

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Muawiyah

Character of Muawiyah

Muawiyah was a typical Arab, and he had all the virtues and vices which characterized the Arabs before their conversion to Islam. As the Governor of Syria he won the hearts of the people by gifts and concessions. He was a man, tall, fair, handsome and of dignified bearing. Umar often said about Muawiyah that he was the Caesar of the Arabs. His great personal charm, his affability, his attractive and pleasant disposition, his good manners, and his eloquence endeared him to the people. He was known to his people as "the silver tongued Amir". His intelligence, his sagacity, his pursuit of poetry, his shrewdness, and his sense of humor made him the "beau ideal" of the people. He was proverbial for his forbearance. He was a diplomat and a politician par excellence. In wining battles he relied more on the effective use of the tongue than on the sword. He was a past master in propaganda. He was of the view that it was the end and not the mess that mattered, and in the achievement of the end, any means fair or foul could be adopted. Islam had enjoined austerity in living, but Muawiyah preferring the Byzantine way followed a luxurious way of life. He was fond of pomp, ceremony and lavish ostentation. He built costly palaces for himself. For the people of Syria used to the Byzantine way of life, there was nothing objectionable in such display of power and pelf. To the orthodox Muslims such wayward luxuriance was frivolous and profane.

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