



## The Path of Heaven

*Chris Wraight*

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## **The Path of Heaven** Chris Wraight

For too long had the Vth Legion ranged out beyond the sight of the wider Imperium, remaining ignorant of the Warmaster's rebellion and the war that inevitably followed. Only once their primarch, Jaghatai Khan, had satisfied himself that the path before them was just and true did the White Scars choose a side, taking the fight to the traitors on every front. But, four years later, the Legion's unfettered spirit has been broken by relentless attritional warfare against the Death Guard and the Emperor's Children – the Khan's Stormseers must find a clear route to Terra if they are to take part in the final, apocalyptic battle.

### **Read it because**

It's a brand new chapter in the Horus Heresy and begins the march to Terra – though perhaps not in quite the way you'd expect.

The eBook edition includes integrated illustrations of characters and events from the story, and an afterword that places the story in context within the series.

## **The Path of Heaven Details**

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Author : Chris Wraight

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## From Reader Review The Path of Heaven for online ebook

### Rob says

If you thought 'Scars' was good then you need to do yourself even more of a favour and get on and read this absolute beast (see the cover) and page-turner of a book!

Chris Wraight has outdone himself here as he negotiates his White Scars on their rocky return to Terra. This book ticked absolutely all of my boxes with regards to what I expect from The Horus Heresy series: war, death, immense amounts of inter-legion detail, heartbreak, AAAs (absolute, a-hole antagonists) and some very cool twists to provide the proverbial cherry on top. Most importantly, this narrative arc features some of the most endearing characters of the entire series (ahem, Yesugei, ahem), and Wraight clearly loves them too, as they are written with all the verve required for a reader to invest their time in simply brilliant characters. This also makes for a much more moving read when one sees some of the excruciating trials these genuinely loveable characters, and indeed, not-so-loveable characters, have to go through. This book makes you care. This book is brilliant. 5/5

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### Sean McGovern says

Ok...I'm assuming that, if you are reading this review, you've followed the series through the previous 36 books. That being said: FINALLY. The metaplot moves forward and the prose is as good as it's ever been. I like that (at least one of) the (loyal) legions are beginning to figure out the steps that paved the way for Horus' rise. The action is sharp, and the quieter times are damned engaging.

In terms of laying the ground work for future books, the foreshadowing is heavy but played very well. And there's a few moment that made me beyond glad I stuck with the series this far - one "oh, shit" and two "No!" moments from me.

4/5.

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### Abhinav says

You can read the full review over at my blog:

<https://shadowhawksshade.wordpress.co...>

From the old lore, all we really knew of the White Scars Legion was their heroic defense of Terra alongside the Blood Angels and Imperial Fists when the traitorous Warmaster finally arrived on throneworld for the final stroke of his heresy. But, in the last few years Chris Wraight has done a great job of not only adding to the character and identity of the V Legion, but also giving them a significant role in the larger Heresy. And it has been fantastic seeing the White Scars and Jaghatai Khan himself develop so and being put front and center for the coming battles.

The Path of Heaven is the culmination of more than two years of such development. In many ways, we have come full circle from the events of Brotherhood of The Storm as the stories of its major characters are resolved and they all move forward to a new phase. The last few full-length novels of the series have been great, and The Path of Heaven is another crowning achievement not just for the series overall but for Chris

Wraight himself, for *The Path of Heaven* is an absolutely amazing novel with some great depths to the various plots, both ongoing and new, and some really sweet development of the characters.

In his introductory novella *Brotherhood of the Storm*, Chris introduced us to three officers of the Legion and a senior officer of the newly-formed *Departamento Munitorum* which was charged with the administrative duties of the Great Cruade's war logistics. Shiban Khan, Torghun Khan, Targutai Yesugei and Ilya Ravaillon were really interesting characters and the novella set up a great basis for Chris to explore next, as he did in the novel *Scars* which followed soon after and the short stories like *Rebirth*, *Allegiance* and *Brotherhood of The Moon* which expanded on the White Scars' role in the Horus Heresy. We have seen how the V Legion was split asunder by misguided treachery and how Jaghatai Khan dealt with this. We've seen the Legion fight some epic battles against its brother legions and still carry on with honour and a sense of duty. That all comes to a head in *The Path of Heaven*.

When the novel starts, it has been some years since the events of *Scars* and the battles against the Space Wolves at Alaxxes and the V Legion's guerilla war against the traitors. The Legion is almost spent, hemmed in by the traitor legions far from Terra and with no way out. It is time for the Khagan to adopt a new paradigm of war and lead his legion along that new path to something that will save the soul of the Legion, and that's a central theme of *The Path of Heaven*.

We begin with yet another great set-piece battle between the Scars and the traitorous Emperor's Children led by none other than Lord-Commander Eidolon. If anything, this battle proves the pragmatism and the way of war of the White Scars and the Khagan as the costly battle is a feint to achieve another objective somewhere else behind the vast enemy lines. From the very first page, I was utterly hooked and as the battle unfolded all I was left with was awe. Chris has a really unique way of writing Space Marines and while for me there have been some duds like *Wrath of Iron*, on the whole he has given us gems like *Battle of The Fang*. And that continues well and true here too. He really gets into the mind of his characters, whether we talk about the Primarch Jaghatai or any of his Khans or Revida Arvuel of the Thousand Sons or the mortals like Ilya Ravaillon or any of the various traitors we come across. We even have a guest appearance by both Horus Lupercal and the Death Guard Primarch Mortarion as the latter is sent to end the menace of the White Scars once and for all, so that the traitors can continue their relentless push towards Terra.

My absolute favourite moments in the novel had to do with Jaghatai's introspections on his role in the war, the goals of the Great Crusade, and the reasons for the Emperor's departure back to Terra. I doubt we've had any of the Primarchs reflect on this so far, and Chris certainly goes into some depth here, presenting Jaghatai as an analytical mind and a deep thinker. The larger plot of the novel deals with this as well, for the V Legion needs to find some way to break out from behind enemy lines or perish as the noose around its neck tightens one last time and the Scars are lost forever, their achievements forgotten.

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## DarkChaplain says

### Review also published here

*The Path of Heaven* is a monumental entry in the Horus Heresy series. It achieves much, reveals details about the nature of the war and the Emperor's secrets, but also develops not just one but *three* Legions and as many Primarchs beyond what we have seen so far.

While some sections might drag on a little too much in the early chapters, things pick up speed later on, and end with some very powerful scenes. As a whole, I loved this novel.

Chris Wraight has set the foundation for the White Scars Legion in *Scars*, a couple of years back. He builds on his successes in this installment, set over four years after the conclusion of *Scars*. It shows a very different picture from the laughing speed-riders of the Ordu of Jaghatai, however. They are at breaking point; weary, their moods far removed from joy. The war of attrition they have been waging to delay the Warmaster's forces has taken its toll on them, and they are on the verge of losing their soul as a Legion.

The difference between the two books' renditions of the White Scars may be jarring to readers. Some characters, like Shiban Khan of the Brotherhood of the Storm, signify the strongest discrepancies - visibly scarred from the climax of *Scars*, he is bitter, quick to hold grudges, out for revenge and willing to throw everything away to get it. His position within the Legion has changed, too.

Even Jaghatai, Primarch of the White Scars, is feeling time running out. He is desperate to bring his Legion back to Terra to defend the Throneworld, trying to fulfill his oaths. With the Warp being unstable and the traitors at his heels, the way is closed to him, and he has to gamble with the lives of his sons. He is also very reflective this time around, musing on the Emperor and his reasons for leaving the Great Crusade. One of those scenes brings one of the most evocative, tragic yet powerful quotes the series has seen to date to the table:

*So I fight for a Father who I never loved, against a brother that I did. I defend an empire that never wanted me against an army that would have taken me in a heartbeat.*

It does a wonderful job illustrating Jaghatai's position in the Imperium, yet also shows an incredible strength of character that catapulted the Khagan to my top favorite Primarchs. He is set apart from his brothers in so many ways, not least of all his will to be true to himself and do what he sees as right, even as he sees his Legion falling apart.

This puts him into contrast with Mortarion, the other Primarch in a main role here. The two have unfinished business, of course. Mortarion, though, abandoned the Imperium in an attempt to get rid of warpcraft and psykers. Ironically, he gave it all another, stronger foothold in doing so, and now he struggles with his new position. While at the same time he wishes to stand beside Horus at Terra and be in the Warmaster's favor, he is trying to understand the warp and sorcery while keeping it firmly leashed and outlawed within the region.

Wraight really dialed Mortarion's corruption-meter back from McNeill's version in *Vengeful Spirit*, where he unleashed a personified life-eater virus. While this could be interpreted as inconsistencies between authors' visions of a character, I think Chris sold it well enough to not feel that way to me. If anything, I enjoy how Mortarion is being shown as balancing on the knife's edge. He will fall, of course, and cut himself. We know the destination, as with many things Heresy, but *The Path of Heaven* gave us another satisfying bit of the journey.

The third Legion in play (beyond the sorta-cameos of two more) are the Emperor's Children, who have a bigger role overall than the Death Guard. Mortarion is shown more often interacting with Lord Commander Eidolon, now called the Soul-Severed, than his own Legion.

Eidolon is now in command of about a third of Fulgrim's Legion, and it all gave off vibes of early Chaos warbands, especially due to the introduction of Ravasch Cario, Prefector of the Palatine Blades. His encounter with Eidolon was both entertaining and exciting, and his role over the course of the story was cool to follow. His position within the Emperor's Children is a tenuous one indeed.

What I did not enjoy as much about the novel were early action scenes, which fulfilled their purpose of showing the complex maneuvering of the Khagan, but also felt a little disjointed and dragged on for almost a

quarter of the book.

I wish the author had instead focused a little more on a couple of (in my opinion) underused characters and developed the relationship between Shiban and Torghun Khan more. The resolution to their plotline felt lukewarm to me, especially considering what they've been through since *Brotherhood of the Storm*, and how they were always set up as contrasting characters. They have made somewhat of a role reversal in this book, which I liked a lot, but I think that Waight could have taken it a little farther still.

At the end of it, though, this book was full of memorable moments. Gutwrenching ones, too. There were many deaths I wouldn't have expected going in, and most of them left some sort of impact on me.

Experiencing the Khagan's pained reactions to it all left a scar, too.

*The Path of Heaven* did a fantastic job showing us the weariness of the Legions, and how the Heresy is taking its toll on everyone. I felt that this installment did a better job at that than any other book so far.

But the end is coming at long last. This one definitely opens up the next phase of the Heresy War in a bombastic way (quite literally, all things considered), and progresses the plot on many points. To me, it felt revitalizing for the series as a whole, after many excursions to the Eastern Fringes or the bunch of anthologies following the draught of new releases in 2015 year. The series needed a book as strong as *The Path of Heaven*, and while it isn't without flaws and some missed potential, it is a very strong entry.

‘Do not grieve. I saw him before we were pulled out. He was already laughing.’

I could ramble on about many details and characters about the book that I enjoyed, but really, I am just going to recommend reading it yourselves. If you have kept up with the series this far, you owe it to yourselves to dig into *The Path of Heaven*. And if you have been frustrated by the lack of progress on the main plot points, or the Imperium Secundus arc, then this should still be something to look into.

***The Path of Heaven*** takes the Scars through hell, and I was glad to be along for the journey.

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### **Veronica Anrathi says**

Enjoyed this quite a bit, but for some reason it took me forever to finish. Chris Waight did a wonderful job breathing life into White Scars yet again, making them one of the most interesting and unique loyal legions. The more I learn about Jaghatai, the more I enjoy and understand him. At this point he seems to be that one loyal Primarch I feel a connection with on a personal level. This book adds quite a bit to the main HH plot and then, similar to Scars, gives a good bit of insight on White Scars' personal business. The whole story of Revuel Arvida takes a turn, his character is very well written, I only wish I did not know the spoilers before I even started reading this book. Also, loved Yesugei. Can't give it 5 stars since I feel like the amount of time it took me to finish it shows that it had a few moments here and there that could not keep me engaged. Overall, a very decent piece.

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### **Andrey Nalyotov says**

I wouldn't have thought it possible - but it is my biggest review to date.

I have spent several hours contemplating over what to discuss and what to write about this novel, but in the end I decided to make it almost spoiler free and share it with everyone. Because, let me be open with you:

this book **IS AWESOME** . And to be even more precise - **IT IS A MASTERPIECE**.

Chris Wraight is now a main author for the Horus Heresy. He became a headliner in that, while 'uber' monsters like Dan Abnett, Aaron Dembski-Bowden and Graham McNeil are working on other projects. His previous novel Scars, the novella Brotherhood of the Storm and the audio drama The Sigillite are beyond amazing.

So getting to read the 'Path of Heaven', I totally believed in Chris. I never would have thought that in my expectations I would be proven so wrong. Because, as I mentioned above, it's not simply a splendid book in itself - it is a 'masterpiece' and a definite must read.

And just imagine that at the same time this novel was really hard to finish by the author himself. He says that some projects, for whatever reason, fight you every step of the way. And this novel was exactly the one for him - to quote him directly:

*«The Path of Heaven was definitely a fighter. It resisted every attempt to come together, throwing up problem after problem, sailing past its deadline and dragging on, painfully, for months longer than intended.»*

Let's get on with it - further review will be with minor spoilers (as tiniest as I'm able).

Let's start with the general impact this novel made on me: **I never heard so much emotions while reading a book in the last 4 years.** It is very inspiring but soul crashing too. It is dark, brutal and depressive. And at the same time - it is full of joy, hope and dreams fulfilled. The main line of the book is to never give up and never lost faith. If you believe, even against all odds, you will overcome everything. Or die trying...

After all: a life without accomplishments is not worth living for.

As author has said himself in the Afterword (which is awesome too - actually one of the best afterwords to date too): «At the heart of the book is the changing character of the Legiones Astartes. The Horus Heresy was not just a military conflict; it was a psychological catastrophe. The ideals of all the participants were shattered, leading eventually to the quagmire of the 41st millennium, where even humanity's remaining defenders are compromised, ignorant and fanatical. After years of constant turmoil, the White Scars are losing their souls.»

At the same time with his 'Scars' and Navis Nobillite characters author shows us that people, even fully immersed in despair and fatalism should never stop dreaming. « Pity those that do not. Scorn them not. We are their guides.» - such a great moto for them.

'Riding our of the storm' that's exactly what this novel is about - almost riding out through 7 mortal sins. Add to that overcoming of lust, despair, grief, lost hope and you will get the life each of us are living or struggling to live.

As for the prose - Chris has shown again what it mean to study/teach English to people. His prose is beyond reproach. And much much better than 'overfamous' Martin's and Rowlling's. Will quote just one piece to show what a level and grade of english level Chris uses in the novel:

«Then he was hurrying off again, scampering weakly through streets stripped of life and now home only to the echoes of old screams, knowing that they were only a few steps behind, and knowing too, with perfect certainty, that they would catch him soon.» or «He slumped against her arms. The dizziness rose up over him like a smothering blanket, and he felt himself fall away.» - that's just the two examples of the highest quality prose.

Next - we have characters. Characters are not the same, as we last time saw them in 'Scars'. Mighty Qin Xa, struggling Ilya, fatalistic Shiban and optimistic Torghun with their humors totally reversed (Horus Heresy will do that to you), fun Jochi, always mindful and clever Targutai Yesugei... And of course 'Khan of Khans' himself - Warhawk, pinnacle of hurricane, master of the Ordu Jahgatai Khan. Plus we have an addition of Summer Lightning - great and laughing Jubal Khan, who epitomise everything White Scars are. We even have a nice background for the future of WS in W40K. But you need to read it for yourself. This novel had so much amazing moments that I can't even decide what to quote...

As with additional characters we have an amazing view into the psyche and life of Navis Nobillite. Chris Wraight has done a masterful job depicting what it's mean to be a navigator and how hard and dangerous

their life is. And in the Horus Heresy, the Navigators are (by necessity) playing both sides at once. They're indispensable, as precious as diamonds even after fighting for your enemies. So the life of the Navigator in the 31st millennium is not a walk near the pond.

As for the protagonists enemies - they are plentiful. The novel synopsis provide a good view on what to expect. Death Guard, Emperor's Children, Iron Warrior's, Sons of Horus are all gunning for the V-th Legion. As for the enemies POV - Chris has again outdone himself with Mortarion. He is still struggling with the inevitable - succumbing to the sorcerous and daemonic. But he is not yet where, not at that point then his decision would be an everlasting dire one. His character, his defiance are still where, his indomitable will and endurance - it is all where, nothing has broken them. Yet...

And did I mentioned that Horus Lupercal himself made an entry in the novel? His dialog with Mortarion at the meeting was such a joy to read - especially then we know the true reason, why Horus is not at the Terra yet (at the same time Horus exclaims the true reason Mortarion betrayed the Emperor): «Because I can trust you,' Horus said, exasperated. 'Do you not see it? You look for slights in every shadow, waiting to be cheated, and yet you, my jealous brother, are only one I have left.' He laughed out loud, bitterly. 'Behold, the tally of my rebellion. Angron has made himself mad – I cannot charge him with the simplest tasks.

Perturabo – by the gods, Perturabo. He would be left standing while the Khan's savages ran rings around his trenches, and the Scars have no fortresses for him to lay low. Alpharius is silent, and ties himself up in knots of his own devising. The list grows short... I come to you,' said Horus, softly, 'because I have no others... My gaze cannot waver from Terra,' Horus went on. 'You cannot imagine what a burden that is. Even as we bring the other-realm into this one, and the ancients respond to my lead like whipped dogs, there still remain the old soldier's curses – munitions, ledgers, schedules. I cannot deviate. Every wasted day narrows the lens of the future.». And on an on it goes - until one day Lupercal will break the wheal, quoting mother of dragons ;)

At the same time has given us three amazing character's for the III-rd Legion. Commander Primus Eidolon again made his entry with a bang, the same way his subordinates Cario (his palatine blades fraternities are awesome) and Azazel Konenos (title orchestrator suit's him well) made. In the fractured structure of the Emperor's Children Legion author has made another splendid depiction on what SM's actually hope for - at times of apocalypse (which Horus Heresy is) and later on in the grim darkness of the 41st Millennium.

The answer is simple - no, not sensations and emotions without borders, as I thought myself. But true fraternity and brotherhood - pinnacle of what SM's can hope for. It's not a surprise that this words are mentioned almost in every chapter - because traitors and loyalists, both are dreaming only about that, with the addition of Emperor's plan of course. And palatine blades troupes inside the fractured EC's Legion are exactly that.

'The noblest kind of retribution is not to become like your enemy' — Markus Relius, circa M1. This quote are the truest view on what the inter-legion's war in 'Path of Heaven' looks like. And even if some characters (80% of them) has become over-fatalistic and despaired- still they does not succumb to rage or the mark of the enemy. But still we already have the visions of W40K here - eternal long hunts, fatalism and freedom of the plains.

As for the plot - it's 100% accurate to what synopsis said. But it's opens with a bang and go on with a great stimuli even further: «A thousand years might pass and it would never lose its fascination.»

The battle for Kalium Gate was awesome - and the Kakophony entrance was glories indeed. It was such a charm to read and imagine the battle of weather magic versus the daemonically infused sonic grand-weapons. Convoy attack was a great depiction of WS strategy and to what was left for them as an options. Every other battle, void warfare, daemonic incursions, actions scenes, stratagems were brilliant in the book. And I can't comment enough how good all the battle scenes are!

At the same time «The Path of Heaven» needed to continue main storyline, plus the one from the 'Scars', as well as advance the various threads to be found in my recent short fiction such as 'Allegiance', 'Daemonology' and 'Brotherhood of the Moon'.

And for the ending I will quote the author himself: we've seen impetuous primarchs rush into ill-advised

fights many times, and it's the Khan's abnegation that ultimately secures his Legion's survival. His finest hour is yet to come. So more to come for the great ordu and Imperium Warhawk.

**For his greatest Black Library novel to date I give Chris Wraight a well deserved 10 stars! And personally want to thank him for the masterpiece he has written.**

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### **Gianfranco Mancini says**

At last the Horus Heresy meta-plot and timeline move forward with a bang, an excellent novel filled with action, emotions and twists.

I liked very much the Warmaster's initial appearance and all the parts with the Emperor's Children: Eidolon the Soul Sundered is a well made character and it was really great to see him and the III Legion quickly degenerating in what seems their 40K version chaos warbands.

Sadly White Scars are not my fan-favourite Legion, Death Guard is still the most unused one, and this novel was released so much time after Scars that I forgot almost everything in it but for the duel between Jaghatai and Mortarion on Prospero(view spoiler).

Still an excellent read that finally sets the stage for the great ending of the series.

All the pieces are on the board and the siege of Terra is finally upcoming for good.

Just hope there is at last a Death Guard themed novel before the end.

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### **Glyn says**

This is an odd one.

Chris Wraight is a fine writer of Heresy/40K fiction and this is a well written book. His rebooting of the criminally ignored White Scars legion/Chapter has been superb and has made them something more than "Mongols in Space!!!"

The premise of the book is simple. The White Scars legion, as seen in "Brotherhood of the Storm" and the excellent "Scars" had paid scant interest to the developing Civil War and when it brought treason and dissension to their own ranks and questions as to who could be trusted it wounded the legion to its very core. Now they have purged themselves of those matters and are fighting alone to prevent Horus reaching Terra. Horus deems them to be a nuisance more than a threat but their lightning strikes have begun to hurt his campaign.

Their main enemy here is Lord Commander Eidolon and his depraved and no longer remotely human

Emperor's Children. Wraight in one brilliantly written chapter makes it very clear just how far and how completely these warriors who once sought perfection have fallen. Eidolon has waged attritional war against the Scars for four years and has blocked off any route back to Terra/ Given time the now demoralised Scars are willing to face total destruction in a heroic last stand but there are those who still believe there is still a way to escape through the madness. Horus, however, needs an end to it now. He tasks Mortarion the tenacious and brutally pragmatic "Death Lord" of the Death Guard to end the campaign by whatever means necessary.

The writing is excellent, the characterisation is strong enough that these do feel like fleshed out characters though there are few you would wish to spend time with socially. The battle scenes thrum with adrenaline and all fight as the character of their force demands. By every judgment this is an excellent novel.

So why not give it 5 stars and call it odd?

Well if you know how the Horus Heresy ends, and I assume that few readers of this series don't know the basic outline of the final battle, then you know that the White Scars are on Terra and play a key role in the defence of the Lion Starport and through that, the Imperial Palace itself. For this reason a lot of the tension of "Will the White Scars be destroyed?" is lost immediately and all one is left with is a fine piece of filler to explain how they got there and allow for a ton of Bolter porn in doing so. It lacks any narrative punch though as you know the outcome and so don't particularly worry for the heroes.

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### **Dylan Murphy says**

By the Gods what a novel! Chris Wraight follows up on his spectacular entry to the Horus Heresy, Scars, with The Path of Heaven. He continues to show the glorious and fast-paced action and intrigue that make his novels so much fun to read, as well as keeping the true wild spirit of the White Scars at the center of their character. I can easily say that this is one of the better entries into the wider Horus Heresy series and is a must-read for any Warhammer fan, and should become a tome of worship for those White Scars fans. It also helps that Wraight is a master writer, has excellent pacing throughout, and possibly some of the best prose I have ever had the privilege to read. He can definitely blow some of the traditional "best authors" from BL out of the water, and The Path of Heaven is probably his best work to date.

Minor spoilers below, I will try my best to keep it to a minimum.

It seems to me that a lot of this story was about evolution. From the large scale evolution of actually moving the meta-plot forward considerably and the evolution of Astartes as a whole, to the smaller scale personal evolutions such as Shiban Khan or Torghun Khan.

The novel picks up a little ways after the end of Scars, IIRC, and the White Scars have been busy in the half dozen or so books since we last read about them. Being caught behind enemy lines due to warp storms, they harass and harry the Warmaster's forces and supply lines, but now they've got to get the hell outta dodge.

Chris Wraight does a fantastic job of dragging the White Scars through the gutter, with amazing battles such as the Battle of the Kalium Gate\*, but keeping the spirit of the Scars first and foremost we can still see that joyousness and hope that makes them such great characters during the time of the Horus Heresy. With hard-fought battles, both victories and defeats, the slow demise of the Scars both as a Legion and their ideals, as well as some insanely awesome reveals and tear-jerking sacrifices, the White Scars continue to easily speed their way to the top of my list for the Loyalist Legions.

That said, I really do much prefer the Warmaster's Legions, and I was very pleasantly surprised to see Christ Wraight do them so well here. Starting with the III Legion, we really get to see how far they have fallen. But we also get to see how much they have grown as a Legion, how they stick to some of the stuff they excelled at before the Change, as well as how in even the most debauched Legion there are still a good number of warriors who have kept to their founding principles(for the most part). I really hope that Chris gets/wants to write some EC works, because if there is any single author I trust with my favourite Legion/Warband now it's him. His Lord Commander Primus Eidolon was amazing. With the once-famous air of nobility and lethality, we now see that he is quite changed since his fateful run in with Fulgrim's sword. He still has that nobility and lethality, but it is really kept to the background before his grotesque amusement and (proven) undying arrogance. Couple that with his 2nd Von Kalda, something of a apothecary though I can't seem to remember ever seeing him heal anyone in the novel! And the Prefector of the Palatine Blades Ravasch Cairo, who was perhaps my favourite character of the novel, and you have a solid set of extremely memorable monsters.

The XIVth Legion has always held a sweet spot for me, all the Death imagery and their insane endurance and unstoppable power just hits all the right notes!, and once again Chris has proven to be a master writer of Warhammer 40k/HH fiction. He just gets them, and really brings out their character while also showing the cracks that are starting to form and the rot is starting to take hold.

Add to all that possibly my favourite scene with the Warmaster since the first few novel, and you have a happy Son of Horus here!

Thanks for reading!

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## **Heinz Reinhardt says**

More than anything else, this is a book, and a story, about faith.

The book follows the V Legion Adeptus Astartes, the White Scars (ethnically/culturally a very fun mix of Mongol, Chinese, Korean and Cossack) as they seek a way to return to Terra, to be there at the end. This is a direct sequel to Scars, one of the two or three best books in the Horus Heresy thus far, and several years have elapsed since the previous book.

The V have been waging a guerrilla naval war against the various supply lines of the traitor legions, striking and fading. However, their losses are mounting, and the White Scars, even their Primarch Jaghathai, are slowly losing their hope, their souls, and their faith.

They are pursued by two of the traitor Legions: the III Emperor's Children and the XIV Death Guard. The III Legion is aligned to Slaanesh, the Prince of Excess, lust, passions, perfection and unimaginable degeneracy. The XIV, as their name implies, represent merciless, pitiless, inescapable death.

Ironic as both indulging oneself in the temptations of various mortal excesses, and caving in to the fear of mortality and the despair of death, are amongst the greatest things to rob a person of their faith.

And yet, despite their struggles, despite their torment, their suffering, and the never ending deluge of misery and agonizing pain that they must endure, the White Scars do persevere. And that, in large part, is why so many come to the 40K universe: to see, even only if in allegorical terms, people of faith struggling against great evil, at least go down swinging and letting the darkness know that you cannot swallow the light without one hell of a fight.

And fight the White Scars do.

The end battle, a massive naval battle replete with boarding actions, features heavily the daemons of Slaanesh, and what better way to represent the struggle of the faithful than with a Primarch who embodies faith, loyalty and duty to honor, crossing blades with a very daemon made up of the essence of temptation

and excess?

In the end the Scars do not lose their faith, in fact, through struggle and the tempering fires of conflict, their impurities are burned away, and their faith is made even stronger. And Jaghathai, The Khan himself utters for perhaps the first time in universe the now immortal words: For the Emperor.

As close to Deus Vult as one can get in a fictional setting.

In closing, this was an inspiring novel, an uplifting tale, and an encouraging story. And one hell of a great read set in the Hours Heresy that, finally, begins to move the storyline forward after several years of limbo. Very highly recommended. This one is easily in the top five of the entire series.

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## **Callum Shephard says**

Some might note we're a little late to the game with this one. Well, there are a few reasons for that, the most relevant of which is re-reading this tome a few times over to really examine its strengths and innate qualities. You see, Chris Wraight's works seem to be akin to a joke or well timed gag in that they need a rapport with the reader right from the start. There needs to be a kind of innate understanding with them to get it firing on all cylinders, and when that isn't the case it can have hits, but they can always seem to be a little off from person to person. Just look at the reception of Wrath of Iron to see how divisive this can be. With that in mind though, Path of Heaven hits it out of the park, and proves to be one of Wraight's best works since Battle of the Fang.

Set four years after the events of Scars, the Legio V is waging a desperate and costly war against the bulk of the traitor legions. With three legions crippled, three more trapped at Macragge and the Imperial Fists refusing to move from Terra, they alone stand in the way of Horus' ambitions. They have fought well, but every second the traitors have been delayed by has been bought with loyalist blood. Now, bloodied and drained by the constant warfare, they fight to fulfill the Khan's oath to be there at Terra when the final battle is waged before the Emperor's gates...

This was a bold book to be sure as it several ideas right from the start, any one of which could have easily torpedoed the whole book. Along with the massive time-skip to bring the legion up to date with the rest of the universe, it pulled a complete twist, going right from the victorious and surprisingly hopeful ending of Scars right into a depressing, shattering war. Many characters have seen sudden shifts in that time, others have passed on into short stories and some are even outright dead from the start. However, Wraight handles this magnificently by starting with the enemy. First showing the legion and events of the war from the eyes of the Emperor's Children, we gradually learn of the White Scars' victories, how they have held the line against four major legions and the toll they have taken. It builds them up so, that even upon learning of how the enemy forces have adapted to their tactics, we clearly see how they have had such a massive impact over the past years.

By starting with victories, it makes it clear from the last book that the White Scars and their decision did have a massive impact upon the conflict. It reminds readers of past events, of what took place without citing them exactly, and eases them into the book while still making the shocking reveal of the legion's dilapidated state. Even then, after this and losing a battle, the book takes the time to clearly depict the legion fighting hard and pressing the other legions back as they are losing, showing just why they had those victories. As such, when the reader sees the Scars losing, hears of their losses and reads of characters near broken by the constant fighting, it makes it clear just why they are now taking such losses. As such, when a prominent character from the past book drops dead, one mission fails and another is only a partial success, it never feels as if the legion is simply being whaled upon by the author.

The explosive opening serves several roles besides offering the reader several major conflicts right out of the starting gate. While we see boarding actions on a fleet, champions dueling and a massive orbital invasion rivaling that of Betrayer's best moments, it gives us a clear and present view of each major character and the author's take upon them. Many legions tend to shift depending upon who is writing them either in major or subtle ways, and Wraight is no different in this regard, especially when it comes to the Emperor's Children.

While Nick Kyme and Graham McNeill have both done (mostly) fantastic jobs depicting the Legio III up until now, the former tended to best work with very isolated individual tales while the latter unfortunately went through their entire development in just a scant few years. Wraight's work here takes a very different approach, but it proves to be no less engaging than past authors. He depicts them embrace their corruption, wholly aware of it and the blessing of Chaos even as they lose themselves, yet retaining an odd fatalistic professionalism which focuses upon the best aspects of their glory seeking, perfectionist side. It's a welcome change of pace to be sure, and even allows Eidolon some much needed character development. The same goes for Mortarion as well, who gets more development in a single book than what we have seen throughout almost the entire Heresy. While the action is big, bombastic and explosive, actions remains intact, the book never forgets that the innate character drama is what really gives it life.

The Scars themselves hold up fairly well in addition to this, especially when it comes to Shiban Khan, who serves as key focal points of the story. We see mostly how the war has changed the legion through them, and it's most keenly felt in Shiban's case, given how massively it has wracked his body. While Yesugei returns once more as his usual awesome self, the Chief Librarian's role is largely present to help augment that of Arvida, the last surviving Thousand Sons' loyalist. While this is hardly a bad thing to be sure, the Arvida is clearly the prominent character of their storyline, with his fate and loyalties hanging in the balance, limiting Yesugei to more of a supporting role than past tales. Well, save for one rather final moment between them anyway. It's akin to that of Dantioch and Pollux from the more Ultramar focused stories, and it does help to offer a great deal of closure on certain long suspected subjects involving the Thousand Sons in M41.

Still, the book is hardly completely perfect, and there are a few irritating sticking points which stand out within the tale. The foremost among them is that, as with many of Wraight's books, there's a long wait during the second act. There's an innate element which seems to be true across the board, as much for him as Aaron Dembski-Bowden, in that their books tend to feature massive, heart pumping openings but a very quiet or generally slow middle. Both try to fill this with minor skirmishes and pathos, but its effectiveness does vary quite heavily. In this case, the middle part is certainly engaging, but there's no denying it's a surprising step down from the start, thanks largely to how certain plots seem to keep spinning their wheels. It doesn't keep up the momentum from the first, part, and what could be a quiet moment starts to be dragged out after only a short amount of time.

In a rather surprising twist, Scars itself is almost forgotten by the book and the crux of its drama is extremely toned down. Save for a single - largely background - storyline, the actual mass civil war and conflict is rarely taken into account or fully acknowledged. While some would argue that four years would be enough to forget this, this was not only a mass betrayal by an ally (something unthinkable at these times) but by those within their own legion. It seems strange to simply think that it could be so subdued and almost pointless in the face of new battles.

Jaghatai Khan himself is also an odd on here. More distant than many of his contemporaries, we don't see too much of him at all throughout the book, and much of what we know is told only through second hand information. While (barring a few exceptionally well written passages) it's usually best to keep out of a primarch's inner thoughts, we really learn very little at all of him here. He seems to be affected by the same exhaustion as the rest of his legion, certainly, but beyond that we get alarmingly little to expand upon his role

or even much time in the spotlight at all.

Finally, the finale is odd to say the least, as it certainly offers as explosive and dramatic a battle as any fan of M31 would want, yet a few storylines seem forced shut. It's not so much that they're left dangling as brought to a very abrupt halt without much warning, as if to close them off rather than leave them for future books. This is hardly a bad thing given the sheer number of short stories surrounding this era, but it's still disappointing to see certain ones come to an abrupt end rather than a natural one.

Despite a few problems though, *The Path of Heaven* is a definite success and an engaging read, focusing upon the war beyond Ultramar once again. It offers just about everything a fan of the White Scars would want and plenty of elements on the Warmaster's side as well, and any Death Guard fan is sure to have some fun seeing Mortarion get some time in the limelight. If you're trying to get back into the series, or just want to see that extra step towards the Siege of Terra, be sure to pick this one up.

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### **Rob says**

A slow start, that finished very well.

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### **Ogbaoghene Ozoro says**

Finally, a really good Horus Heresy novel. 10 years later and 36 books in, we're still building up to the Siege of Terra but it's stories like this that make it worth it. All those reveals made it such a rewarding read. Enjoyed it so much I think I'm going to read it again.

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### **Luke Courtney says**

Having been waiting for this book for months, I'm well aware of the general consensus that it's one of the best additions to the Horus Heresy series and I've just got to say...I couldn't agree more! This has shot to be one of my new favourites, not just of the Horus Heresy and Warhammer, but one of the best books I've ever read; it had everything, action, humour, horror, heartbreak; people with me on the train to work the last few days must have thought me crazy, I was laughing, gasping, jumping, completely caught up reading this book, which is surely the mark of a great book, that it captivates you so utterly...if there is anyone who hasn't read this by now, do it! The Emperor commands it!

Chronologically, four years have passed between this story and *Scars*, the preceding novels: the White Scars have thrown themselves into the Loyalist cause and are desperately trying to get back where they need to be-Terra- as the clock counts down to the final battle. Trapped behind enemy lines and vastly outnumbered, they're being forced to follow ever-desperate threads in the hope of escape... Wraight's characters are great as always; the Khan and his Legion accurately showing the effects 4 years fighting a war of attrition while being thwarted in their efforts to get back to where they need to be is having on them. Many of the characters are shown to be suffering the effects of wounds both physical and mental, and are clearly desperately fighting the onset of depression and despair as their fight seems ever more hopeless, and this is conveyed perfectly by the writing. As Wraight himself puts in his afterword, this was a trial by fire for the Vth, and many of them didn't make it through; it was hard to say goodbye to a fair few favourites of mine, particularly

those who died at the Battle of Catallus, giving their lives to ensure their Primarch gets back to where he'll make a difference. (some of those actions pieces got my heart racing, particularly the redemption of the Sagyar mazan). The villains also deserve a mention: Eidolon and the Emperor's Children are always a pleasure to see (mainly because I never get tired of the IIIrd Legion's colossal arrogance being shown up and humiliated); Cario in particular was an interesting one, a man desperately clinging to his own vision of perfection even as those around him sink deeper and deeper into debauchery (though it didn't stop me cheering on Shiban to kill the bastard!). The character development of Mortarion was also interesting to read, showing how far he's come with the progression of the Heresy (though I think I may need to read 'Vengeful Spirit' and 'Daemonology, several threads in this novel seem to tie into those) and I may have to start my own army of 'yaksha' thanks to Maushya-Rakshasis- spent many months imaging the duel between the Khan and the Keeper of Secrets after first seeing the cover art for this book, and it didn't disappoint! Also enjoyed the subplot with Ilya, Veil and the Navis Nobile: just goes to prove the old truth that in times of war, there will always be those who look first to their own fortunes first. Slightly miffed that my least favourite Primarch stuck his oar in at the end, but I suppose we do have to acknowledge that the Scars left the Wolves high and dry against the Alpha Legion last time...of course if Russ had taken a second to actually think before nuking Prospero...ah well (looks like a read of Wolf King is also on the cards..). Some characters were also notable by their absence, such as Fulgrim and Typhon (though I think I have a suspicion where he is) and I look forward to seeing where they go with bringing those two back into the fold as the Traitors complete their final preparations for the battle to come...

All in all, a great book that showcases the Vth Legion again in all their glory, reminds me why they shot from being an obscure group to which I didn't give a second thought to my favourite of the Loyalist Legions, cements Chris Wraight as one of the best authors Black Library has for Horus Heresy and leaves me really aching for more (I'm already planning to start two new armies now thanks to this). With the Vth back where they need to be and given Horus's appearance in the book, you get a real sense that the endgame is fast approaching (I'm hoping soon, Book 40, maybe? Considering how many stories there are in that battle to be told, would ten be enough?) and I eagerly look forward to seeing what comes next as the clock counts down, the armies make their final march and the Battle for Terra finally gets underway (seriously, they have got to have Chris Wraight write the Vth Legion's retaking of Lion's Gate Spaceport!)...as Mortarion said to Horus, I say to Black Library "Give the order. Set it in motion...No more delays. Launch the assault"

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### **Chris Dennison says**

Another excellent contribution to the Horus Heresy saga by Chris Wraight. Engaging from start to finish. It was good to see some of his previous White Scar characters return and continue their story arc. Having finished this book it really feels like the story line has progressed in a significant manner by putting a number of pieces on the board where they should be and, in true Black Library fashion, both answers questions you didn't know needed answers and raises a couple of new ones.

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