

The Five Ages: Swedenborg’s View of Spiritual History presents a compelling spiritual and psychological history of human evolution. It is a compilation of extracts from the works of the eighteenth-century Swedish philosopher and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg on the subject of the “world ages,” a concept that is found in many different cultures and mythologies. The Greeks and Romans called these epochs the Golden, Silver, Bronze and Iron Ages; Hindu mythology talks of the four yugas; Islam, meanwhile, refers to a pattern of the six major prophets. Similar timeframes appear in Norse, Persian, and Aztec mythology, but nowhere is this theme treated with such detail as in the works of Swedenborg. He divides human history into five biblically based ages: that of Adam, Noah, Moses, Jesus Christ, and a fifth one that is just unfolding, one predicted in the book of Revelation. The Five Ages brings together passages from over twenty different works by Swedenborg, neatly linking them with an engaging and informative commentary in which P. L. Johnson compares and contrasts Swedenborg’s ideas with those from other cultures, placing them in the context of historical and archaeological knowledge gathered since Swedenborg’s time. The book is illustrated throughout, featuring thirty helpful and charming black-and-white line drawings. It also contains a bibliography, a subject index, an index of quotations from the works of Swedenborg, and an appendix on “World Age Patterns.”

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