

Douglas, Lloyd C. (1878-1951)

Encyclopedia Article

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Contents

Douglas, Lloyd C. (1878-1951) Encyclopedia Article.....	1
Contents.....	2
Douglas, Lloyd C. (1878-1951).....	3

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With the publication of *The Robe* in 1942, Lloyd C. Douglas became the most influential religious novelist in the world. Following in the tradition of Lew Wallace's *Ben Hur* (1880), Douglas' novels satisfied a reading public's demands for rollicking adventure and historical romance, combined with piety. *The Robe* purports to tell what happened to the Roman soldier who acquired Jesus' garment at the Crucifixion. After many adventures, this soldier meets St. Peter and accepts Christianity, later to die a happy martyr's death. Douglas, who retired from the Congregational ministry to write, never pretended his novels were refined works of literature. He graciously suffered the attacks of reviewers, who found him loquacious and sentimental. Yet he proved incapable of writing a book that did not become a best seller; the public loved his vintage narratives of decent characters who worked through problems to happy resolutions. In 1953, Henry Koster directed a major Hollywood film adaptation of *The Robe* which is still highly regarded. Douglas' continuing though diluted influence may be seen in books by Fulton Oursler, Taylor Caldwell, and Frank G. Slaughter.

Further Reading:

Douglas, Lloyd C. *Time to Remember*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1951.

Hackett, Alice P. *60 Years of Best Sellers, 1895-1955*. New York, R.R. Bowker, 1956.

Schneider, Louis, and Sanford M. Dornbusch. *Popular Religion: Inspirational Books in America*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958.