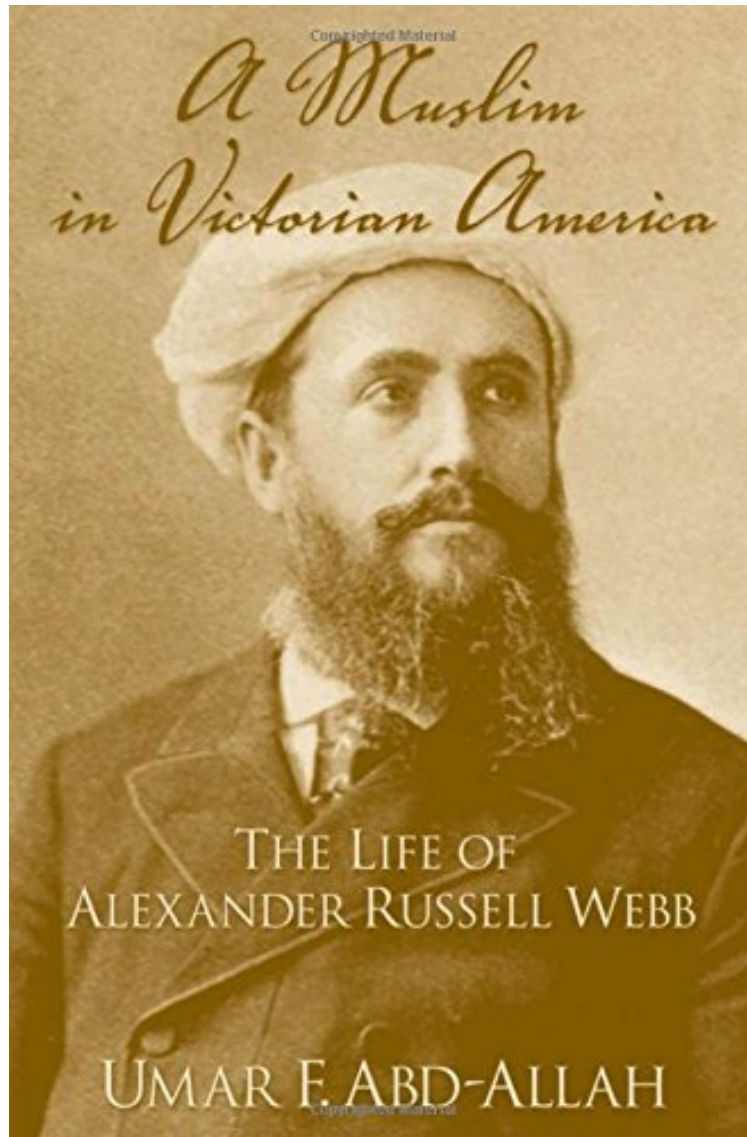


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A Muslim in Victorian America: The Life of Alexander Russell Webb

Umar F. Abd-Allah

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Umar F. Abd-Allah : A Muslim in Victorian America: The Life of Alexander Russell Webb before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Muslim in Victorian America: The Life of Alexander Russell Webb:

19 of 19 people found the following review helpful. A timely bookBy CustomerThis look at the life of Muhammad

Alexander Russell Webb, one of the first American converts to Islam, is well researched and written in a language that captivates one and takes you on a journey with Mr. Webb on his many travels. People in the West still view Islam as a late entrant to the scene in the US but as Muslims continue to integrate in the American social life, one will read and hear (and see hopefully) more and more stories of how Muslims have always been a part of the fabric of America. Some estimates say that almost 30% of the slaves brought over to the US were Muslims and we have Alex Kronemer coming up with a documentary on the life of an African slave who was a Prince and how he fought for and won his freedom after 40 years of slavery here to go back to Africa (The Prince among slaves). Dr. Abd-Allah is educated from Columbia, Cornell and the Univ. of Chicago and taught at King Abdul Aziz university in Saudi Arabia for 18 years. He has been back in the USA since 2000 and is the head of a non-profit organization called the Nawawi foundation based in Chicago which is dedicated to provide relevant, meaningful Islamic teachings to America's growing first and second generation Muslims - teachings firmly rooted in authentic scholarship and taught in a way that is dynamic and applicable to the modern world (See website [...]) Dr. Abd-Allah is and has always been a voice of moderation amongst Muslim scholars and is dedicated to more interfaith dialogue amongst people of various faiths. He has always been a proponent of peace and he has many Audio CD's out in the market dealing with various issues affecting Muslims and has made his feelings on extremism and violence quite clear. Mr. Rubin needs to check his sources (if any) before making comments on Dr. Abd-Allah. Read the book, you will like it. It is a book about a man of his times, who lived in a time of turmoil and great change in the USA, and should interest any student of American and Islamic history. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Customer Good book 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Timely and of Lasting Importance By Mike DePue, OFSAs the scrum for the Republican presidential nomination shines a spotlight on both domestic and international Islam, this book becomes even more germane than it would otherwise be. (At this point, 33% of Trump voters in South Carolina think the practice of Islam should be illegal in the United States.) In a way, Webb's Islamic advocacy could well be considered an abject failure. "During the initial stages of the American Mission, Webb expressed boundless confidence that it would succeed. 'I honestly believe that within five years [of 1892] we will have a Moslem brotherhood in America very strong numerically.' Webb's relatively short-lived experiment fell drastically short of his predictions." (p. 256) Hindsight offers several explanations for the precipitate collapse. "The first sees it as a failure of patronage, probably compounded by less than brilliant management. ... Never in his life does [Webb] appear to have been especially practical or fitted for management. A second explanation... combines allegations of financial and administrative shortcomings with misconduct. ... A third analysis focuses on the hostility of Victorian American society and the incompatibility of Webb's mission with its time and place." (p. 257) Yet, "like his precursors and successors, Webb provides the American Muslim community today not only with a sense of the importance of community, but also with a deeper sense of identity and historical continuity." (p. 269)

Conflicts and controversies at home and abroad have led Americans to focus on Islam more than ever before. In addition, more and more of their neighbors, colleagues, and friends are Muslims. While much has been written about contemporary American Islam and pioneering studies have appeared on Muslim slaves in the antebellum period, comparatively little is known about Islam in Victorian America. This biography of Alexander Russell Webb, one of the earliest American Muslims to achieve public renown, seeks to fill this gap. Webb was a central figure of American Islam during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A native of the Hudson Valley, he was a journalist, editor, and civil servant. Raised a Presbyterian, Webb early on began to cultivate an interest in other religions and became particularly fascinated by Islam. While serving as U.S. consul to the Philippines in 1887, he took a greater interest in the faith and embraced it in 1888, one of the first Americans known to have done so. Within a few years, he began corresponding with important Muslims in India. Webb became an enthusiastic propagator of the faith, founding the first Islamic institution in the United States: the American Mission. He wrote numerous books intended to introduce Islam to Americans, started the first Islamic press in the United States, published a journal entitled *The Moslem World*, and served as the representative of Islam at the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago. In 1901, he was appointed Honorary Turkish Consul General in New York and was invited to Turkey, where he received two Ottoman medals of merit. In this first-ever biography of Webb, Umar F. Abd-Allah examines Webb's life and uses it as a window through which to explore the early history of Islam in America. Except for his adopted faith, every aspect of Webb's life was, as Abd-Allah shows, quintessentially characteristic of his place and time. It was because he was so typically American that he was able to serve as Islam's ambassador to America (and vice versa). As America's Muslim community grows and becomes more visible, Webb's life and the virtues he championed - pluralism, liberalism, universal humanity, and a sense of civic and political responsibility - exemplify what it means to be an American Muslim.

"In this timely and engaging book, Umar Abd-Allah brings to life an important, but little-known figure in Victorian America. In an illuminating story of Alexander Webb, Abd-Allah shows how he navigated life as a prominent Muslim and an American with relative ease and without resistance from mainstream society. This work is an important lesson,

not only for history buffs but for anyone interested in understanding contemporary times." --Geneive Abdo, author of *Mecca and Main Street: Muslim Life in America After 9/11*"A remarkable biography of the intriguing Alexander Russell Webb, one of the earliest American converts to Islam. Webb's efforts to plant Islam in the United States are placed in the historical context of his New York upbringing, the religious developments in Victorian America, and his travels in the Muslim world." --Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, co-author of *Muslim Women in America*"A prodigious study of one of the most important early American Muslims. Webb's tour across the Islamic world is captivating, and his interpretation of the faith provides a model for contemporary Islamic thought." --Jane I. Smith, author of *Islam in America*"Fascinating for all Muslims and all Americans." --*The Muslim World Book* "Given our current lack of solid information about the place of Islam in American religious history, Abd-Allah's scholarly work is really quite valuable." --*H-Net*"An informative biography of an important spiritual figure." --*Religious Studies* "Umar Abd-Allah's account of Webb is by far the most comprehensive...Abd-Allah's lucid and elegant prose should make the work attractive to a wide array of general readers as well as religious historians of the United States." --*Journal of Religion*

About the Author Umar F. Abd-Allah is the Chair and Scholar-in-Residence at the Nawawi Foundation, a non-profit educational foundation based in Chicago. Abd-Allah received his Ph.D. in Arabic and Islamic Studies from the University of Chicago in 1978.