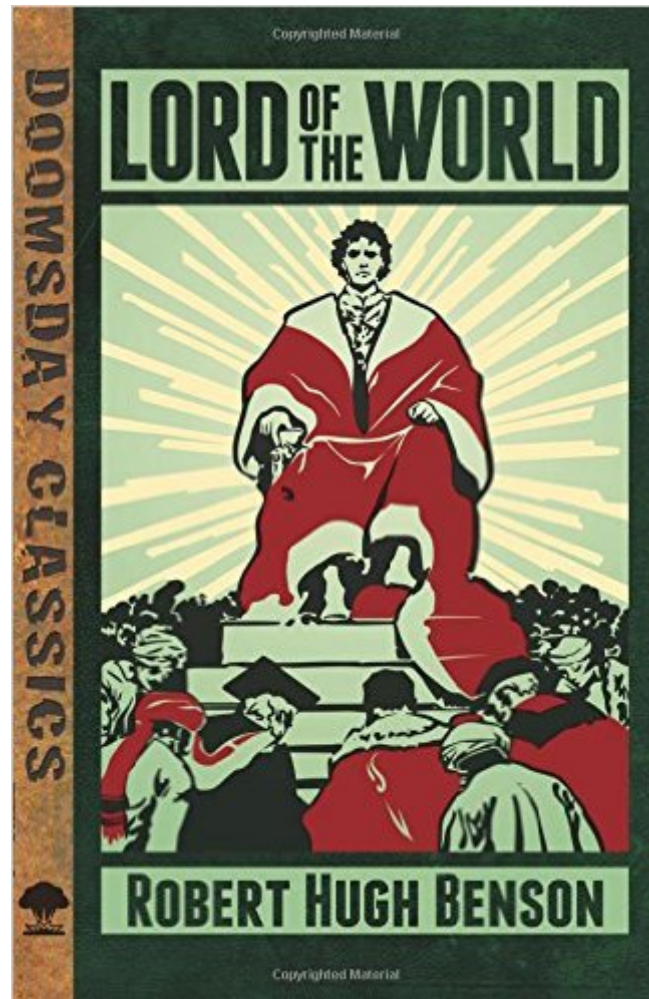


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Lord Of The World (Dover Doomsday Classics)



Synopsis

Belief in God has been replaced by secular humanism in this gripping tale of the apocalypse. Protestantism is over, Catholicism is driven underground, and the Eastern religions have merged into a single pantheistic creed that poses an ongoing military threat to the West. Without a spiritual dimension to their lives, people are literally bored to death, choosing legal euthanasia rather than an empty existence. A charismatic leader arises amid this culture of despair, and in their eagerness for change, the citizens support the coming of the Antichrist and the end of days. One of the first works of modern dystopic fiction, this 1907 novel is remarkably prescient in its depiction of a technologically advanced society that rushes headlong toward its own destruction. Author Robert Hugh Benson, son of the Archbishop of Canterbury and a convert to Roman Catholicism, wrote this dark parable in response to the science-fiction novels of H. G. Wells, which portrayed utopian societies in terms of atheism and one-world government. The novel has been hailed as prophetic by Dale Ahlquist, Joseph Pearce, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis, among others.

Book Information

Series: Dover Doomsday Classics

Paperback: 400 pages

Publisher: Dover Publications (September 16, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0486803813

ISBN-13: 978-0486803814

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (150 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #73,475 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #39 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Religious & Inspirational > Science Fiction & Fantasy](#) #84 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Literature & Fiction > Fantasy](#) #93 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Literature & Fiction > Science Fiction](#)

Customer Reviews

This is an excellent edition of Benson's classic work. Unlike many other recent editions of Benson's books (*Come Rack Come Rope*, *Oddsfish*, etc.), this edition has not been abridged. It is the story of the future world from a turn of the century vantage point. Protestantism has fizzled, the Masons have triumphed, and Catholicism is on the defensive. The world has divided into three parties, and a

silver tongued savior comes to save the day. Benson believed that armageddon would more likely result from smooth talking and twisted ideologies than from naked evil. Although Benson may have over estimated the Masons and underestimated Protestants, he makes many surprisingly accurate predictions. The rhetoric used by the Bolsheviks in Russia, the Nazi's in Germany, and the parties of the Spanish civil war was foreseen by Benson. The great white line Hitler painted around the Vatican and the Atomic bomb were also not beyond Benson's imagination. Unfortunately, only a small audience will appreciate this book, but that audience should include all Catholics who take ideas and the modern threat seriously. This book helps explain the beauty of pre-Vatican II ceremonies without siding against the changes of Vatican II.

R.H. Benson wrote two mystical visions of the future. *The Dawn of All* is an extremely romantic and improbable 1911 parable of a 1971 world mostly Catholic and at peace, ready for the Second Coming. *The Lord of the World* came first, in 1907, and was a darker vision. A world of flying craft, major scientific advances, and comfort has become a place of materialist despair. Euthanasia is routine, for the desperately ill and the terminally bored. Oliver and Mabel Brand, a rising young couple, are the golden ones -- Oliver becomes a major political figure, but Mabel chooses the cool despairing end of legal euthanasia. Father Percy Franklin is one of the last Catholic priests in a world hostile to freedom, church, university, and history. Eventually elected the last Pope, he is restricted to the dusty forgotten village of Nazareth. Julian Felsenburgh is a charismatic American adventurer who means to and does become Lord of the World, anti-Christ. Details are less important than the very modern mood. Believing in progress as the only good, people are swept into any movement that promises it. The past is ruthlessly exterminated. The quest for one world government that begins with Esperanto ends with one world dictatorship.

"A Century before Left Behind there was Lord of the World," reads the cover blurb in the striking Wildside Press edition. But while both books deal with end times, that's where the similarities end. In Benson's vision, Catholics are the last remaining Christians. The Left Behind books, named for a line in Larry Norman's song, "I Wish We'd All Been Ready," on the other hand, follow the idea of the rapture popularized in Hal Lindsey's bestselling book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. I ordered this book from after reading Gwen Watkins' essay in *Charles Williams: A Celebration* (also available from) comparing Benson and Williams as writers. Williams being my favorite author, I was very excited to come upon a similarly gifted novelist. Benson wrote *Lord of the World* in 1907; it takes place in a future about a century later (around now). That's also around the time that Chesterton

wrote his novels. Both he and Benson write so colorfully that it's sometimes hard to know what's going on. Whether people were more imaginative then or that was the style at the turn of the century I don't know. But having read GKC helps one read Benson, and vice versa. Williams is often held to be obscure for his descriptions of supernatural and occultic ritual. Benson's obscurity lies in his pre-Vatican II Catholic vocabulary and bits of the Latin Mass, which will not be familiar to many readers. That aside, this is an absolutely gripping story. Having once started, I couldn't put the book down. Uncannily, in this 1907 novel, Benson prophesied a dark future that became reality, first in Germany and then in the USSR. Writing in the then new genre of science fiction, he envisioned a technologically advanced world nevertheless rushing headlong to destruction. It's amazing how contemporary he sounds as he looks forward in time to our present and his future.

As an evangelical with strong Catholic sympathies, I was excited to discover "Lord of the World" for another twist on the "Left Behind" scenario. The author writes at the dawn of the twentieth century and hits a few predictions about our world dead-on. But better yet is the sense of gravity Benson conveys in the novel. You really feel the earth coming to a conclusion, the ultimate clash of faith in God versus faith in Man.

Msgr. Robert Benson analyses the end times and the influence of the antichrist upon government, individuals, and even the Church. His insightful approach and convincing arguments offer much for meditation regarding the direction of modern thought. Written at the turn of the century, Msgr. Benson's novel announces the conclusions of such trends with chilling accuracy. His style is simple, yet captivating, and far from striking terror and fear into his readers, however, Benson inspires with the Faith and the truths of salvation within the Church.

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