

Chesterton's Jews: Stereotypes and Caricatures in the Literature and Journalism of G. K. Chesterton

Simon Mayers



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G. K. Chesterton was a journalist and prolific author of poems, novels, short stories, travel books and social criticism. Before the twentieth century, Chesterton expressed sympathy for Jews and hostility towards antisemitism. He was agitated by Russian pogroms and felt sympathy for Captain Dreyfus. Early in the twentieth century, he started to fear the presence of Jews in Christian society. His caricatures of Jews were often that of grotesque creatures dressed up as English people. His fictional and his non-fictional works repeated stereotypes of Jewish greed, usury, capitalism, bolshevism, cowardice, disloyalty and secrecy. This book provides a detailed study of these stereotypes and caricatures in Chesterton's discourse. It also examines Chesterton's discussion of the so-called "Jewish Problem" and the argument that Chesterton could not have been antisemitic because Israel Zangwill was his friend and the Wiener Library defended him from the charge.

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