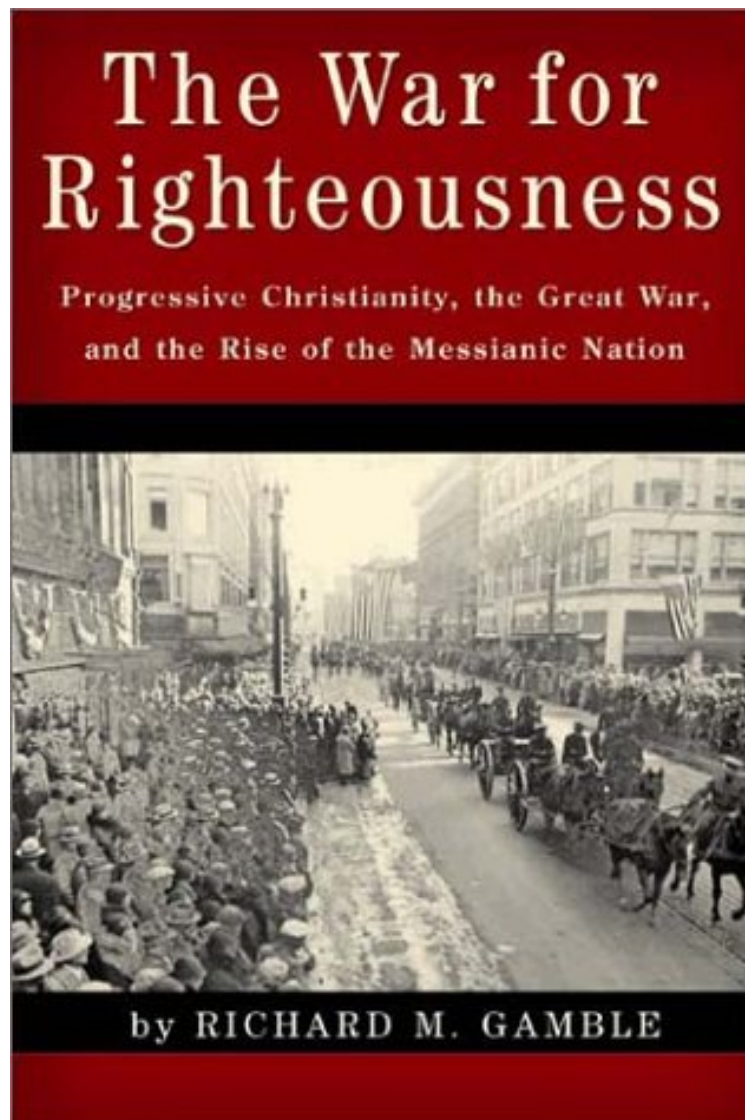


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## The War for Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War, and the Rise of the Messianic Nation

*Richard M. Gamble*

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**Richard M. Gamble : The War for Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War, and the Rise of the Messianic Nation** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The War for Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War, and the Rise of the Messianic Nation:

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Spreading The Gospel of DemocracyBy A. SmithAmerican

political Progressivism mixed with religious liberal groups and created a powerful combination in the decades preceding the First World War. God was with America, a "righteous" nation, and the nation had a heavenly obligation to spread its goodness to the world. One righteous nation would lead to another and another until all humanity could live as one. National barriers would dissolve; peace would reign. So was the thinking of the American Progressive movement leading up to the First World War as told in Richard Gamble's *The War for Righteousness*. It is an eye-opening story of a country not bothered by the tight bond between church and state. Americans at that time truly believed they were a Christian nation, God's agent of good with a responsibility to redeem the earth by taking God's righteousness to every corner. Christianity, Christian principles and Christian blessings would flow to the world through the United States, God's chosen people, and the blessing of righteousness would be delivered by the sword if not willingly accepted through the Word. The apparent success of the "American experiment" was viewed as God's revealed approval of her democracy. Since the defeat of the Southern Confederacy, God's blessing, it was concluded, resided with the victorious Union. The evil of slavery was vanquished, wealth (blessing) was available to those willing to work hard, and the country had reached her manifest destiny by expanding her borders to the Pacific Ocean. It therefore seemed obvious that America was God's special country, a nation set apart for a purpose. Since God approved of America, she could use herself as the standard to judge the world, but if the world did not agree, America would enforce her righteousness with the sword, for the world's own good. The democracy exemplified by the United States was exalted as God's anointed form of government, and the old autocracies of Europe were by definition evil. Once the structures of the Old World were destroyed, America's righteous democracy would usher in a new era of world righteousness, peace and unity, with the United States as the humble world leader. America's willingness to fight selflessly for the world was an example itself of her righteousness, never mind the fact that men had to be drafted into "selfless" sacrifice via the Selective Service. The arrogance is astounding, and a reader cannot help but wonder how much of the progressive attitude of aggressive American superiority remains today. It wasn't enough for Americans to believe that they had the best nation in the world; they insisted on waging jihad to spread it to the rest of the unfortunate or unrighteous world. How have the progressive ideals affected current war policies? Is democracy truly a divinely ordained form of government? And if it is, ought we to forcefully spread it abroad? Gamble does not delve into these questions, but his book certainly causes a reader to ask them.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Must Read By Mark Carlton Malcolm Muggeridge once observed that the "trouble with kingdoms of heaven on earth is that they're liable to come to pass, and then their fraudulence is apparent for all to see. We need a kingdom of heaven in Heaven, if only because it can't be realized." I have never come across a single volume that is a better illustration of Muggeridge's point than *The War for Righteousness*. Gamble's book is important because Progressive Christianity, with its desire to build the kingdom of God on earth, is experiencing an amazing comeback in our time. While many fear the religious right history has shown us that the Utopian dream of the religious left is perhaps the greater danger. Gamble carefully documents where the kingdom builder took the nation the last time they held sway. The 125,000 Americans who lost their lives in their last attempt at kingdom building should serve as a warning not to be drawn into their "kingdom" rhetoric again.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Eric G. Anderson Great

This line, the final one in G. K. Chesterton's poem, *The English Graves*, serves for Richard as an interpretive key to a peculiarly important moment in American history: the time of the First World War, when progressive Christian leaders in America transformed themselves from principled pacifists to crusading interventionists. The consequence of this shift, says Gamble was the triumph of the idea that America has been destined by divine Providence to bring salvation to the less enlightened nations of the world. In *The War for Righteousness*, Gamble reconstructs the inner world of the social gospel clergy, tracing the evolution of the clergy's interventionist ideology from its roots in earlier efforts to promote a modern, activist Christianity. He shows how these clergy eventually came to see their task as world evangelization for the new creed of democracy and internationalism, and ultimately for the redemption of civilization itself through the agency of total war. World War I thus became a transcendent moment of fulfillment. In the eyes of the progressive clergy, the years from 1914 to 1918 presented an unprecedented opportunity to achieve their vision of a world transformed--the ancient dream of a universal and everlasting kingdom of peace, justice, and righteousness. American sacrifice was necessary not only to save the country, but to save the entire world. Vividly narrating how the progressive clergy played a surprising role in molding the public consensus in favor of total war, Gamble engages the broader question of religion's role in shaping the modern American mind and the development, at the deepest levels, of the logic of messianic interventionism both at home and abroad. This timely book not only fills a significant gap in our collective memory of the Great War, it also helps demonstrate how and why that war heralded the advent of a different American self-understanding.

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About the Author Richard M. Gamble is Assistant Professor of History at Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, Florida, where he has taught in the history and honors programs since 1994. He is also a Visiting Scholar at St. Edmund's College, Cambridge University, and regularly returns to the Western Front to lead travel-study programs on the Battle of Verdun. His essays and reviews have appeared in *Humanitas*, the *Journal of Southern History*, *Chronicles*, the *Independent*, and *Ideas on Liberty*.