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Remembrance: Rev. J. Ian Boyd, CSB (1935-2024)

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Rev. J. Ian Boyd, CSB (1935-2024)

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Father Ian Boyd (left) with Wade Center founder Clyde S. Kilby at Wheaton College's "Imagination and Belief" writing conference in 1980.

Rev. J. Ian Boyd, CSB, the doughty champion of Gilbert Keith Chesterton, died in Edmonton, Canada, on 10 January 2024, two weeks short of his eighty-ninth birthday. He was raised in Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan, the youngest of seven children. Family life at the Boyds was Catholic and literary; one item in particular had a lasting influence on young Ian: back copies of *G.K.'s Weekly*, Chesterton's newspaper.

Ian attended local schools and St. Thomas More College, federated with the University of Saskatchewan, receiving his bachelor's in 1956. Impressed by the intellectual apostolate of the Basilian Fathers at the College, Ian followed the example of an older brother, Leo, by entering the seminary. Ian was ordained to the priesthood on 15 December 1963. Previously he had taught at Saint Michael's College School, where he inspired his students to

astounding feats of memory. One learned a Wodehouse short story by heart; another could recite the Ukrainian Constitution . . . in Ukrainian.

Ian earned his master's from the University of Toronto with a thesis on Maurice Baring, Chesterton's contemporary and friend, and evidenced his devotion to Chesterton further in his doctoral studies at the University of Aberdeen; his thesis, "Chesterton's Fiction: A Political and Literary Study," was later published as *The Novels of G.K. Chesterton* (1975). The new Dr. Boyd returned to Saint Thomas More College to teach undergraduate English, specializing in the modern English novel, with an emphasis on Christian authors such as T.S. Eliot, Evelyn Waugh, Muriel Spark, Flannery O'Connor, and, of course, Chesterton.

Attendance at a conference on the occasion of the centenary of Chesterton's birth provided the incentive for Ian to found the Chesterton Institute and its journal, *The Chesterton Review*, in 1974. Ian became known outside Canada, mainly through local Chesterton societies, some of which had arisen because of the *Review*. These contacts increased dramatically when, in 1999, the Chesterton Institute moved to Seton Hall University in South Orange,

New Jersey. With more professional support and greater funding, the Institute was able to sponsor conferences around the world.

With failing health, by 2020 Ian had surrendered direction of the Institute to his colleague Gloria Garafulich-Grabois and editorship of the *Review* to Dr. Dermot Quinn. Ian was named President Emeritus of the G.K. Chesterton Institute for Faith & Culture and Founding Editor of *The Chesterton Review*. That year, he moved to Edmonton, where he lived with his sister Betty until he died.

“Larger than life” best describes Ian. Virtually single-handedly, he brought G.K. Chesterton to the attention of the contemporary world by an indefatigable promotion of his vast literary remains as well as by collecting scholars worldwide to write for *The Chesterton Review*. He also served on the advisory board of *VII* for more than four decades, from the very first volume (published in 1980) until his death in 2024. His collegial support of *VII*, even as he oversaw *The Chesterton Review*, was characteristic of his generous spirit towards all who were interested in the writings of Chesterton and the other six Wade authors. But it was his priesthood that was the centre of his long career as an academic, a teacher, an editor, and a minister of the Gospel. His profound Christian faith impressed everyone who met him, and it gave his priestly ministry a sensitivity and effectiveness far beyond the ordinary.

FATHER DANIEL CALLAM, CSB

Remembering Father Ian Boyd

Thanks, said Chesterton, are the highest form of thought. When considering the fate of Chesterton scholarship, one owes the highest thanks to Father Ian Boyd. At a time when scholarly interest in Chesterton was nearly extinct, Father Boyd founded *The Chesterton Review* in 1974, convinced that Chesterton’s reputation could be revived and restored by the rigorous study of his life and work. His pioneering scholarship (especially in *The Novels of G.K. Chesterton*) and indefatigable editing of the *Review* for nearly half a century provided the impetus and opportunity for the growth of a serious body of criticism of Chesterton and his milieu that once seemed fanciful but that has been realized in the work of a generation of authors who benefited from Father Boyd’s indispensable support and tutelage. Father Boyd combined an unequivocal commitment to high intellectual standards with a personal graciousness and charity that befits the student of a man who argued but never quarreled.

Father Boyd’s generosity of spirit took tangible form in his personal solicitude for emerging scholars. For instance, when I first met him at a Chesterton conference in 1994, I happened to mention that I was working on the thought of Christopher Dawson as well. Father Boyd immedi-

ately invited me to visit St. Thomas More College, which then housed Dawson's library and personal papers, and arranged for me to stay with the Basilian community there for nearly a month. His kindness to a young doctoral candidate made possible research that I have drawn on for my entire career. My experience of his charity is hardly exceptional.

Finally, Father Boyd modeled the integration of faith and reason that Chesterton upheld so forcefully. As a priest, he displayed deep reflection and profound faith. His celebrations of the Mass were models of holiness and deep care for the encounter with Christ that he was mediating. All who knew him will thus be confident in our prayers for his eternal rest after a life of faithful learning and loving service. And all those who seek the intelligent exploration of the Christian and Western heritage will unite in Chesterton's "primeval duty of praise" to this wise steward of that patrimony.

ADAM SCHWARTZ