



THE EMPEROR'S CHILDREN

Numeration: The IIIrd Legion

Primogenitor: Fulgrim

Cognomen: (Prior) None

Observed Strategic Tendencies: Combined Arms Warfare, the use of Complex Manoeuvre and Discursive Tactical Planning, Asymmetrical Assault.

Noteworthy Domains: Chemos (Primary), Terra (tertiary rights)

Allegiance: *Traitoris Perdita*

The Emperor's Children were the only Legion to bear the Emperor's own name and his own standard—the great Palatine Aquila—granted to them by his own hand. Few were ever so honoured among the Space Marine Legions and given less cause to betray a father than they. Given the plaudits and accolades accorded them, few could doubt that they were the embodiment of what the Emperor intended the Legion of Astartes to be: noble in action and aspect, excelling in all matters, strong, civilised, firm of purpose and loyal to the core. From this height they descended in treachery to the lowest and vilest of creatures, enslaved to pride and consumed by desires that no natural power could fulfil. The history of their deeds before their fall is not simply a history of what they were and what they

achieved, but as with others that turned traitor, a history of how they created their own doom, for as the ancient texts say "*pride goeth before destruction*", and seldom has this proverb been more apt than in the case of the IIIrd Legion of the Space Marines.

Betrayal changed the Emperor's Children beyond recognition, their quest for perfection became a hunger for excess, and the finally balanced order of the Legion's structure twisted until it shattered. These changes and horrors were yet to come when they came to Isstvan III. At that moment the skin of the past still held in place over the corruption beneath. What follows reflects the history and structure of the Emperor's Children as it was for much of the Great Crusade up to the Isstvan III atrocity.

ORIGINS: THE MARTIAL BROTHERHOOD

The IIIrd Legion was created alongside their brother Legions during the latter phases of the Unification Wars on Terra, with many of its first recruits drawn from the courts and blood vassal populations of Europa. The nobles of Europa selected the finest of their youth and offered them to the Emperor as tribute and penance for their previous defiance after their systematic humiliation in battle at the hands of the Thunder Regiments. Among them were sons drawn from each noble family, a fact apocryphally said by some to have given the Legion its lasting name, reaffirmed in later years by its Primarch. Of this title some gave in grudging tribute, thought of as little more than hostages, while others co-operated with the zeal of true converts—House Loculus of Komarg is said for example to have sent all of their sons at the time of their capitulation, and to have given the first born of each generation thereafter to the Legion willingly. In later decades other Terran dynasties followed the example of Europa, filling the ranks of the IIIrd Legion with the flower of Terran youth which seemed well-matched with the aristocratic blood of its initiates, forming a martial brotherhood whose ancestry in war stretched back into lost ages.

Much is still extant in documentation of this Legion's founding, and from the data it is apparent that the mark of the Legion's gene-seed and its conditioning produced warriors with finely sculpted physiques, a noble bearing, and finely controlled thought processes, with psychological tendencies driven towards personal achievement and competition to prove individual superiority. The only abnormality registered was the occasional incidence of albinism, and a shift in iris colour to violet in some recruits. Such minor effects of the gene-seed implantation and conditioning process did nothing to distract from the aura of aesthetic refinement that clung to the IIIrd Legion, even in the first years, and they were held up as an archetype to be lauded and by whom others were judged. Clad in thunderbolt and rayed-sun adorned power armour, to the human followers of the Emperor's cause they were the demigods of myth made flesh and bound in steel.

In these early wars the IIIrd Legion seemed to have been used to notably support the actions of the nascent Imperial Army, and in many instances to directly lead it in battle. This differed notably from many of the founding Legion forces which were often deployed as unified commands

en masse as shock troops supported by heavy war machinery only. Coordinating and leading 'lesser' troops seemed natural for the IIIrd Legion. They had a profound ability to understand the strengths and manifold weaknesses of the diverse armies in service of the Emperor and drew on the long traditions of Terra's military aristocracies to command with surety and purpose. The Antarctic Clearance is, for example, marked as a victory for the Army Group Antilles, but in truth any detailed analysis of the conflict reveals that it was the IIIrd Legion which sculpted the tactics and strategy of the campaign, and led it to successful completion. Likewise when the Bronze Host took Nadarin it was under the eye and with the aid of the IIIrd Legion, and the Fifth Raising of Jove-Sat II was done principally by their hand, though other names than theirs throng the honour rolls. The examples are numerous, and through them all the IIIrd Legion proved their superb ability to execute and exceed the intent and expectations of their Emperor in war.

Owing also to their singular character and mien, the Emperor also used members of the IIIrd Legion as aquilifers and equerries in situations of hazard and utmost danger, a responsibility the Legion was proud to carry. Bearing the palatine eagle standard of the Emperor, members of the IIIrd Legion accompanied diplomatic missions and emissaries as bodyguards and agents into the heart of the foe, and in battle bore the standard and commanded the armies of the newly conquered as instruments of the Emperor's will and judgment if needed. The sight of the Emperor's symbol carried by one of his favoured warriors was enough to

keep many a wavering new ally in line. These standard bearers, and the honour guards that accompanied them, symbolically coloured their armour with lacquer of imperial purple to mark their rank and mission.

So arrayed none could doubt that they were the chosen of the Emperor, and such was the record and esteem with which they functioned that for a time it became common for them to bear the Emperor's wishes and orders to other Legions and military forces scattered across the new-born Imperium. The nature of the IIIrd Legion's psychology meant that they would carry the precise meaning and intent of any order without deviation and with their last breath if needed. In this role the IIIrd Legion took on the mantle of the Emperor's will—no other Legion was so honoured. Others bore his words, but at this time the IIIrd were his voice.



The Palatine Aquila

It was after the Proxima Betrayal that the Emperor's Children Legion was granted the exclusive right to bear the Palatine Aquila, the Emperor's personal standard, in its own heraldry. This honour was bought in blood as the Legion's XVIth Cohort, assigned to the Proxima compliance ceremonies and honour guard, fought and died to the last warrior alongside the Legio Custodes, never giving ground during the insurrectionist surprise attack on the ceremonial plaza. By their sacrifice was the wounded Emperor, who had suffered injury by the use of a Vortex weapon, bought time to recover and fight his way clear of the insurrectionist trap. In recognition of this, the standard of the Palatine Aquila so fiercely fought for that day was given to them by the Emperor's own hand, to be their relic ever after, along with the right to end the Proxima revolt by *Exterminatus* and so repay the blood that was owed them.

While the great Aquila in its variations signifies both the Imperium of Humanity and loyalty to the Emperor as its master, and there is much allegory bound up into its form, for the Emperor's Children it also now represented their own deeds as well—an honour never given to another Legion.

THE GENE-SEED CRISIS

One great disaster marks the early decades of the IIIrd Legion's existence—the catastrophic loss of nearly the entire Emperor's Children's gene-seed stock. Coming within a solar year of their great moment of triumph fighting at the Emperor's side at Proxima, it was to prove a turning point that was to forever alter the Legion's future.

As the Emperor's wars of unity broke the bounds of Terra, the pacification of the gene-cults of Luna and the Martian Compact allowed the Imperium to produce and equip new Space Marines at an unprecedented rate, and the Legions began to expand to meet the demands of war across the stars. As the gene-forges began to implant recruits for all the Legions, a portion of the IIIrd Legion's gene-seed reserve was dispatched to Luna for establishment there. What happened next is not clear. Some claim that elements of the Selenite cults still resistant to the Imperium hijacked a defence laser and destroyed the ship carrying the IIIrd Legion's gene-seed, while conflicting accounts recount that the ship lost control and crashed as it was attempting to dock, whilst others claim that it simply vanished. It would be easy, in retrospect, to assign hidden conspiracy or malignant agency to this disaster and this is not a possibility that can be discounted. The loss of the IIIrd Legion's gene-seed reserve was a severe blow, but it would not have endangered the Legion's survival if a second calamity had not occurred in quick succession.

Like all Legions the IIIrd recovered the progenoid glands from its warriors who fell in battle. From these organs a fresh set of gene-seed organs could be grown and a new warrior created to replace the fallen. This system was, however, not perfect. The nature of battle, and the manner in which Legionaries died, did not always allow for such recovery. To ensure that there were always organs ready to implant into new recruits a reserve of gene-seed was kept safe on Terra. From this emergency reserve it should have been possible to keep the IIIrd Legion supplied with new warriors, even with the loss of the gene-seed sent to Luna the Legion would have endured and in time grown; survival should have been certain. But in a single night that hope was obliterated.

It was discovered that a fast acting viral blight had suddenly infected several of the gene-seed vaults on Terra, its cause and origin unknown. Feverishly the Bio-Magos sought to hold it in check as its progress threatened to wipe out in a matter of hours what had

"There is a tragedy in perfection as the ancient philosophers were wont to say—it is doomed to fail, to become imperfect. The more tightly it is grasped the more imperfect it becomes. The fall of all those who turned against us are all bitter tragedies in their own right, but the fall of the Emperor's Children is a tragedy in the greatest and oldest sense. Their tragedy is not that they fell from perfection, but that it was never in their power to attain it, for they were always flawed, broken things. They reached for a distant light that would forever be out of their grasp and in reaching they fell so far that the flawed magnificence they had so painfully achieved would rot in our memories. The flaws were there, my lords. They were always there. We were blind to them. Now we must see both the glory that was and the ruin it became—we have that duty."

*Malcador the Sigillite
-Address to the Council of Charon*

taken a century to build, but the doubtlessly artificial—and many surmised xenos— infection defied treatment, and it was only the intervention of the Emperor's own peerless genius that was to purge the taint. While many Legions suffered losses from this attack from an unknown quarter, the blight was found to have destroyed the gene-seed of the IIIrd Legion in its entirety. From that moment the IIIrd Legion began to die.

While other Legions grew in size and glory as the Great Crusade gathered pace, the IIIrd Legion withered. The only way it could replace losses was from the progenoid glands of the dead. Without the Legion's Primarch, the Emperor and his gene-wrights could only rebuild the gene-seed reserves with painful slowness. As the process of rebuilding crept forward the IIIrd Legion's strength dwindled with every battle. It became clear that the IIIrd Legion would have fallen far below effective strength long before their gene-seed reserves were rebuilt. The doom of the Legion was inevitable.

THE CHEMOS SALVATION

The IIIrd Legion was saved by the discovery of their Primarch. Guided by chance or the wisdom of the Emperor, the Great Crusade came to long-forgotten Chemos. It was a grey-skied and grey-skinned mining world, where hope was thin and drudgery the coin of life, and slow decay the fate of the isolated human population that abided there. Privation was common on Chemos and there were doubtless hardships to be endured, but there have been those that have wryly observed that compared to the foundling fates of many of the Primarchs, Fulgrim was blessed.

On this drab world the Primarch Fulgrim had grown and risen to a position of power. Fulgrim himself was pale-skinned and fine-boned, like some ancient paragon of

grace given life. Ash white hair framed a handsome face and his violet eyes held a spark of delight. In war, thought, craft and creation he excelled effortlessly. The details of his life and the influence of Chemos on Fulgrim have been told several times over by diverse hands. For our purposes the most significant fact is that Fulgrim had become a beacon of hope amongst the fading existence of the people of Chemos. His presence had driven a resurgence of craft, art and intellectual refinement, and through dint of his intellect and achievements he had stopped the backsliding of this hardscabble world and set it upon a path, if not to greatness, then at least a betterment of its lot. Grown on stony ground, this reaching for something better would never attain great heights, but the will to grasp greatness Fulgrim inspired was strong.

The reunion of father and son was a warm one, and the accession of Chemos into the Imperial fold smooth and eagerly accomplished, and soon the Emperor gave Fulgrim charge of the dying IIIrd Legion. Numbering only two hundred, they arrayed before him. They were so few that each of them bore a banner of a Company that had either perished, or now numbered only a handful of warriors. They were unbowed and stood with pride, as if in defiance of fate. Did Fulgrim see an echo of the struggle of Chemos in his remaining gene-sons? We cannot know, but at that moment he knelt before his own Legion. When he rose he spoke to them, telling his gene-sons of their destiny, of how they must shake off the misfortunes of the past, and rise to heights that others dare not. *"You are the Emperor's chosen, his heralds, his warriors, his children, for this is only the beginning,"* the Primarch decreed. On hearing of Fulgrim's words the Emperor renamed the IIIrd Legion the Emperor's Children, ratifying a name

long known but now given full force of decree. The Officio Militaris College of Arms recorded the change and marked their panoply as imperial purple with the talon-spur as their emblem and the Aquila Palatine their right to bear as executors of the Imperial will.

The Emperor's Children could begin to rebuild. The discovery of Fulgrim allowed the rapid synthesising of gene-seed and Chemos could provide the raw material of recruits. The Emperor, perhaps pleased with the zealous acceptance of Fulgrim and his people into the Imperium, personally decreed substantial resources immediately put at the Legion's disposal. Some amongst the War Council advised taking new recruits from different worlds. In their eyes there was little to mark the people of Chemos out as suitable warrior material. They also lacked the strong martial culture common amongst worlds that supplied recruits for the Legion's Astartes. Fulgrim dismissed these objections; the people of Chemos had the right and will to rise above their beginnings—to become something greater than their past had allowed them to be.

Other worlds did, however, help rebuild the Emperor's Children. On Terra some of the old families of the nobility renewed

their tribute of sons, and as Fulgrim took part in the compliance of human worlds it became customary for him to offer the ruling elite the chance to give their young sons as aspirants if he deemed them worthy. Fulgrim seldom refused such tributes of noble sons, despite his words to the War Council. Perhaps he was flattered.

BROTHERS TO WOLVES

Even as the Emperor's Children grew again in strength they were still a shattered remnant when compared with their brother Legions. The Emperor's Children numbered just a few hundred, while the Ultramarines had already been the first to breach the mark of 100,000 Space Marines, and beside them the larger Legions such as the Imperial Fists and Luna Wolves had numbers enough to prosecute multiple campaigns alone. Even the XXth Legion, young as it was and yet without its Primarch, had greater numbers in the field. Seeing the need to nurture the Emperor's Children's recovery, the Emperor asked Horus to mentor Fulgrim and his Legion. So it was that for over a decade the Emperor's Children and the Luna Wolves fought side by side.

The bond of brotherhood and trust forged in battle between Fulgrim and Horus, unlike as they were, became unbreakable.

So also did their Legions grow close, just as unlike in temperament but equal in skill, both Legions and Primarchs seemed to complement one another. Where Horus was swift and intuitive, Fulgrim was patient and considered. Where the Luna Wolves were direct and brutal, the Emperor's Children were flexible and subtle. When eventually the Emperor's Children broke away to stand on their own they had become oath brothers to the Luna Wolves; it was a bond that treachery one day would twist into a chain to shackle their souls.

PRIDE AND FALL

A passionate intensity filled the Emperor's Children from the moment Fulgrim knelt in humility before them. It was as if the achievements of the past counted for nothing to them, only a future mattered, a future in which they could countenance no failure. They pursued all matters with total dedication and focus, and the skills of war were chief amongst their concerns and they would accept nothing that another could better. When another Legion excelled in any detail of warfare the Emperor's Children would set out to learn those skills. They channelled themselves completely into their training and study, allowing it to consume them completely until mastery was achieved. Once mastered a method would be evaluated and refined.



NAME: CHEMOS
CLASSIFICATION: LEGIONES ASTARTES HOME WORLD
[IMPERIAL CIVILISED WORLD]

SYSTEM DATA: HU/3366//A/R
STELLAR GRID: I9-GSONM/U-02
SEGMENTUM: ULTIMA/COREWARD

NOTATION: TEMPERATE-SUB ARTIC/MODERATE
REGISTER TERRAN ANALOGUE [77%]/ECOSPHERE
IMBALANCE OWING TO GENERATIONAL MINERAL
EXHAUSTION/UNDERGOING ENVIRONMENTAL REPAIR.
NATIVE POPULATION 0.5 BILLION
++[FIEFDOM OF THE EMPEROR'S CHILDREN
LEGION]++
++[AQUITAINE SECTOR CAPITAL/PRIMARY
ASTROPATHIC TERMINUS]++

This compulsion famously allowed Fulgrim to smile in the Council of Blades that followed the destruction of the Ork empire of Mirga, when Roboute Guilliman noted to the Chamber that the Emperor's Children had demonstrated his own counter-attack doctrines better than the Ultramarines had on the day of battle.

As admirable as such practices may seem they came at a price. Though their conduct was exemplary, at some point pride and resentment polluted nobility.

The only measure of achievement is to measure oneself against others. When another Legion was honoured it was said they took it as both a spur to do better and a wound to the Emperor's Children's pride. When they failed to reach the quality of another it created jealousy. When they did excel it bred contempt for those they had risen above. And no matter how high they rose, no matter how much they achieved, it was never enough. The achievements of the past were dead to them. Their hunger for perfection was without limit, and could never be sated. The atrocities that would come later demonstrate this assessment, but the signs were there long before they fell.

The point at which Fulgrim and the Emperor's Children embraced darkness is not known. Perhaps Horus corrupted Fulgrim after his own fall, or perhaps

Fulgrim was already on a downward path and Horus' treachery simply overshadowed and consumed that existing corruption, we shall never know. Some amongst those who serve the Emperor on his left hand point to Fulgrim's cleansing of the dangerous xenos species known as the Laer as the crisis that finally doomed him, as there are indications that malign forces used this event to ensnare Fulgrim and begin the rapid corruption of the Emperor's Children. This may be true, but even if the dark powers used the Laer to sow their seed, it could only have bloomed on fertile ground. Contra-wise it is also the case that many of the Emperor's Children held to their ancient nobility to the last. Whether they saw the doom of their Legion coming is a moot point, but that they were resistant to the taint that claimed their brothers is clear. The ashes of Isstvan III hold the inviolable evidence of the ultimate price paid for their resistance and loyalty. Purged for their supposed imperfection by a Primarch insane with resentment and made the plaything of dark forces, they who fell on Isstvan III, their oaths unbroken, were the true soul of a Legion that the Emperor himself named as his children.

UNIT AND FORMATION STRUCTURE WITHIN THE LEGION

The Emperor's Children were organised in a manner that suited the ideals of Fulgrim and their own exacting nature. As with every other aspect of the Emperor's Children nothing was left to whim or chance; everything was deliberate and assessed for its aesthetic and functional value. Fulgrim was fond of remarking that if one was to excel then no detail was too small to consider, and that the quality of the whole lay in the quality of its constituents. In ordering his Legion it is not surprising then that Fulgrim favoured formality, conformity and order.

The organisation of the Emperor's Children took much from the structures of the Legions when they were first created, it also added its own layers of terminology, emphasis and balance while remaining largely true to the Terran patterns long established. A hierarchy of authority and ability existed in every part of the Emperor's Children. Every warrior, piece of equipment or officer was placed in a function best suited to their strengths and proven ability, and in that sphere expected to excel. Fulgrim also maintained rigid order amongst the divisions of his Legion and command hierarchy. The fluid variations in size and nature common in certain other Legions played no part in the Emperor's Children's way of war. Any change or variation was deliberate and the outcome of careful consideration. Likewise the appointment and rank of every warrior of the Emperor's Children was carefully delineated. Honours, symbolic representations of achievement and marks of renown abounded, but were solely gifted by a superior rather than assumed by an individual, with honours granted by the hand of the Primarch held in the highest esteem. Every warrior of the Legion knew his place and value in the sight of the Primarch and the Emperor, and this translated into a level of personal commitment and bravery the

equal of any found among the ranks of the Space Marines, fuelled in no small part by an unshakable faith in their own superiority.

The Emperor's Children were ordered and precise; formation sizes and structure were largely uniform and where they were not it was either a temporary aberration or a deliberate variation for a particular purpose. Within this careful order the squad was the base unit that showed most variation in both size and function. Comprising a handful of Emperor's Children each squad had a particular purpose and specialisation. Squad members were expected to excel in their allotted roles and would train exhaustively to achieve the pinnacle of efficiency and unit cohesion. Notably all of the variations in squad type and equipment found in other Legions were present within the Emperor's Children, as they believed there was no sphere of warfare they could not or should not excel in. There were however certain beliefs held within the Legion's culture about the superiority of certain martial virtues over others. Beliefs that originated as the opinions and inclinations of their Primarch Fulgrim and filtered down through the ranks as ironclad doctrine that was not to be questioned.

Once such chosen virtue was the importance of speed—whether in manoeuvre, action or attack as being of cardinal importance over strength, endurance or even firepower—the decisive warrior who struck first was the likeliest to be victorious, just as the moving target was harder to strike. This doctrine was made manifest on many levels, from the selection of battle plans to the choice of the wargear the Legion favoured. This factor being evident in the large number of jump-pack equipped assault units and Land Speeders, Grav-attacks and Sky Hunter squads present amongst the Legion. In particular, jetbike-equipped Sky Hunter squads dominated the ranks of a number of companies. One often quoted reason for the favour given to these units seems to be that their mode of warfare appealed to Fulgrim's nature by his own admission: swift and elegant they captured much of the old legends of noble knights and mythic

champions riding to battle, their banners streaming behind them and their armour glittering in the sun. Further practical considerations for the extensive use of high speed vehicles and a reliance on manoeuvre can be seen in the fact that the Emperor's Children Legion never possessed the active numbers let alone the psychology to engage in brute attrition warfare as the Iron Warriors or Death Guard did for example. For Fulgrim, keeping his Legion as intact as possible while achieving victory was perhaps always a consideration, albeit one seldom admitted to.

The Legion relied greatly on thorough and detailed strategic planning and the flawless execution of its battle plans by the individual warriors of the Legion. Every aspect of battle was analysed and turned to their advantage, from terrain and weather to the availability of logistical support and reinforcement, nothing was left to chance. Each component of the Legion's forces as well as any allies or ancillary forces under their command was taken into account and utilised accordingly. This forethought and almost mechanistic approach to warfare had its dangers as well as its strengths however, and should an entirely unforeseen contingency occur (as unlikely as this was in most cases), or some crucial element or strategic asset be unexpectedly removed, the Legion could be wrong-footed, thrown into confusion and suffer the consequences.

Alongside the division of units commonly found within other Space Marine Legions, the emphasis and regard placed upon skill and excellence also notably led to the formation of a wide number of unique 'elite' or veteran units within the Emperor's Children. Some were highly specialised such as the 'Sun-Killers'—lascannon equipped support squads formed from the crème of the Legion's heavy weapon specialists, or who fulfilled more formal and ceremonial roles such as the Phoenix Guard whose number was set at 200 to commemorate the first days of the Legion's rebirth. Perhaps the most famous example whose renown spread outside their own Legion was the Brotherhoods of the Palatine Blades. These units were not permanent formations but formed for particular battles against foes deemed worthy, and whose membership existed outside of the usual rigid rank structure. When such an enemy was encountered the senior commander would draw together the finest swordsmen from

amongst the forces present—a selection made easier by the relentless sparring and duelling that took place between battles to hone the Legion's skills. Armed with duelling blades, sabres and trophy weapons the Brotherhoods would then seek out the finest warriors amongst the enemy on the field of battle. The number and quality of such squads depended on how many of the Emperor's Children were present in a given warzone and the quality of their foe. When twenty Millennials of the Legion came together under Fulgrim to destroy the Golden Kings of the Moraeb Drifts, over a hundred of the Blade Brotherhood took to the field. Amongst them were warriors who had already writ a legend among their Legion—Lucius, Akurduana, Irmandus and Fulgrim himself led them against the bodyguards of the heretek kings.

COMMAND HIERARCHY

Fulgrim maintained clear and rigid lines of authority within the Emperor's Children Legion. The Primarch himself stood in overall command of his Legion and beneath him were ten Lord Commanders who led the first ten Millennials of the Legion. Fulgrim had invested ten of his sons with this exalted rank when the Legion was still recovering from near extinction and the tradition had remained strong throughout the Great Crusade. Forming an inner circle around the Primarch each was expected to be a paragon of leader, warrior and noble. The Primarch Sanguinius called these ten the 'Princes of War', and to them fell the leadership of the largest and greatest campaigns undertaken by the Emperor's Children Legion. It was common for a Lord Commander to be given overall command of forces consisting of

contingents from other Legions, millions of soldiers of the Imperial Army, and forces drawn from the many militant arms of the Imperium and on the rare incidence of true failure in command, the Lord Commander was apt to take their own life in penance.

Authority descended through an elaborate and multi-tiered command structure which reached from the Lord Commanders through the Praetorate which in turn comprised Commanders, Lieutenant Commanders, Masters, Sub-Commanders, Tribunes Palatine and Ordinary, Captains of various divisions, to Consuls, Equerries, Ancients of various functions, through Centurions and Heralds to the Praefectors and Sergeants who commanded the Legion's individual squads, down finally to the Legion's warriors. As each Space Marine of the Legion looked to his superior for guidance and leadership by example, and devotedly followed their lead in matters of style and doctrine, they created a pattern of leadership that bordered on a personality cult at every level throughout the Legion, with Fulgrim himself and beyond him the Emperor viewed as objects of almost religious devotion. This fanaticism was well-noted by the Legion's peers (some of whom did not look favourably upon its obsessive quality in their private councils), and was outmatched perhaps only by that once held by the Word Bearers. That such fervent loyalty to the Emperor could be so readily set aside seems incredible, but nevertheless it proved true.

The Perfection of Flesh

The quest for perfection consumed the Emperor's Children in body as well as spirit. For some it was not enough to achieve the accolade of perfection, they thirsted to embody that perfection. For these warriors it was not enough that the Emperor had crafted their flesh, and shaped each with insight and knowledge no other could rival; their granted state was simply the beginning of an unfinished path. Evidence would emerge during the Heresy that many years before Horus' treachery was made manifest, a few amongst the Emperor's Children Legion believed that they could perhaps improve on what gene-seed, human breeding and the Emperor's design had made them. They tampered with implanted gene-seed organs, analysed and modified progenoids, and undertook surgical augmentation of those willing subjects who shared their obsessions. The blasphemies of flesh this belief would birth only emerged in the darkest years of the war, but its roots must have grown long before the Emperor's Children trod the hot ashes of Isstvan III.

The root of this folly was no doubt to be found in the Legion's Apothecarion, which in proportion was considerably larger than that of most other Legions, and was both fiercely proud of its work and acutely paranoid of failure in its responsibility—spurred on no doubt by the weight of memory regarding the Legion's past near-extinction. In time criminal and outlawed medicae-practices would spread cancerously, become warp-tainted and swallow all of the Emperor's Children, but it seems likely that the taint of evil began with a few individuals, and possibly with just one—Lieutenant Commander Fabius, the Legion's Chief Apothecary at the time of the Heresy whose name has since become a byword for atrocity.

It is certainly known that the Apothecaries of the Legion performed more careful purity checks on both aspirant and gene-seed before implantation. Did those checks stray and become 'correction'? Certainly there were elements in the Emperor's Children who bore 'improvements' before the Isstvan III atrocity. Some beneath a shell of apparent superhuman normality concealed augmented senses, modified musculature, even surgical alterations to brain structure far from aligned to the Emperor-ordained pattern set for the Legiones Astartes. Transgenic blasphemy and forbidden technology may have played its part, but above all it was the fact that many of the Emperor's Children willingly embraced such alteration that was the true corruption that went unnoticed.

It seems that the submission to such procedures was akin to a secret cult within the Emperor's Children. While the warrior lodges played their part in dragging other Legions into heresy, amongst the Emperor's Children it was their own sins of the flesh that helped them on the path to damnation.

The Swords of a Thousand Forges

Duelling between battle-brothers was a part of many Legions' martial traditions. For some these practices were a matter of training and honing the skills of battle. For others they took on significance beyond that of practical necessity; they became an end in themselves rather than a means to effectiveness in war. The fighting pits of the World Eaters are one example, the Blade Feasts of the Imperial Fists another. To the Emperor's Children, however, duelling was a fundamental part not only of their training but of their psychology. The duel was the ultimate expression of a warrior's skill and prowess, a mirror which reflected his essence.

The weapons they used to duel with were a key part of this culture, and spoke to their aesthetic appreciation. Many of the Emperor's Children bore swords crafted by the blade-smiths of a thousand worlds. Among these the Charnabal sabre of the Old Terran tradition was a particular mark of quality within the Legion; forged to ancient rituals and alchemical formulae each blade was a unique product of a master sword maker. Examples of this regard can be seen in several well-recorded incidents, such as when Fulgrim gave six Charnabal sabres, forged by Yelena Mordant, to the survivors of the Cyberseer Insurrection as an award of valour. While Akurduana—before his death reckoned to be the finest swordsman of the Legion—fought most often with paired Charnabal sabres, although it was also well known that he possessed a personal collection of 360 swords taken from defeated foes. This habit of taking particularly fine weapons from defeated enemies was a strong characteristic of the wider Legion. If a renowned swordsman encountered a weapon of surpassing quality in the hands of an enemy he would take it as a trophy. The swordsman would then practise with the trophy weapon until he wielded it with more skill than its makers, this act representing an almost kabbalistic ritual absorbing and defeating the enemy in spirit. So it was that the champions of the Emperor's Children wielded Racathian glass glaives, friction axes from the Norvik Sinks, Aegisine 'saintie', Tuonela mortuary swords, Terran Gladius and Martian-forged power blades to name but a few. No prohibition existed against weapons taken from aliens or cultures that were otherwise worthy only for destruction; all that mattered was the quality of the weapon itself.

WAR DISPOSITION

Unlike Horus, it seems that Fulgrim did little to disassemble the strength of his Legion prior to the atrocity of Isstvan III. Though the slaughter of the loyalists was planned in advance what little we know of Fulgrim's psychology at the time would indicate that viciousness, whim and excess had already begun to cloud his strategic judgement. Amongst those purged on Isstvan III it is likely that there were some that would have followed Fulgrim into treachery, but died because they failed the test of perfection.

The pre-atrocity strength of the Emperor's Children was likely to be approximately 110,000 Space Marines arranged into roughly thirty Millennials, as the Legion's Chapters were referred to. Of these perhaps a quarter to a third were marked for death on Isstvan III. The losses incurred by the traitorous portion of the Emperor's Children in the battle to eradicate the loyalists also seem to have been high. Fulgrim may have lost as many as 20,000 warriors in the process of eliminating the

survivors of the virus bombing. This would place the strength of the Emperor's Children after Isstvan III in the region lessened by perhaps 50,000 Space Marines: a substantial loss of fighting strength by any measure and a fact that anecdotally is said to have enraged Horus in the extreme. The growing strength of the Emperor's Children in later phases of the war, and the increasing instability of its warriors may be linked to the gene-seed experiments and flesh abominations of its renegade Apothecaries and their haste to replace these losses and bolster the Legion's strength as the war continued. Unfettered by the restraints of secrecy or fear of discovery they would change the bodies of the Emperor's Children to reflect their corruption.



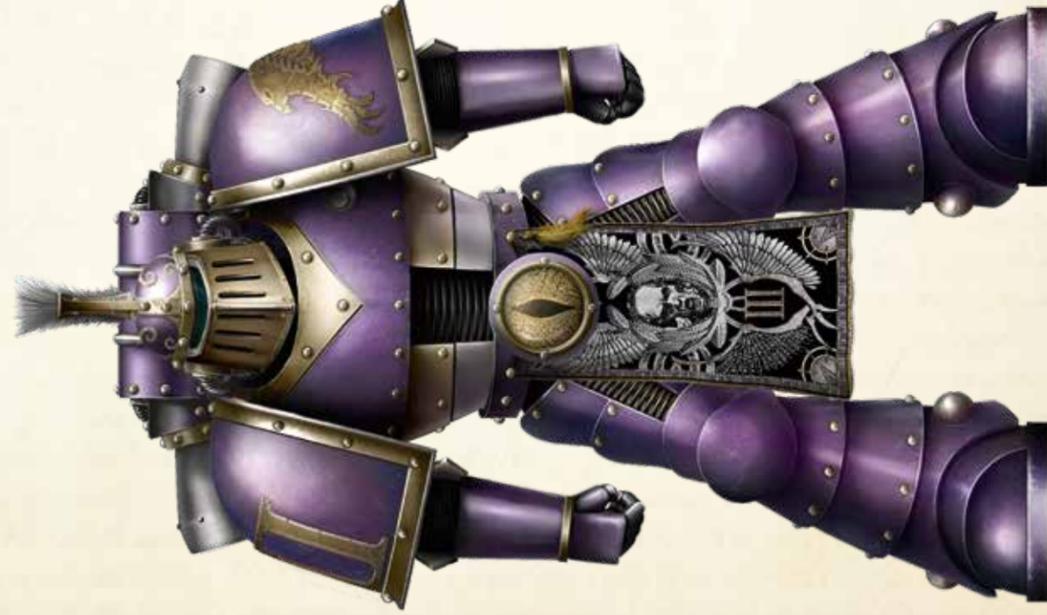
Prefector Flavius Alkenex of the Emperor's Children Legion
[Pict-capture Ullanor Triumph]

Alkenex's armour displays the typical aesthetics and complex heraldry of his Legion. Note: Helmet crest denotes status within the Legion's organisation, in this case the membership of the elite 'Phoenix Guard'. Millennial of the Legion: Seal papers carry 'Oaths of Moment' commending the wearer to fulfil specified duties or ordinances at any cost.



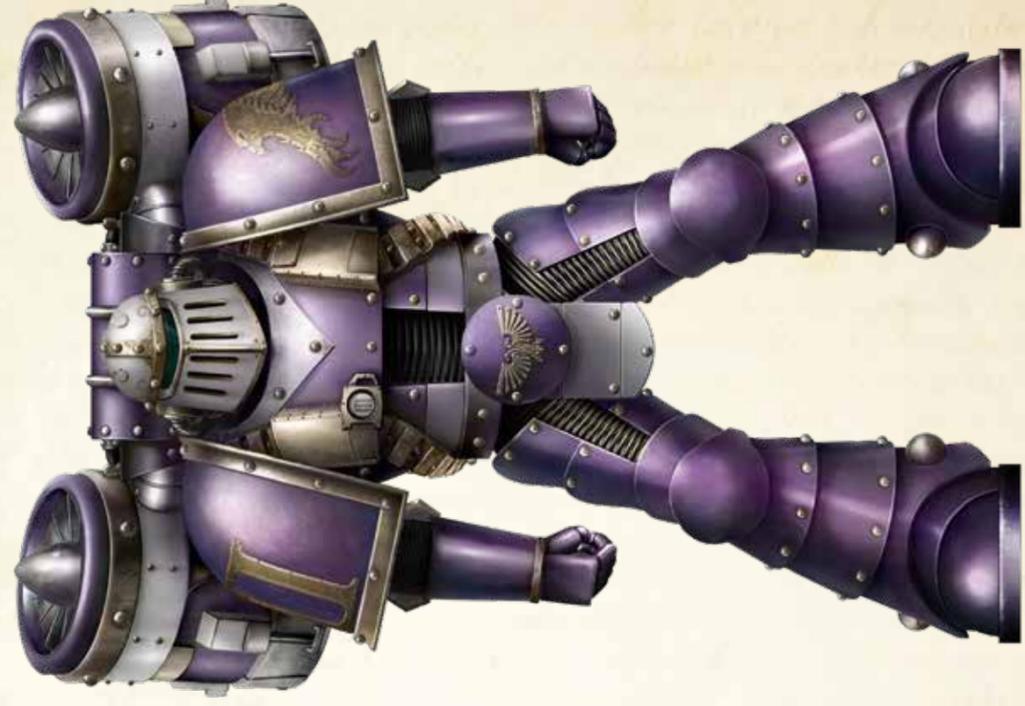
Unknown Emperor's Children Legionary [Pict-capture Issvan III Atrocity]

This Space Marine's wargear and panoply typify that of his Legion at the latter stage of the Great Crusade, including considerable personal adornment and customisation of his armour. Note: 'Maximus' pattern power armour, reinforced with molecular bonding studs in the greaves by Legion artificers: Palatine Aquila displayed across chest plate (an honour unequally bestowed on the Legion). Leather pieruges added to standard armour as martial decoration (often worn as a privilege of minor within particular Legion companies.



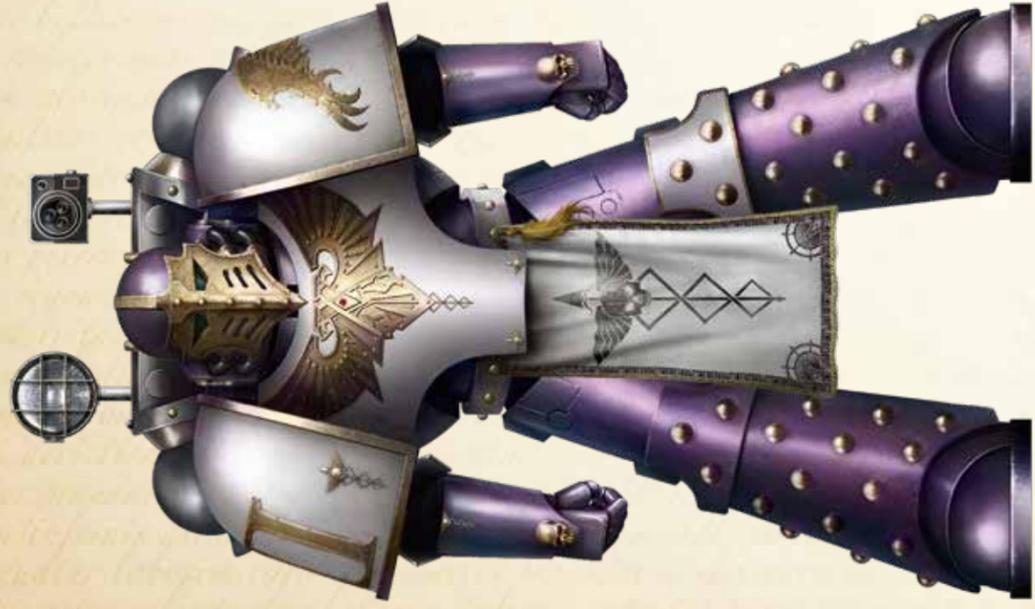
Decanus Grythan Thorn of the Emperor's Children Legion
[Pict-capture Kobal Compliance]

A known figure outside his Legion, Thorn served as equerry to his Primarch Fulgrim during the Kobal Compliance campaign. Thorn is known to have been slain during the botched commandeering of the heavy cruiser *Sunstone* during the early stages of the Issvan III atrocity. Note: Eye of Horus emblem denotes service with the Warmaster and possible lodge involvement.



Decurio Rath Luastus of the Emperor's Children Legion
[Pict-capture Issvan III Atrocity]

Terran by birth and strike leader of one of his Legion's jump pack-equipped assault companies, Luastus was slain during the initial Issvan III attack by a 'war-singer' rebel battle psyker. Note: Equipped with older issue 'Crusade' pattern power armour: White enamel inlay used to denote rank and heraldry was an older Legion tradition dating back to before its unification with the Primarch Fulgrim.



Apothecary Abdle Comendius of the Emperor's Children Legion
[Pict-capture Issvan III Atrocity]

The Emperor's Children Legion maintained an unusually sizable and influential Apothecarian. A native of Chemos, Comendius was betrayed along with his Legion's first wave, and fought valiantly in the defence of the Precentor's Palace against the traitor attack. Note 'Phoenician' pattern helm (Emperor's Children Legion unique variant awarded as a badge of valour): Specialised medical auspex and illuminator systems in-built into modified backpack.



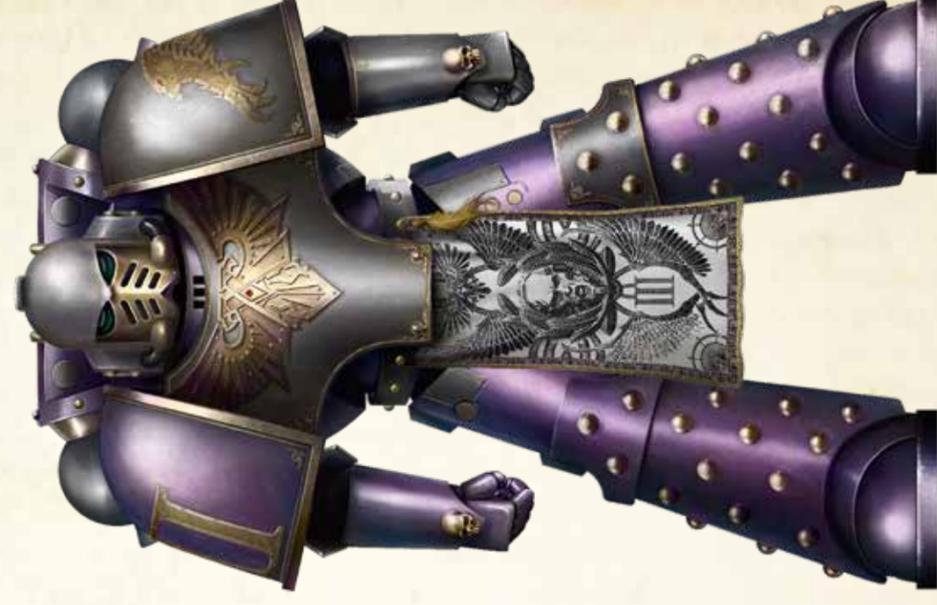
Unknown Legionary of the Emperor's Children Legion
[Pict-capture Issvan III Atrocity]

Legionary assigned to siege-assault breacher squad, Lord Commander Eidolon's traitor forces. Note: 'Iron' pattern armour only in limited use within the Emperor's Children Legion by specialised units: Complex personal heraldry displayed.



Centurion Azeal Konenos of the Emperor's Children Legion
[Pict-capture Issvan III Atrocity]

Known as the 'silent' after the Issvan III atrocity, Konenos was Lord Commander Eidolon's second in command during the ground assault against the Emperor's Children loyalists, leading repeated attacks and sustaining multiple injuries while doing so. This included the destruction of his voice box and larynx which was later replaced by a crude augmetic as self-inflicted punishment for his failure. Note: Transverse helmet crest denoting rank.



Unknown member of the Palatine Blades, Emperor's Children Legion
[Pict-capture Issvan III Atrocity]

Drawn from the usual ranks and formations of the Legion, the Blades were among the finest swordsmen in the Emperor's Children forces, tasked with seeking out and slaying the foe's finest warriors in battle. Note: Inclusion in these elite squads was often marked by the use of platinum blazoning of armour sections: Legion artificer-modified 'Maximus' pattern power armour.

