

## Tahera Qutbuddin, Virtues Workshop, June 2017

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1. Chapter on “The Sermon of Pious Counsel,” from my monograph project currently underway titled *Classical Arabic Oratory: Religion, Politics and Oral Aesthetics of Public Address in the Early Islamic World*.

### Abstract:

Showcasing a unique outlook on the purpose of human life in the early Islamic world of the seventh and eighth centuries, the sermon of pious counsel was one of the four major types of Arabic oration. Rooted in the pre-Islamic desert-dweller’s deep consciousness of cosmic cycles and human mortality, it was channeled toward priming for the afterlife by the monotheistic vision of Muhammad and the Qur’an. Pious counsel also permeated the other three categories: Friday sermons were an obvious repository of devotional material, but battle speeches and political orations were also frequently framed in a pietistic vein. The orator concentrated on reminding his audience of the inevitability of death, the necessity of leading a pious and principled life preparing for an imminent hereafter, and remaining at all times conscious of God. The chapter I am submitting for our Workshop examines these key themes and their religious and ethical subthemes with copious textual examples. In addition, it outlines the sermon’s historical development, formulae and patterns, and briefly describes concurrent non-oratorical genres of pious counsel. It ends with the text, translation and analysis of an illustrative sermon attributed to a commander of the Kharijite “Seceders,” Qatari ibn al-Fuja’ah (d. ca. 698).

2. Short paper titled “Imam Ali’s Preaching of Peace and Pluralism: Five Categories of Exhortations to Justice, Equity and Compassion from *The Path of Eloquence (Nahj al-balaghah)* and *A Treasury of Virtues (Dustur ma’alim al-hikam)*”—expanded write-up from presentation originally prepared for UNESCO World Philosophy Day, 2014, Paris, at a conference titled: *The Contribution of Ali ibn Abi Talib’s Thought to a Culture of Peace & Intercultural Dialogue*.

### Abstract:

Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib’s (d. 661) strong advocacy of peace and pluralism is well known and works on multiple levels of individual, society and state. In this paper, I present five broad categories of these early Islamic teachings through a selection of Ali’s sayings, sermons, letters and verse: (1) seeking justice and abstaining from vengeance; (2) pluralism; (3) focus on the hereafter, not worldly gain; (4) personal ethics: respect and sanctity of living creatures; and (5) the role of government.