

**THE GREAT THOUSAND YEARS: WRITTEN IN  
THE YEAR 1908 AND FIRST PRINTED IN PAX,  
THE MAGAZINE OF THE BENEDICTINES OF  
CALDEY, IN DECEMBER 1910; TO WHICH IS  
ADDED A BRIEF  
COMMENTARY WRITTEN IN JANUARY 1918  
AND CALLED TEN YEARS AFTER. PP. 4-67**

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# **RALPH ADAMS CRAM**

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## TEN YEARS AFTER

By

**RALPH ADAMS CRAM**

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CHICAGO  
BROTHERS OF THE BOOK  
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aged. These things are but the froth of bursting bubbles on the waves of change, and it is only by looking beneath that the slow pulsation reveals itself; a deep throbbing in five-hundred-year epochs, a tide that rises and falls in obedience to some primal and unknowable law, signalized in its tremendous beatings by the lives of men who are the instruments of the Will of God, and such efficient instruments that now and again one almost feels that they themselves are the effective energy.

This great throbbing is as rhythmical as are human heart-beats, only the pulsations are each five centuries long, the beat falling at these regular intervals both before and after the year of the Incarnation, which forms of course the moment from which we calculate our system of historical periodicity. Before, though racial identity lasted sometimes for two thousand years, these great periods were always divided into epochs of perfect distinctness, each approximately of five centuries' duration, and whether we consider Egypt, Judæa, Babylonia, or Assyria, we find that the years 1500, 1000 and 500 B.C. mark approximately the end of a consistent era of five hundred

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years, the beginning of another destined to equal duration. Hellenism lasted through two quite distinct phases, almost to the Birth of Christ. Rome for an equal period until five centuries after. Then came five hundred years while the Eastern Empire was going through its first and greatest epoch (later to be followed by an equal space of time marked by a desperate and hopeless struggle for existence), while the races of the North were in France and Germany and England laying deep the foundations of their great future, and while the South was hidden in the gloom of the Dark Ages; a shrouding cloud of horror and despair that only opened now and then to show — working dimly — the beginnings of the great epoch of Mediaevalism that began with the year 1000, and ended five centuries later with the dawn of our own epoch, that may be neither estimated nor named until its term, which is due to fall before the close of the present century.

This is all in general terms, of course; there sometimes comes nearly a century of premature decay, and sometimes vitality endures beyond its allotted space by almost an equal period, but no epoch has either



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begun or ended except in the century preceding or following the established node, and one might almost say that history records no crucial point in civilization within the three centuries that fall in the midst of an epoch. Of course there is often a long period of incubation; the beginnings of a new era reach back century after century until the point of departure is found coincident with the effective opening of the antecedent epoch, as the origins of Rome are working darkly in the years of Marathon and of Salamis and Thermopylae that signalized the flaming dawn of Hellenism; as the Son of God becomes Incarnate just as Roman imperialism rises dominant over the world, even though five centuries were to pass before His reign was to be established in the East; as S. Benedict and Pope S. Gregory the Great appear five centuries before the final redemption of the West, and Charlemagne three centuries later strives to break the thralldom of the Dark Ages, a deed only to be accomplished at the coming node by Cluny and Otto the Great and Pope Gregory VII. This law of nodes means only *dominance*, and as such it marvellously holds, while around each node

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assemble in the same two bounding centuries, all the names of those men who, under God, are to destroy the decadent epoch and build in majesty the new. Through the entire term of any period those who best express it are born at any time, indeed it often happens that the great flowering is after the trunk itself is dead and decaying, but the men who make epochs and mar them, whether they are Benedicts, Ottos and Hildebrands, or Alarics, Calvins and Borgias, appear like clustered stars, beneficent or baleful, around that mysterious point that forms a node of history.

Now, two of these five-hundred-year eras may well be called "The Great Thousand Years," for so they are to us who consider ourselves component parts in a still operative Christian society. The first was the epoch of the beginnings, the second of achievement; the first opens with the node of A.D. 500, the second with that of A.D. 1000, while the latter closes with the year 1500. For four centuries we have been pleased to look on exactly this time as of no importance, since we are children of what followed; and if we believed in our mother — the Renaissance-reformation-revolution —

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the less we said or thought about Mediaevalism, the better for our peace of mind, as the two were separated by the entire diameter of being.

Working silently, subterraneously — as the filaments of the mushroom creep for yards under the ground before they are content to rise above the surface — the revolt against this monstrous ignorance gathered form and substance even from the last years of the eighteenth century, but it was not until the end of the first quarter of the next that it showed itself, sometimes in art, sometimes in economics, sometimes in religion and theology. Now it is soundly established, crescent even while the post-mediaeval or Renaissance epoch is going to its death with the decadent violence of anarchy, profligacy and apostasy. It is not yet sovereign over destiny, for its day is now hardly more than at dawn, if the hitherto unbroken course of history is to meet with no violent change. Neither as yet have the great personalities that are to be the hammers of God in beating down the towering fabric of modernism, the effective agents in His building of a new era — neither as yet have they appeared, though