

895 A.D. A PREFACE

The boy sat on soft ground in front of the cold grey stone. He had chosen it months before as his favorite spot from which to watch the sea. The soft green moss was long gone from his slouching and squirming. The seas rolled; the sun bounced off the water hypnotically. Leaning his head back against the stone, he wallowed in his dejection.

Family lore told of his great-uncle having come with Columba himself to this little island in the Scottish Hebrides. His kinsman had served the Saint in the darkest hours of bringing the new word to Scotland, and had helped stack the very stones of the monastery where the boy now lived. He had served and been a hero. Now young Cullum longed for his own day. He was frustrated at being sent out, day after day, to sit on the hill by the shore and watch for trouble coming from the sea. Though he had heard of the Viking raids that happened before his arrival, he only half believed the tales. Had the monks just sent him to the hill to get him out of their way? He didn't have the skills they had, true, but he was sure he could do more than this. He longed to feel useful, to contribute.

He bounced the leather pouch that lay on his lap, fiddling with one of the three tassels that hung from the old leather. It was said that this sporran pouch belonged to his great-uncle, and he hoped the story was true. He shifted it back and forth absent-mindedly upon the leather strap that hung it from his waist, and looked up at the clouds being puffed along overhead by the eastward wind.

When will my time come? I hate just sitting here.

Under the warming sun, his eyes closed. They were shut for what he thought was just a moment. In that time, however, the world had turned.

The first ships had already been beached. A pair of large painted dragons glared up at him from the front of the two ships being pulled further onto shore. With a clank of arms and cursing, men scrambled up the stony beach of Iona. Other ships were in the shallows and coming quickly toward the shore. The boy's heart jumped, his stomach turning. He dropped sideways onto the ground, hoping with no reason to hope that the broad men with wild hair and unkempt beards had not seen him. Crawling behind his stone, he peeked over the edge and saw the first group beginning to walk up the path from the sea.

"Boy!" one of them shouted.

The boy in the brown wool robe of a monk's apprentice froze.

"Boy!" the man bellowed again.

Cullum jumped to his feet and without looking back he ran as fast as his legs would carry him down the other side of the hill. He ran and ran. His brown robes waved in the air and his sporran bounced ferociously against his loins. As he approached the monastery, he began to yell. "Vikings! Brothers, the invaders have come! Vikings!"

The monks scrambled. Having been raided before, they were ready. Each sprang to his own emergency role: Some threw stores of food down into the holes hidden beneath their floors while others took treasures out to be hidden amidst the rocks and in secret crevices behind stone walls in the unadorned buildings.

Cullum kept running as he yelled the alert. He burst into the chapel, fearing the monks in prayer might not have heard his calls. They had heard, and only one man still stood in the center of the room. Cullum approached the Abbott. Out of breath and frightened, the boy knew he had failed in his duty to give ample warning of the terrible Norse warriors. He should not have allowed himself to drift off in a daydream. He should not have closed his eyes. He could now understand that he had been given an important job; he had not performed it well.

“Do you still have a bit of swiftness left in those legs, Cullum?” the Abbott asked, his head bowed to look into the boy’s eyes.

Cullum nodded in the affirmative, though he was still catching his breath.

The Abbott turned, picked up a large book that stood on the center table in the chapel, and rubbed his hand across its cover with a mixture of admiration and deep dread. “This, lad, is Columba’s great book. Some will call it the *Leabhar Cheanannais*. We have labored many years in the scriptorium to create this book.” The man wiped a small tear from his right eye and the act confused the boy. The Abbott brushed his hand across the ornate cover, fingering the gold lettering and the jewels. He paused and traced the shape of the solid silver cross that came together at the exact center of the cover.

“Lad, the pages are of the finest vellum, but what is on them is more important still. This cover is inlaid in gold and set with jewels, but its leather is more important still. Can I trust you with it?”

Cullum could feel the pride rising in his chest. “Yes, teacher. In the name of my uncle who served Columba in his time of need, you can trust me.”

The two were startled by the sounds of a skirmish from the courtyard outside. The Abbott ran to the wooden door and slammed a thick plank across it and into the stone frame. There was yelling and screaming and the sound of the pounding of boots, hammers and shields against doors.

The Abbott turned to Cullum. “This, lad, is why you were born. This is your destiny. This is your story, just now beginning to unfold. Take this book and guard it with your life. It must not fall into the hands of the evil men of our age or any other. It is not just a book. It holds secrets more important than the gold leafed upon the pages. It holds a truth more powerful than the jewels on the cover. Share its story with anyone, but protect its secrets from everyone.”

A slight rattling at the door made the two turn. Finding the door blocked, the invaders then began pounding with sledges on its thick wood. The hammering rattled the formerly peaceful air of the chapel.

“You have no time, Cullum. Back here. Quickly. Out this window and then down to the beach. I’ve hidden a small boat down amidst the bushes by the sea. Take the boat and go. Don’t look back. Just row as fast as your arms can move. Get to another of the islands and run. Find a place to hide. Tell no one what you carry. Let no one see it. Make your way then to Kells in the land of Patrick. There you will find an abbey. Trust our brothers at Kells. They know what we have done. They will then protect the book. Don’t come back here. Stay at the abbey at Kells and never return to Iona. Your destiny is elsewhere.”

Cullum stood confused. Was he being sent away? Why couldn’t he come back? This was to be his new home since his parents had passed away in the cold winter of 894. He was to serve where his great-uncle had served. A great cracking in the wood of the door sent splinters flying into the chapel, giving focus again to his thoughts. The Abbott pressed the great book tight into the boy’s chest. Cullum’s arms folded around it. The man leaned down and kissed the boy in the center of his forehead.

When the door finally shattered off its hinges, the Viking invaders entered to find a lone man kneeling in prayer in the center of the chapel.

Almost twelve centuries have passed since the boy rowed off the island into a web of destinies not completed even now.

PART I

IONA ACADEMY

IONA ACADEMY

The baseball spun as it rose through the air and then descended again to land in Jacob's hand. With each toss the boy lying on the bed tried to get the ball closer to the ceiling without it actually making contact. The game had left several cupped indents in the plaster and the occasional black eye when his concentration had slipped.

Mr. Nibbles lay between the boy's feet. The pug dog had learned to get safely out of the way when Jacob tossed a baseball. Once, a ball had awakened the little dog the hard way when it came crashing down on his tiny brown and black head. He jumped off the bed and was half way down the stairs by the time he realized the house was not falling in on him.

It had been almost a year since Professor Chadwick von Niblick had given Mr. Nibbles to Jacob at the end of his stay in Edinburgh, Scotland. It had also been almost a year since the magic sporran had arrived on his doorstep, bringing him into the mystical world of the Order of the Sporrai. He had kept up with professors Hammish, MacGregor and Chadwick von Niblick by letters exchanged through his magic sporran pouch. Mr. Nibbles occasionally acted more strangely than the average pug dog and sometimes disappeared in the night for hours at a time. Otherwise, the past year had gone pretty much like any other year.

He had turned thirteen the previous October and, when he deserved it, now enjoyed a bit more independence from his parents. He was lying on his bed now because he had snapped at his mother when she told him to take care of his homework before he went to play basketball with his friend Will.

The rap of knuckles on the door agitated him again. "What?"

"Mail call!" Mr. Boyd announced as he opened Jacob's door, tossing a envelope onto Jacob's chest.

"Thanks, Dad."

"You're welcome. Come down to get some dinner when you cool off."

Jacob picked up the envelope and caught a whiff of nutty vanilla that reminded him of Professor von Niblick's pipe tobacco. There was no return address on the envelope but a red rampant lion stamp was in the upper left corner with the letters "IONA" in fancy letters below it. He turned it over to find the package was sealed with red wax with the same four letters pressed into it.

Hmm. . . Iona? I wonder what this is?

"Nibbles, what do you think?" Jacob tore open the package as the dog walked up the bed to inspect the contents with him.

Inside the envelope was a burgundy colored folder with a rampant lion in gold on the front below which was written those four letters again "IONA." He opened the folder as Mr. Nibbles leaned over to look for himself. In the left pocket was a brochure for a boarding school called "Iona" located in a rural area outside the little town of Aberdeen, Kentucky. There were pictures of young boys and girls playing sports, having class, and taking a meal in a large dark paneled dining hall.

The right pocket held an application for enrollment in the school for the upcoming summer term. The application was on a heavy parchment paper with a red wax seal at the bottom. Like any standard application, there were blanks for name, address, phone numbers, grades, interests, parent information, medical concerns, and food allergies. *Just junk mail*, he thought.

Jacob tossed it on the floor beside his bed, deciding to head down the stairs to apologize to his mother, get dinner, and start his homework. "Come on, Mr. Nibbles, lets get something to eat and take you for a walk," Jacob said as he rubbed the pug's head and got up from his bed.



Later that evening, Jacob returned to his room and prepared to turn in. Mr. Nibbles, as always, was right at his heels. As they did almost every night, Jacob sat in the chair by his desk and Mr. Nibbles got up on the bed. Jacob tossed a ball into the air just out of the small dog's reach. The pug leapt out and caught the ball in his mouth, often followed by a stunt man-style roll across the floor. The dog trotted back over to Jacob and dropped the ball so the game could start all over again. His little legs were only good for a few of those a night, but Mr. Nibbles never wanted to miss them.

Jacob switched on the reading light by his bed and switched off the overhead light on the ceiling. Mr. Nibbles curled up next to him and Jacob reached down to take a closer look at the package he had received in the mail that day. He opened the folder from Iona Academy and removed the brochure. He dropped the outer folder back onto the floor.

Jacob began to open the brochure when a strange thought crossed through his mind. *Weird*. Something seemed different about the folder. He picked the folder up again and opened it. Just as quickly, he slammed it shut and tossed it across the floor. His heart raced and Mr. Nibbles jumped up, cocking his head in confused concern for his master.

The folder flopped open as it landed. From across the room Jacob's eyes confirmed his first impression. *I'm sure it was blank earlier today! I know it was!* In dark black ink that looked handwritten, his name now appeared on the application: Jacob Thomas Boyd.

He reached for a cracked old wooden baseball bat from beside his nightstand and stretched to reach the folder. Its slick cover slid easily across the floor and slipped safely under his bed. Jacob laid back down, staring at the ceiling and petting Mr. Nibbles nervously. It had been almost a year since anything really out of the ordinary had happened in his life.

Jacob feared the magic was seeping back in and he wasn't sure he was ready for it all to start again. *I'm a teenager now! I have things I have to do! I have things to live for, now!*

DISCOVER THE HISTORY BEHIND THE REMNANT CHRONICLES

Many readers have asked if there is any real history behind *The Remnant Chronicles* and Jacob's trips through Scotland. The quick and true answer is that there is *a lot* of history behind the stories. Real people like William Wallace and Saint Columba were very important figures in Scotland's history. Nearly all the places Jacob visits are real and can be visited today—they all await exploration just a plane ticket away. Even Feddinch House is a real Bed and Breakfast overlooking St. Andrews and I have it on authority that Mrs. Woods continues to make her famous waffles to this very day. I hope you will take some time to pick up another book or two or go on the Internet to explore some of the real history and geography of Scotland. Who knows? You might even stumble upon a clue or two that Jacob will need as his adventures continue in *Remnant Rising!*

Here are some real-life places, people, and events related to *The Remnant Chronicles* that you can learn more about in books and on the Internet:

Columba	Feddinch House	Catacombs
Reilig Odhrain	Edinburgh castle	William Wallace
Fingal's Cave	The Highlands of Scotland	Robert the Bruce
Cairns	Lia Faile	King Arthur
Oran's Chapel	The Stone of Destiny	Scotland's Thistle
Dun I	Rob Roy MacGregor	Broadswords
Iona Abbey	The MacGregor clan	The Island of Iona
Sueno's Stone	The Boyd clan	The Book of Kells
The Birnam Oak	Niblick	Battle of
Dalriada	Pugs	Culloden
University of St. Andrews	Sir Walter Scott	Hadrian's Wall
(and Saint Andrew Himself)	Holyrood Palace	The Celts
Saltire Cross Flag	Kelpies	
(Saint Andrew's Flag)	The Royal Flag of Scotland	
Rule's Tower	The Royal Mile Edinburgh, Scotland	
Saint Rule (Saint Regulus)	Rampant Lions	

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

G. L. Gregg studies ancient manuscripts and ideas and holds the Mitch McConnell Chair in Leadership at the University of Louisville. His previous book of Jacob Boyd's adventures is called *The Sporran*. He lives in LaGrange, Kentucky with his wife, four children, and a golden retriever named Meg. Contrary to some rumors, he does not live with a dragon pug – yet!

Dr. Gregg is available to visit schools and civic groups.
Contact him at www.thesporran.com.

For more information on *The Sporran*, *The Remnant Chronicles*, excerpts from upcoming books, and information on the real life connections from the series, visit

WWW.THESPORRAN.COM

For the beginning of Jacob's adventures with his magic sporran, pick up your copy of *The Sporran*.

COMING NEXT –

Remnant Rising
Book IV of The Remnant Chronicles

The jewels of Isildane are being rediscovered.
The lost parts of the *Book of Kells* are spilling their secrets.
But what treasures did the Roman Legions take back with them to Italy when they abandoned the British Isles?
Who will find them first and wield the power?
The race that will determine the future of humanity is on!

OTHER TITLES OF INTEREST

*Repotting Harry Potter: A Professor's Guide for the Serious Re-Reader
Rowling Revisited: Return Trips to Harry, Fantastic Beasts, Quidditch, &
Beedle the Bard*

Dr. James W. Thomas

In *Repotting Harry Potter* and his sequel book *Rowling Revisited*, Dr. James W. Thomas points out the humor, puns, foreshadowing and literary parallels in the Potter books. In *Rowling Revisited*, readers will especially find useful three extensive appendixes – “Fantastic Beasts and the Pages Where You’ll Find Them,” “Quidditch Through the Pages,” and “The Books in the Potter Books.” Dr. Thomas makes re-reading the Potter books even more rewarding and enjoyable.

*The Hidden Story of Narnia:
A Book-By-Book Guide to Lewis' Spiritual Themes*

Will Vaus

A book of insightful commentary equally suited for teens or adults – Will Vaus points out connections between the *Narnia* books and spiritual/biblical themes, as well as between ideas in the *Narnia* books and C. S. Lewis' other books. Learn what Lewis himself said about the overarching and unifying thematic structure of the *Narnia* books. That is what this book explores; what C. S. Lewis called “the hidden story” of *Narnia*. Each chapter includes questions for individual use or small group discussion.

*Virtuous Worlds:
The Video Gamer's Guide to Spiritual Truth (pub 2011)*

John Stanifer

According to a recent report, there were 34.2 million units sold of video game hardware or “consoles” in 2009. This does not include much larger sales numbers for the actual games. Popular titles like *Halo 3* and *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess* fly off shelves at a mind-blowing rate. John Stanifer, an avid gamer, goes beyond a general overview and shows readers specific parallels between Christian faith and the content of their favorite games. Written with wry humor (including a heckler who frequently pokes fun at the author) this book will appeal to gamers and non-gamers alike. Those unfamiliar with video games may be pleasantly surprised to find that many elements in those “virtual worlds” also qualify them as “virtuous worlds.”