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Lord of the World is a 1907 novel by Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson that centers upon the reign of the Anti-Christ and the End of the World. It has been called prophetic by Dale Ahlquist, Joseph Pearce, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. Oliver Brand, an influential Communist MP from Croydon, listens as his secretary, Mr. Phillips, describes the seemingly inevitable rush toward war between the Confederation and the Empire. He mentions that Julian Felsenburgh, a Senator from Vermont who looks identical to Father Percy Franklin, has unexpectedly taken charge of the American Republic's peace delegation. Felseburgh is tirelessly crisscrossing Asia and Siberia, delivering speeches to rapt audiences. In conversation with his wife, Mabel, Oliver comments that war between the Confederation and the Empire will be "Armageddon with a vengeance", and expresses hope that Senator Felsenburgh will save the day. Although Mabel Brand appears concerned, her husband responds, "My dear, you must not be downhearted. It may pass as it all passed before. It is a great thing that we are listening to America at all. And this Mr. Felsenburgh seems to be on the right side." Westminster Cathedral, London. Over breakfast, Oliver frets about his upcoming trip to Birmingham, where the outraged population is again demanding the right to trade freely with the American Republic. As his mind returns to the possible war against the Empire, Brand ponders that the real problem is the survival of religious belief in the Eastern Empire—Buddhism, Islam, Sufism, Confucianism, and Pantheism. In Great Britain, only Catholicism remains in "a few darkened churches" and "with hysterical sentimentality" in Westminster Cathedral. He ponders with disgust how, against his opposition, Ireland was granted Home Rule and "opted for Catholicism." Furthermore, the city of Rome was "given up wholly" to Pope John XXIV, who has transformed it into a Hong Kong-style enclave where "mediaeval darkness" reigns supreme. He recalls with outrage how the Italian Republic was forced to move its capital to Turin. As he departs to catch a volor to Birmingham, Oliver looks out at "the grey haze of London, really beautiful, this vast hive of men and women who had learned at least the primary lesson of the gospel that there was no God but man, no priest but the politician, and no prophet but the schoolmaster

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Derek McCaleb:

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