga City is mindful of actions.
4. Tradition made the Arab despise his self; modernity makes the Arab despise himself.
5. Your ego stops you seeing that the Sharia should stop your ego.
6. It is only when you know that there is excrement in your heart as well as in your belly that you will begin to taste the joy of loving God.
7. Put wifey before wifi.
8. Think before saying Amen to another's wish, for not every prayer is amenable.
9. If you wish to be a champion of *da'wa*, overcome your anger.
10. Gilbert and George should know that the purpose of the flesh is not frottage but fruitfulness.
11. It is not possible to be a traditionalist and to seek to replicate the past.
12. If you want Islam to be just a set of answers, it will not give you the right answers.
13. A spouse should be as the tree of Maryam, the gourd-bush of Jonah.
14. Trinitarians invented the Divine name *al-Ba'id*.
15. 'You deserve nothing' – the bitter pill which will bring you happiness.
16. Islam: the fertiliser and the fertilised are equal. The Monoculture agrees, but claims that the difference doesn't matter.
17. Puritan Tanjid yielded Audi Sarabia.
18. Let Fajr and Isha hold up the suspension bridge of your day.
19. The Arab Spring should have begun with plogging, not blogging.

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20. Europe's three founding oppressions: Zeus against Europa, Aeneas against Dido, Augustine against Monica.
21. May your silence speak louder than your words.
22. Leave nature alone – it's busy.
23. It is not the purpose of the Law to sacralise the world, but to enable us duly to celebrate its sacrality.
24. Your breathing the Word shows that you are created to be higher than the angels.
25. Edom: consecrate celibacy; Ishmael and Juda-yi Ism: celebrate consecration.
26. The False Parturition tore the Liber Asian into three, but gave the Manu Mission its first unity.
27. In the Monoculture everyone is nowhere, so let Islam be your somewhere; but ensure that you place your somewhere somewhere.
28. If you do not permit criticism of your resentment you are a fascist.
29. Do not seek happiness, but if it comes, be happy.
30. If you are only a scholar, you are not a scholar.
31. Have the courage to respect the *rūksa*; for ours is an age in which the *azima* is usually an emotional indulgence.
32. Live for giving and you will be forgiving.
33. If Islam is an ideology, then prayer is not an act which heals the world.
34. The dervish gives gifts which graciously shock their recipients.
35. You are Muslim only if your energising trauma is your separation from God.
36. Nowadays what you like defines true religion.
37. 'Caution not spirit, let it roam wild; for in that natural state dance embraces divine frequency.' (Shah Asad Rizvi)

38. Seek wisdom, and your work and your words will be calm.
39. Some men worry about what the world will say. Others worry about what the Muslims will say. Still others are at peace, because they love the verdict of the Truth.
40. The twentieth century's great blunder was to allow Darwin to enter politics.
41. It is the moderns who believe that the world is flat.
42. "When one sees ignorant persons who imagine that the principle of religion is hardness, severity, excess and barbarism, it is time to repeat these words: "Patience is lovable, in God do we place our trust." (Emir Abd al-Kader to Imam Shaml.)
43. Love is triumphant, while the palaces of Najd are built on sand.
44. Do not think that the ancients have left nothing for us to do.
45. A government based on science must be totalitarian, for science cannot tolerate exceptions to its rules.
46. Sloth is an expressed preference for death.
47. Do not try to straighten her, for not all straightness is wisdom.
48. Only rich Arabs believe that there will always be an England.
49. You may find it easier to work for the Umma than with the Umma.
50. The blooms of wisdom grow from the manure of disappointment.
51. You will grow to be what you habitually intend.
52. You caress your *nafs* so tenderly, although it is the main source of your unhappiness.
53. The Qur'an is never read twice.
54. You will only learn to relax when you realise that you deserve nothing at all.
55. Some people seek the Truth, others merely want to be right.
56. The False Salafism is to the True Salafism what hip-hop is to the blues.

57. Only utter words on which buildings could be built.
58. Atheism: life's a choo-choo to nowhere.
59. 'I was struck by the divine aspect of reality.' (Balthus)
60. A khutba is not a flame-thrower. 'Give good news; do not repel!'
61. Kate Millett feared she was John Aspinall.
62. Scientism: when we know all our secrets, we will be more human, not less.
63. *Taklif*: use your own feet for walking.
64. The worst way of celebrating the world is trying to control it.
65. Nine in every ten cases of narrowness are caused by the ego. And when the spirit is the cause, it always fears that the ego is the cause.
66. When we lie we lie to ourselves; because we claim that misrepresentation will bring us peace.
67. To the fundamentalist, the golden mean looks like a grey area.
68. A sincere controversialist always tries to turn heat into light.
69. How easy it is for the worship of narrowness to replace the worship of God!
70. 'There are two kinds of indecency – the indecency of Puritanism and the indecency of cynicism.' (Valentine de Saint-Point)
71. Trust only the reformer who proclaims his need to be reformed.
72. Atheist spasms are the devil's waterboarding.
73. The traditional scholar knows that Islam gives seven million answers to a million questions. The frightened modern identity-seeker wants one million answers alone.
74. Be respected because you want others to be benefited by respecting you, not because you want to be respected.
75. Modernity gives us more people than we need, and fewer cultures than we need.

76. Beware that place in Hell reserved for those who favour strictness in a time when the people are weak.
77. Do not trust the withered promises of an arid age; only God's clouds will give you rain.
78. The *haraam* is so much gilded excrement.
79. Ballet's great misunderstanding begins with the feet.
80. Women need men to need to be needed.
81. We are sick of False Salafi news. When will we hear Islamic news?
82. You run about, but happiness does not come from outside you.
83. The agnostic should be agonistic.
84. Let us be to one other sparks of fire which make the moment blaze!
85. The unbeliever watches the moment, the believer eats it.
86. Pardon or explode.
87. The future and the past are not real to you; the present has everything that you need.
88. Bless Boaz, renounce ruthlessness.
89. Darwin abolished *homo sapiens*.
90. The dead live as they compel us to the act of self-recognition.
91. Semitic tongues fecundate by the verb. Conjugate, don't decline!
92. One does not become Muslim by joining Islam, one joins Islam by becoming a Muslim.
93. The Web has abolished rarity.
94. Respect lovers, for they show the possibility of total reconciliation.
95. Ijazaless Islam so readily becomes the devil's plaything.

96. The weak drown in the torrent; the strong wade across; the chosen few can carry others on their backs.
97. The False Salafi has replaced *istihsan* with *istiqbah*.
98. Reform? Let there first be a conversion of mentalities.
99. David Icke defames lizards.
100. Uhud is Islam's Uluru.