



Magnus the Red: Master of Prospero

Graham McNeill

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The third novel in The Horus Heresy: Primarchs series, a brand new sequence of novels focused on the superhuman sons of the Emperor.

Lord of the mystical and uncanny, Magnus the Red has long studied the ancient crafts of sorcery. A psyker without peer, save only for the Emperor himself, he commands his loyal followers of the Thousand Sons Legion in the Great Crusade, always vigilant for any lost knowledge they might recover from the remains of dead human civilisations. Now, fighting alongside his brother Perturabo of the Iron Warriors, Magnus begins to foresee an approaching nexus of fate. Will he remain true to their mutual aims, or divert his own efforts towards furthering his own mastery of the warp?

Magnus the Red: Master of Prospero Details

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From Reader Review Magnus the Red: Master of Prospero for online ebook

Andrey Nalyotov says

capax Dei/capax infiniti

(capable of receiving God/holding the infinite - from From Augustine, De Trinitate XIV, 8.11: Mens eo ipso imago Dei est quo eius capax est, "The mind is the image of God, in that it is capable of Him and can be partaker of Him.")

And thus we have another beautiful example of the Primarch serie. Shining - in beautiful box and with amazing cover it's presentable view is beyond doubt. But does the 'words' content suffice to our standards? Especially if the novella is written by Graham McNeill - a long headliner for the Black Library. Let's make something clear from the start. 'Primarchs' series consists of novellas - not novels. Illusionary desire of GW and BL to call 126 pages books with double intervals a novel, is absolutely not funny anymore. But let's focus on the book.

Plot. New story from Graham McNeill, author of an amazing stories 'Storm of Iron' and masterpiece of 'The Thousand sons' can't stir us wrong?

As far as synopsis for the novella goes: *Lord of the mystical and uncanny, Magnus the Red has long studied the ancient crafts of sorcery. A psyker without peer, save only for the Emperor himself, he commands his loyal followers of the Thousand Sons Legion in the Great Crusade, always vigilant for any lost knowledge they might recover from the remains of dead human civilisations. Now, fighting alongside his brother Perturabo of the Iron Warriors, Magnus begins to foresee an approaching nexus of fate. Will he remain true to their mutual aims, or divert his own efforts towards furthering his own mastery of the warp?* Has nothing to do with the plot and narrative of that novella.

Chronologically novella take place in 2 time periods - during an early years on intergalactic Great Crusade and after the 'Razing of Prospero'. We saw Magnus at it's worse - shattered and broken, in search for the meaning of his further existence and meaning to being 'alive'. In contradiction to his father/brother desires. In search of that and being at some island of time and space in the warp Magnus remember that one time - then everything was not as it seems. And how good intentions and knowledge could stir you into the dead end.

Story is goes from Magnus at his lowest in the ruins upon the Planet of Sorcerers after the 'Razing of Prospero' take us straight into the death of a world. World of Morningstar gives us a glimpse of a Hollywood apocalyptic movie in the prose form. And Graham truly shines here. The world is being rent apart by magnetic storms and tectonic disaster which eventually lead to total society collapse, catastrophe and preceding it evacuation.

Right in that 'shit storm' 15th Legion and their brothers from the Iron Warriors arrive. Here Graham McNeill gives us a shining example of the Legions doctrine. While TS save population and it's knowledge in any form, brutal and methodic Iron Warriors build fortress, clear the zone and proceed with logistics for the people evacuation.

And that author did amazingly too. In accordance to the strange grim dark of the humanities lost colonies and grandeur of the Great Crusade another enemy arrive in the face of the cultists from the Sons of Shaitan. As cult demagogues and zealots strive for the apocalypse and magnetic whirlwinds destroy the planet, the Thousand Sons and the Iron Warriors are caught in the middle. As usually goes with Graham - eventually where would be a twist. And sure - it's here and will take you by surprise.

The Thousand Sons and good old friend Atharva investigate lost ruins, libraries and caches of the world - Iron Warriors take their logistically dim view of the populace to its end. And Magnus tries to figure out why and how this planet survived the Dark Age of Darkness then all the others in that universal sector of the

galaxy did not.

Also novella shines at the moment of true disaster and body count. As our better said: *cadavera vero innumera* (truly countless bodies). They give it the true level of grim darkness. As the true face of the Sons of Shaitan and 'that' ending.

And again Graham McNeill shines in that condition as a W40K and HH author. He was able to show similarities between the 'so' different Legion doctrines and at the same time directly view their differences. Both has the 'standards' of the Emperor as their moto, both strive for the greatness (through different views and definitely different methodology) and both fail to see the cornerstone of the Imperial Truth due to the absolutely different reasons.

For the TS who after the reunion with their Primarch (to whom they are young kids whom he justly aptly saved from the doom) - knowledge, their physics powers and mysteries of the Universe is the main moto by which they would see their work in the future. For Iron Warriors and their also 'almost' new Primarch Perturabo - their future based on mathematics/logistics through which and only through which Imperium could strive and achieve greatness.

And most of all that similarities and differences were planned to be shown through the bonds of friendship between Primarchs. Between Perturabo and Magnus.

And that's where it all went wrong.

Characters:

Probably the main reason why this novel suffers from delusions of grandeur is the bad choice and reasoning for it's main characters. Which could be explained by the page count. I'm sure if that would have been a full (at least 300 pages) novel - it would be an absolutely different and amazing story.

Combining 2 Legions into one novella - Thousand Sons and the Iron Warriors should have given us a lot of new and amazing characters contrived into a sprawling story of tragedy and betrayal. Instead, especially due to low page count Graham McNeill wasn't been able to give new characters their due and thus he used his old ones... And from here it all went downhill very quickly.

Yes - instead of new characters, except for the Primarchs you thought you would get a new interesting characters, but no. It's old same company which went with us in 'Storm of Iron', 'Angel Exterminatus', 'Thousand Sons' etc.

Ahriman, Forrix, Hathor Maat, Obax Zakayo, Phosis T'kar, Barban Falk and Harkor - they are all the main characters of this story. In case of Hathor Maat - that character was truly butchered. From the stoic and persistent character from the 'TS' - here we have a rash and dim person who would have been a better Imperial Fist instead of 15th.

Additional storyline, as is the developing bond between First Captains Forrix and Ahriman only worsen the case. Especially the way it was shown for us. And that's the best example why this novella stirred us wrong... Instead of show us young but already experienced legionaries, so well known to us - we get absolutely 'non Ahriman' and 'non Forrix' characters. Sure - the story take place long before the HH and it's events. But universal view of this too are truly butchered.

Ahriman on the other hand is too flawed and inconsistent - that's not Ahriman from amazing TS. And yes I know that he is a lot younger then he is in TS - BUT! A big but! We saw his younger self at Beotia and at Tizca - and he was not that naive student who are afraid to do what needs to be done. Plus all that foreshadowing into the future (Forrix case). It seems that author simply shown it as a fan-service. Nothing more - cause Ahriman did nothing on what he saw at Morningstar etc. The line is simply severed here - and everyone went on their own business - like nothing has happened.

And as for the Primarchs... We are shown Magnus in the process of trying to figure out his limits and the full range of his abilities. Which in itself contradicts a lot of TS fluff. Especially the point that - Magnus already know the range of his abilities after his deal and compact with Tzeentch to save his sons.

As for Perturabo, yeah, he's different - it is still very early for him and even though he is cold and calculating I think by the time of this novella he is still in awe of the Emperor and this fills him with optimism and certain gentleness. The problem is - his character was used and written by 4 authors to date. And so his true

image is too different in each novel.

Forge World HH books took John French characteristic for him. In Crimson Fist he is a cruel master - here we saw streaks of his cruelty, but at the same time he is such a funny fella... In all seriousness - Perturabo would have never destroyed that occulus, he has created for Magnus. And time has nothing to do with it. Even if we take McNeil image - it's already 4 years since he saw the Emperor etc.

In contradiction of some reviewers who thinks that 'every character and setpiece feels on point and vital' - it is not so.

As for the prose - I can't say it provide us with something unique or special. Usual flow of the words and story to tell.

Verdict.

Infinitely more than the synopsis, that novella tried to chew more than it could (due to the aforementioned reasons). It is always an amateurish try to combine a catastrophe and opportunistic human cruelty with the Great Crusade enlightenment and Imperial truth.

In the end it is a novella about hope and human cruelty, about the necessity of sacrifice and the poison of belief - which was ruined by it's own character range.

I give it 3,5 out of 5 stars. It has an amazing disaster scenario, adventures, great scenes depicting Astartes and imperium society. But failed where it actually matters - to show us the true greatness and 'flaw' of the Primarchs.

Can I suggest this novella to fans of HH - with some 'bad eyes' 'yes'. Can I suggest it as a must read and awesome book - with big if.

It is a novella which foreshadows the incoming Graham McNeill Horus Heresy novel 'The Crimson King'. And all the events of Magnus the Red: Master of Prospero are simply a filler to continue the story after TS and went deeper in 'The Crimson King'. In which I have absolutely no doubt that Morningstar will be remembered.

Michael Dodd says

On the doomed Imperial world of Morningstar, Magnus and his brother Perturabo lead their Legions in an attempt to rescue as many civilians as possible before the planet tears itself apart.

At its core, this is McNeill exploring the conflicting aspects of Magnus – his self belief, his desire to do the right thing, his hubris...he's a complicated guy with the best intentions, and there are so many great little hints here to the path that he's already on.

Read the full review at <http://www.trackofwords.com/2017/05/3...>

Marc Collins says

Graham McNeill crafts a tour de force of a novel which alloys together his phenomenal development on the Thousand Sons and the Iron Warriors into a sprawling story of tragedy and betrayal. Infinitely more than the blurb described, this is a gloriously beautiful novel- one which pits seemingly natural catastrophe and opportunistic human cruelty against the enlightened interest of the Imperium.

Framed by Magnus at his lowest in the ruins upon the Planet of Sorcerers, Master of Prospero brings us headlong into the death of a world. Morningstar is being rent apart by magnetic storms and riven by cult

violence from the Sons of Shaitan. As apocalyptic Creed meets the apocalypse, the Thousand Sons and the Iron Warriors are caught in the middle. The Thousand Sons seem to care more for knowledge while the Iron Warriors take their logistically dim view of the populace to its end. As much as they are Legions in contrast, they are also unerringly similar. The friendship between Perturabo and Magnus is strong and a lodestone for the story, as is the developing bond between First Captains Forrix and Ahriman.

In the end it is a novel about hope and human cruelty, about the necessity of sacrifice and the poison of belief. It is the Great Crusade in microcosm, and shows us the hopes and fears of humans and transhumans alike. It is a novel that breathes and flows with life and emotion. Effortlessly McNeill weaves his best characters and ideas together into a tapestry of his greatest. Every character and setpiece feels on point and vital.

This Primarch novel more than any other feels like revisiting old friends. A must read for fans of the series and of the author.

John Vance says

A fascinating look at pre Heresy Magnus, Perturabo, Ahriman and even Forrix. They all, truly did want to help mankind. But this book also showcases the very things that are eventually responsible for their downfall: Thousand Sons and their use of sorcery and the the Iron Warriors and their to look at all lives as just numbers. FUN!

Dennis says

The best book in the primarch series so far. Maybe because it deals with one of my favorite primarchs, Magnus the Red of the Thousand Sons, maybe because it was written by Graham McNeill, who also wrote "A thousand sons" and therefore is familiar with the characters in this novel. Maybe it was the setting: Instead of a planetary war, in which the Space Marines participate, two Legions join forces in this novel to evacuate a world that's ravaged by a cataclysm. It was a real treat to read, a welcome change of scenery from the countless other action-infused novels in the Warhammer 40k universe and valuable insights into the mind of Magnus the Red.

Alexander Draganov says

The core of the novel is good, but only Graham could make a 200 pages read to feel slow moving. Review in Bulgarian here:

<http://citadelata.com/magnus-the-red/>

Patrick Stuart says

My one-man war against irritating references in Graham McNeill books continues unabated, unacknowledged and ineffective.

This is a quality of his books which, once you notice it, gradually makes them worse the more of them you read, like a toxin building up in the blood over time. They are not that irritating in any particular book but the more of them show up the more annoying they are.

Worst offenders in this one were a book randomly picked up by MegaMag in his burnt library being a copy of Shakespeare, the symbol of the chinese space force apparently surviving near-unaltered and a thingy made by Pertuarbo being a recreation of the Ankythera mechanism.

Why this is bad - there are literally 40,000 years of pseudohistory in the universe being described and every historical referent used comes from 'modern' history of the last 2000 years. The likelihood of *anything* surviving so long, or any any unaltered cultural product is close to zero.

Its not so much the individual unlikelihood of the particular choices but the fact that it collapses a sensed history into this tiny small box. As much as the success of the Heresy series has crushed and folded up the 10,000 years of the Imperium, so that the histories of modern codexes read like bookends with the heresy fading out directly into the present day, with many of the exact same people continuing the exact same stories, legend and myth deflating into soap opera, so McNiells overuse of these modern tropes and objects destroys any felt sense of deep history in the fiction

Other mild irritations;

Primarchs doing EXTREME FORSHADOWING of future actions. Pertuarbo smashes a precious object to make a point, MegaMag reduces a bunch of his dudes to dust through heroic hubris. I am not sure if this is good or bad writing, re-use of ideas or reverse-engineering of personality flaws, I think I am slightly against it as it seems sometimes a little too pat.

That's about it. Other than that I largely liked the book.

Good elements - as usual McNeil excels in baroque and specific detail, the omni scale of the 40k universe comes through neatly.

He can write *scenes*, neatly placed micro-dramas with a strong sense of identity and feel. Magnus fights a bunch of tanks. Pertuarbo flies through a superstorm using his cursed sight of the Eye of Terror as a compass. Ahriman hangs out with an Iron Warrior and they do the buddy cop thing.

The key climactic scenes of the book are very effectively drawn and work well, megaships fall from the sky, cults engage in super-treason, ancient thingys are discovered.

MegaMag and Pertuarbo both come through neatly with all of their obessions, flaws and quirks. McNiel wrote the key books on both of these very different weirdos and he did a good job of both of them. As much as the flickers of his writing style irritate me, he can (largely) fucking tell a story and he can grab personality with strength and firmness, if not always with perfect grace.

He can show not tell. Though he tends do both just to make sure you get the point, unlike Nick Kyme who tells without showing or ADB who shows without telling.

A pleasing element of the book is getting to witness two guys who will ultimately become SUPERDEMONS while they are still nominally on team good-guy and trying to get along. They are locked in the 40k universe so the horror/movie/tragedy ending is fitting. Its a testament to the writing that I actually wanted MegaMag

and Perty to somehow win at the end and felt bad when they were trapped by foreshadowing of their inevitable DOOM.

Oliver Patrick says

Having only read the first two books in the 50+ HH books a couple of years ago, I decided to give it a go at reading the entire HH series in chronological order. Starting with the "Last Church" audiobook set in 30,800. I am using <https://sites.google.com/site/tymells...> as a guide on which books to read in chronological order.

I found the book to be very entertaining and would recommend to others looking to delve into the origin story of the Thousand Sons and Magnus. As I have little to no knowledge of the history\characters in the Thousand Sons I found it very helpful to look up in advance of reading the book <http://wh40k.lexicanum.com> to give an overview of the Thousand Sons and other key characters. Once I read the Lexicanum I found I was engrossed in the book even more than I believe I would have otherwise.

The initial opening of the book starts shortly after the burning of Prospero, then delves into the Thousand sons run in with Chaos on Morningstar in 30,853. The story and characters I felt were well written.

The audiobook version was very well read and is ideal for anyone looking to listen whilst doing other things i.e. commuting or in the car etc.

Christian says

This was a very entertaining short read of Magnus and Perturabo before the Horus Heresy. It is tragic in a way because both Primarchs are written as noble protectors of the Imperium and human life. To me, there are two plot lines with satisfying conclusions and the story contains clever foreshadowing about what will happen. It was a satisfying read.

Veronica Anrathi says

Quite a decent read, definitely more exciting than Guilliman's. Not mindblowingly spectacular, but interesting. I truly enjoyed the dynamic between marines and Primarchs of the Thousand Sons and Iron Warriors, especially while still being loyal sons of their father. Always good to learn something new about the nearly unlimited powers of Magnus.

Daniel says

As with the other two books in the Primarchs series, I was impressed greatly with this book, but 200+ pages is just not enough! I wanted so much more. I am an Ultramarines fan and loved the first book, but when I read the Horus Heresy, most specifically Prospero Burns, which tells of the ultimate fate of Magnus and his Thousand Sons, I was a fan of Magnus the Red. Here lies the tale of before the Heresy, when Magnus and his brother and fellow primarch, Perturabo were invested in the evacuation of the planet Morningstar.

This book really pulls you into the powerful Psyker that Magnus is and this book spells that out in detail, and man is he more powerful than I thought!

Mr. McNeill as always writes a compelling story about a tragic anti-hero. Chaos ends up claiming Magnus within the pages of the Horus Heresy, but here we see the Thinker, the Intellectual seeker of lost lore and hidden knowledge the is at his core, what Magnus is. He is an absolutely amazing character and there is so much more I want to know about him. I know he turns to the Ruinous Powers in the future, but here he is the loyal and Emperor fearing Primarch, the son. He loves and cares deeply for his sons and it is reflected here in many ways.

Overall this is a must read for folks who love reading about the Primarchs, and in my opinion this is the best in the series yet. Absolutely amazing but too short! LOL

Danny

DarkChaplain says

Review also published here

Magnus the Red: Master of Prospero is, overall, a damn good novel for all manner of reasons. I have some gripes which relate to the usual issues with Graham McNeill's works, but at the end of the day, *it worked*. It felt like a fresh story, with early Great Crusade Legions still growing into what they'd become by the Heresy. Out of the three *Primarchs* novels out so far, I might like this best (though admittedly I stopped reading *Leman Russ* for the time being; the action-heavy start just didn't get me fully invested).

To get my big bugbear out of the way first, though: Yes, McNeill once again "recycles" his characters from previous books. Not only do we see Ahzek Ahriman, Hathor Maat, Phosis T'Kar and Atharva, who at least make sense being here in a Thousand Sons novel, but Graham also included his old *Storm of Iron / Angel Exterminatus* cast; Forrix, Obax Zakayo and Barban Falk accompany Perturabo, and while Forrix at least made sense considering his rank, I found the inclusion of Zakayo and Falk to be... redundant.

I didn't feel it added to the plot, and their roles could have easily filled by other, non-established Iron Warriors. In fact, I cannot recall a single, lasting Legion character of either TS or IW that we did not see before in another McNeill novel. Where both David Annandale and Chris Wraight have made efforts to play with a new roster of fresh characters, Graham is, once again, resting on his old creations. It strikes me as lazy, even if I can see why he would do it. Adding to that somewhat on-the-nose foreshadowing for Forrix and co, regarding *Storm of Iron*, didn't help me feel good about it.

Be that as it may, though, the rest of the book was pretty unconventional. Rather than big warfare, we get a logistics problem here. What fighting there is tends to be limited to short scenes, not drawn-out engagements, and McNeill implies more of the overall conflict than he clearly spells out. I bloody loved that!

I've talked about "battle fatigue" a few times before, and after seeing both previous *Primarchs* novels being heavy on action, this came as a pleasant surprise and relief. I didn't have to trudge through chapters full of bolter shells and psychic fizzing, but got to see a desperate evacuation of a doomed world that allowed for plenty of character development for Magnus, his sons and even Perturabo.

That isn't to say that the action was unsatisfying, not at all. It was on point and had a purpose beyond ticking checkboxes for the editors. There are spectacular scenes here, showcasing the psychic might of the Thousand Sons and their Primarch, and Forrix kicks ass. But everything serves the plot and the greater moral dilemma. McNeill made the correct choice going this route, in my eyes. It is too easy to fall into the trap of writing

superhero-Primarchs doing everything by themselves. True enough, Magnus goes far and beyond what you might expect here, but it is all well-grounded and comes at a price. What he does here shapes his character in a way I didn't expect, and Perturabo too has some great scenes, including lines of dialogue that I'd quote here if they didn't involve spoiling some very well-handled scenes.

Where the book really shines in my eyes however is in depicting the youthful naiveté of the two Legions. They are still highly idealistic and think they can do no wrong. Many lines have not yet been crossed, and Perturabo and his Legion aren't worn down yet by disregard and being used as blunt tools of siege warfare. The sons of Magnus are still a little reluctant to show the full extent of their powers to the other Legions. It was refreshing, really, to see some characters like Ahriman still a little uncertain of their true potential, though I am a little disappointed in how his role grew exponentially throughout the book, taking the spotlight from Atharva. I'll really have to re-read *A Thousand Sons* soon as well, I think, even if just to see if Hathor Maat was as much of an annoyance there too...

The scale of the story, the early look at the Legions, the well-paced action and awesome twists that link back to the Sons' search for lost knowledge all made this book a truly enjoyable experience for me. I can overlook my nitpicks about recycled characters and heavy-handed foreshadowing if the overall framework and many of the close-ups of the story are as satisfying as with this novel. The book stands on its own pretty damn well, while offering readers of *A Thousand Sons* and *Angel Exterminatus* some really neat looks behind the curtain. If you've ever been interested in reading more about the Sons and their early days, this is about as good as it gets.

Dave says

A little on the short side (which seems a recurring theme in this primary series, punching the pennies maybe) but otherwise really good.

Some nice insights into the chapter, some nice characterisation and I enjoyed how Magnus was portrayed. I particularly enjoyed the part with the emperor.

All in all, a decent read.

Andy Ward says

I thought this was a really good book following Magnus the Red and, returning to his past during the dark times of the Horus Heresy. However, the part of the tale I found most captivating was the insight we were given into the mindset of Perturabo, Primarch of the Iron Warriors. I would thoroughly suggest that people read this wonderful work by Graham McNeil, a tome I will definitely be returning too again and again

Kdawg91 says

I am a fan of Warhammer40k. In my view as a lifelong science fiction and fantasy fan, the Warhammer universe is basic goofy fun. What kid wouldn't love super soldiers, aliens and terrible danger wrapped in a big bow of explosions and bullets and swords?

I picked up reading The Primarch series on a whim and I needed a palate cleanser for my brain. I flew through this tale, enjoyed it and then.....it hit me.

My realization probably isn't a new one, but I will state it anyway. The Warhammer40k world bears a huge resemblance to mythology. The Primarchs, the emperor, all the players are just gods and demigods with all their flaws and massive power just making their way through the universe in a constant battle.

Yeah, you all knew that...my bad. Magnus is a good read, very fast and if you are like me, a casual fan of the universe and love to see the backstory and history of characters, check it out. You will be happy.
