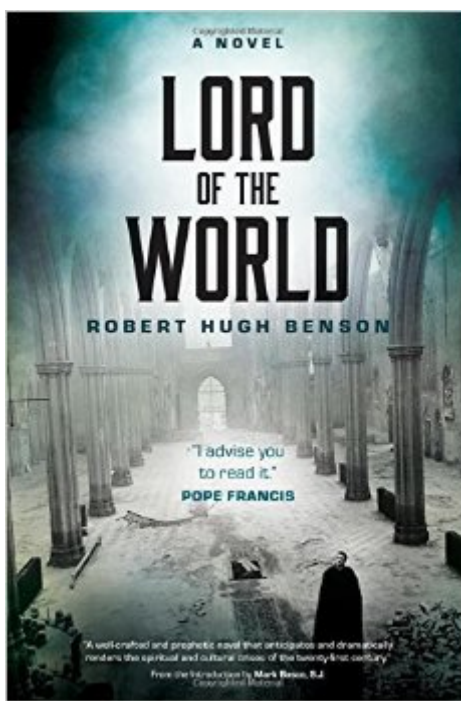


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Lord Of The World: A Novel



Synopsis

"I advise you to read it."--Pope Francis on *Lord of the World*

In an airplane news conference on his return from the Philippines in January 2015, Pope Francis mentioned Robert Hugh Benson's *Lord of the World*. It wasn't the first time the Holy Father praised the book. This 1907 futuristic narrative has been hailed as the finest work of this unsung, but influential author and son of the Archbishop of Canterbury whose conversion to Catholicism rocked the Church of England in 1903. The compelling book includes a new introduction, a biography of Benson, and a theological reflection.

Popular young adult books such as *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, as well as literary classics such as Walker Percy's *Love in the Ruins* and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, have created a growing interest in dystopian novels. In one of the first such novels of the twentieth century, Robert Hugh Benson imagines a world where belief in God has been replaced by secular humanism. *Lord of the World* describes a world where Catholics are falling away and priests and bishops are defecting. Only a small remnant of the faithful remains. Julian Felsenburgh, a mysterious and compelling figure arises, promising peace in exchange for blind obedience. Those who resist are subjected to torture and execution. Soon the masses are in Felsenburgh's thrall and he becomes leader of the world. Into this melee steps the novel's protagonist, Fr. Percy Franklin. Dauntless and clear-sighted, Franklin is a bastion of stability as the Catholic Church in England disintegrates around him. Benson's harrowing plot soon brings these two charismatic men into a final apocalyptic conflict. With an imagination to rival H. G. Wells and theological insight akin to G. K. Chesterton, Benson's astute novel has captured the attention of many today, including Popes Benedict and Francis. This new edition makes it easily available and features an insightful introduction by Rev. Mark Bosco, S.J., a brief biography of Benson by Martyn Sampson, and a theological reflection by Rev. Michael Murphy, S.J.

Book Information

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: Christian Classics; Reprint edition (February 5, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0870612980

ISBN-13: 978-0870612985

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 1 x 8.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (7 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

This book is pretty amazing. It was originally written in 1907 but is so appropriate today. I first wanted to read this book when I heard that Pope Francis recommended it. I am so glad I read this one. This book takes place in a dystopian present (it was the future in 1907 though!). The world looks different than it does now simply because Robert Hugh Benson had no idea where technology would go. The telegraph is still a pretty important part of information transfer in this book. Percy Franklin is a Catholic priest in a world where humanism is the guiding belief. Those who are religious in any way are persecuted for their faith. Euthanasia is readily available and commonplace in this world. Everything is secularized and man is the epitome of evolution. Father Franklin is working as hard as he can to save souls and keep the world from devouring his religion. The battle he is fighting seems to be a losing battle when Julie Felsenburgh, a mysterious American, manages to broker world peace. Felsenburgh is anti-anything-resembling-true-faith. Instead, Felsenburgh is a leader of secular humanism. After world peace is established, he is hailed as the savior of the world and the expression of the divine human. All of this is directly opposed to the Catholic Church, the only Christian denomination left in existence. The humanistic society is reframing all religious thought around Felsenburgh while the Church can do little to combat it. Father Percy Franklin is thrown into this mix with his brilliant mind and his uncanny resemblance to Julian Felsenburgh. Something is going to happen and these two men are likely to head the opposing sides. This novel is so apropos for today's world where being a Catholic is such a hard thing. It is amazing to think that this book was written in 1907 when it is so appropriate to today's world. I loved this book much more than I thought I would and even though the ending was horribly abrupt, I have no idea how else it could have ended. This is a great book and I am so thankful that Pope Francis recommended it which then made me aware of it. I received this book for free from the publisher via NetGalley for review consideration. This in no way affects my opinion of the title nor the content of this review. This review first appeared at Orandi et Legendi [...]

The plot of the book was somewhat as I had hoped it would be. It is a very telling story reflecting the times and attitudes of people in our modern day. It kept me wanting to read more. The characters were well defined and given a necessary depth to understand the underlying message the author is

trying to convey.

Lord of the World: A Novel, by Robert Hugh Benson, is a classic I had never heard of, but which boasts "I advise you to read it" - Pope Francis on the front cover. Ave Maria Press released a new edition in 2016 of this 1907 novel. Confession: I skipped the (probably very interesting and educational) introduction by Fr. Mark Bosco, S.J., and just dove into the book. I had no clue what it was about, aside from the back cover's assertion that it's "one of the first dystopian novels of the twentieth century." I'm a reluctant fan of dystopian literature: I even catch myself sort of understanding why it's so popular. I want to hope, even as I almost despair at the mess the world seems to be in. Reading Lord of the World struck me with a familiarity that I wasn't expecting. It gave me a feeling of "Oh! This has been wrong for a LONG TIME!" The plot follows a few characters: a priest, an on-the-rise politician and his wife, and a cast of supporting folks who feel all too much like today's politicians and citizenry. The hope in this novel comes at the end in an unlikely way. I was expecting a fight, and I guess there was one at the end, but it was far from what I expected. What is faith and what is the longing for spirituality? How is it manifested? Where do you find it? Interestingly, the answers aren't necessarily in the text or solved by the plot, but the seeds of thought are planted. There's a chilling reality in this book: the way people both answer temptation and flock to false peace. I walked away feeling much the same as I did after reading 1984: humanity hasn't really changed. Maybe it won't. But hope remains, even when we face ourselves.

Excellent book

I'm very glad I read this book!! At times the author seemed a bit wordy, but the story was worth it!

awesome catholic fiction

Hard to read this book.

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