The First Form

Anthropos, Adam Kadmon, and the Cosmology of the Primordial Human

An exploration of Gnostic and Jewish mystical cosmologies, read against scripture, later interpretation, and the question of why the universe was imagined in the shape of a human being.

A cosmological study
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And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

Ezekiel 1:26

Contents

The First Form

A Note to the Reader

I. The Question of the First Form

II. Scriptural Seeds

III. The Heavenly Human of Alexandria

IV. The Form on the Chariot

V. Anthropos in the Gnostic Cosmologies

VI. Adam Elyon and the Birth of Adam Kadmon

VII. Luria: Contraction, the Line, and the Primordial Man of Light

VIII. Shared Grammar, Divergent Worlds

IX. Reasonable Expansions

X. Shared, Common, and Individual Beliefs

XI. The Face That Precedes the World

Note on Sources

A Note to the Reader

This book is an exploration, not a confession. It does not ask the reader to adopt a Gnostic myth, a Lurianic diagram, or a private synthesis of the two. It asks a narrower and older question: why, across several ancient cosmologies that grew from or beside the Hebrew scriptures, does the first intelligible form of the universe appear as a human being?

The two names that organize the inquiry are not synonyms. *Anthropos*, in a cluster of Hellenistic and Gnostic writings, names a primordial Human who stands in or near the divine Fullness and whose image is later copied, often badly, into the material world. *Adam Kadmon*, in medieval and early modern Kabbalah, names a configuration of divine light that appears after the Infinite has withdrawn, a first world so high that later Kabbalists treat it as almost continuous with the Infinite itself. One figure belongs to a family of myths in which creation is a catastrophe of ignorance. The other belongs to a family of theologies in which creation is a deliberate contraction, a breaking, and a repair that never abandons the oneness of God.

They share a grammar. They do not share a creed.

Where scripture is quoted, the wording follows public-domain English of the Authorized Version, occasionally adjusted only for clarity of a single phrase. Where Nag Hammadi or Kabbalistic sources are used, the account is a careful paraphrase of well-attested teachings rather than a reproduction of any modern copyrighted translation. Interpretive expansions are marked as such. They are

offered as ways of thinking with the material, not as hidden doctrines recovered from a vault.

Jewish and Gnostic systems are kept distinct on purpose. Comparison is useful only when it does not flatten. The reader who comes from one community should find the other described without being annexed. The reader who comes from neither should find a map of how two of the most ambitious anthropocosmic ideas in the West were built, and why they still press on the imagination of cosmology: the suspicion that the universe is not merely a machine, nor merely a story, but a form that resembles us because we first resembled it.

I. The Question of the First Form

Cosmology, in the ordinary modern sense, is a science of origins measured in temperatures, densities, and the first fractions of a second. The cosmologies treated here are older and stranger. They are maps of how the unmanifest becomes a world that can be spoken of, prayed in, and suffered. Their first question is not “what exploded?” but “what appeared?”

The answer they keep giving is a human shape.

That answer is not sentimental. It is not the claim that the galaxies look like a face if one squints. It is the claim that the first structure capable of mediating between the Absolute and the many is anthropic: a pattern of head and body, right and left, inner and outer, male and female, speech and silence. The universe, on this view, is not first a heap of objects. It is first a configuration of meaning that can later be read as a body.

Two traditions give that configuration a proper name.

In certain Gnostic texts recovered from the sands of Upper Egypt in 1945, and in the reports of their ancient opponents, the name is Anthropos: Man, the Perfect Human, the First Manifestation, sometimes called Adamas or Geradamas or Pigeradamas. He is not the Adam of dust. He is the luminous paradigm whose reflection the lower powers glimpse in the waters and then try to copy. The copy is the earthly human. The original remains above, in the Pleroma, the Fullness.

In the Kabbalah that takes shape in thirteenth-century Provence and Castile, and that is recast with extraordinary mythic force by Isaac Luria in sixteenth-century Safed, the name is Adam Kadmon: Primordial Man. He is not a creature who happens to stand first in a queue. He is the first world of light after the Infinite Light withdraws, the blueprint in which all later worlds are superimposed before they are sorted into space and time. In Luria's system he stands higher than the four worlds of Emanation, Creation, Formation, and Action. From the apertures of his "face"—eye, ear, nose, mouth—further lights stream, and those lights become the subsequent history of cosmos, rupture, and repair.

Why a human form at all? Three pressures converge, and they are older than either technical vocabulary.

The first is scriptural. Genesis says that the human is made in an image and a likeness. Ezekiel, in exile by the Chebar, sees above the living creatures "the likeness as the appearance of a man." Daniel sees one "like a son of man" coming with the clouds. Proverbs personifies Wisdom as present when the depths were established. Once those texts are read together, a possibility opens that the human is not an afterthought placed in a finished world, but the key by which the world's order can be known.

The second is philosophical. Platonism, especially as it reached Alexandria, distinguished an intelligible paradigm from a sensible copy. If the visible human is a copy, there must be a form of Human that is not made of clay. Philo of Alexandria, a Jew writing in Greek in the first century, already draws that line between the heavenly human of Genesis 1 and the molded human of

Genesis 2. Later Gnostic and Kabbalistic systems inherit the problem even when they reject Philo's calm.

The third is experiential. Merkabah mystics who sought the vision of the chariot, and later Kabbalists who contemplated the sefirot as a divine organism, did not experience the first principle as a blank. They experienced glory, measure, voice, and a form that could be praised. The Infinite as Infinite cannot be drawn. The Infinite as it gives itself to thought and liturgy arrives already configured. That configuration, again and again, is anthropic.

The intrigue of the subject is not that two traditions used a similar metaphor. It is that they used it to solve opposite anxieties. Gnostic Anthropos often explains why the world feels like a prison built by lesser gods: the true Human is elsewhere, and salvation is recollection of that origin. Adam Kadmon explains how a world that is genuinely God's can still be fractured, delayed, and in need of human work: the first form is divine light in the shape of a man, and earthly human action can answer that form. One myth climbs out of the cosmos. The other repairs it from within.

The chapters that follow keep that difference in view while tracing the shared architecture underneath it: a hidden source, a first appearance in human likeness, a descent or condensation into worlds, a crisis of form, and a path of return.

II. Scriptural Seeds

No later myth of a primordial Human is free of the Hebrew Bible. Even systems that invert the God of Genesis still need Genesis in order to invert it. The later figures of Anthropos and Adam Kadmon are not smuggled into scripture. They are grown from a small set of verses that refuse to stay flat.

Image and likeness

The first and most stubborn seed is Genesis 1:26–27:

> *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*

The verse does three things at once. It places the human at the climax of the six days. It uses the plural “let us,” which later readers filled with angels, with the sefirot, with a heavenly court, or with a hidden companion to the Creator. And it binds the human to an “image” and a “likeness” without saying what the prototype is.

If the image is simply rationality or upright posture, the verse is moral anthropology. If the image is a heavenly form that precedes the dust-creature, the verse becomes cosmology. Ancient readers felt the second possibility because the next chapter seemed to tell the story again, differently.

Genesis 2:7 says:

> *And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*

Here the human is not spoken into an image. He is formed, like pottery, and then animated by breath. Two verbs, two materials, two atmospheres. The first account is royal and luminous. The second is intimate and earthen. Once a reader decides that scripture does not merely repeat itself, the two Adams become thinkable: one according to image, one according to clay.

Rabbinic midrash often keeps them as two aspects of one creature, or as the androgynous first human later divided. Gnostic readers split them into different ontological ranks. Kabbalists will later say that the earthly Adam is patterned on a higher Adam. The fork is already present in the double story.

The likeness on the throne

Ezekiel 1 is the second seed, and for mystics the more dangerous one. The prophet, among the exiles, sees a storm, four living creatures, wheels within wheels, and a firmament like terrible crystal. Then the gaze climbs:

> *And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.*

The Hebrew piles hedges around the vision: likeness, appearance, likeness again. The figure is not casually called God. Ezekiel names what he has seen only at the end: “This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.” The Glory, the *kavod*, is what can appear. The one who appears, appears as adam.

That sentence is the hinge of a whole mystical history. If the Glory can be seen as a human form, then anthropomorphism is not a childish projection onto God. It is the way Glory gives itself to a prophet. Later Merkabah texts will measure the limbs of that form. Later Kabbalists will call the sefirotic organism Adam Elyon, the Supernal Man. Later Gnostics will say that a voice from above announced “the Human exists,” and that the archons mistook the announcement for a chance to manufacture a captive copy.

Mishnah Hagigah already treats the Work of the Chariot as restricted teaching, not to be expounded before one student unless he is wise and understands from his own knowledge. The restriction is a sign of pressure. The verse was doing too much work to be left in public.

One like a son of man

Daniel 7:13 adds motion to the form:

> *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.*

The figure is “like” a human being and comes as a royal recipient of dominion. In the Similitudes of 1 Enoch, a related figure is described in language that echoes Ezekiel: a being whose countenance has the appearance of a man, standing with the Head of Days. Whether or not one identifies that figure with the later Christian Son of Man, the pattern is clear. Heaven contains a human-like presence who is not simply the dusty Adam, and who is associated with judgment, glory, and the end of empires.

Cosmology and eschatology here touch. The first form and the last judge can be imagined as the same kind of being: the Human who belongs above history and therefore can close it.

Wisdom at the beginning

A fourth seed is not a man but a companion. Proverbs 8 has Wisdom speak:

> *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth*

was.

Wisdom is beside Him as one brought up with Him, rejoicing in the inhabited world, and her delight is with the sons of men. In later Jewish thought this figure can become Torah, or Shekhinah, or a sefirah. In some Gnostic systems she becomes Sophia, whose solitary act produces a flawed craftsman. The important point for cosmology is that Genesis does not stand alone. There is already a tradition that something—or someone—was present "before his works of old," a first companion to the act of world-making.

When Gnostic texts pair Immortal Man with Great Sophia, they are rearranging this furniture, not inventing a room.

Breath, name, and measure

Other verses feed the same fire. "Let there be light" becomes, in Kabbalah, the first utterance after withdrawal, and in some Gnostic tellings a light that the rulers try to trap. The Tetragrammaton, the four-letter Name, becomes in later Kabbalah a map of worlds, with Adam Kadmon standing at the cusp of the first letter. Isaiah's vision of the Lord high and lifted up, and the hem of the robe filling the temple, encourages the imagination of a vast divine body. Song of Songs, read allegorically, supplies the limbs that Shiur Qomah literature will number in parasangs of fire.

None of these verses, taken in their plain narrative sense, teaches Adam Kadmon or the Gnostic Anthropos. That must be said plainly. What they do is

leave an opening: an image without a pictured original, a Glory in human likeness, a human-like figure in heaven, a Wisdom older than earth. Later cosmologies rush into that opening. They do not do so at random. They do so because the Bible’s own language of beginning is already half-anthropic. The world is spoken. The human is imaged. The Glory is seen as a man. Cosmology, if it stays with those verbs, will keep discovering a first form that looks back.

III. The Heavenly Human of Alexandria

Before there is a Nag Hammadi codex or a Safed courtyard, there is Philo of Alexandria. He is not a Gnostic and not a Kabbalist. He is a first-century Jewish philosopher writing in Greek, reading Moses with Plato in the room. His importance for this story is that he makes the double creation of Genesis into a metaphysical distinction and gives the upper term a name that later worlds will not forget: the heavenly human.

In the *Allegorical Interpretation* and in *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, Philo treats Genesis 1:26–27 and Genesis 2:7 as accounts of two kinds of anthropos. The first is made according to the image of God. He is intelligible, incorporeal, neither male nor female, immortal by nature: an idea, a genus, a seal. The second is molded from clay, sense-perceptible, already qualified, composed of body and soul, divided into male and female, mortal by nature. Between them, Philo says, there is a vast difference.

The heavenly human is not, for Philo, a mythic hero who later falls into matter. He is the noetic paradigm. In some passages the image of God is identified with the Logos, the divine Reason through which the cosmos is ordered. The earthly human is then a copy of a copy: stamped by the Logos, mixed with dust, made living by inbreathing. Cosmology and anthropology interlock. To know what a human is, one must know what kind of world can contain both a seal and a pot.

This is a calm system. God remains the good Artificer. Matter is not a demon. The lower human is not a trap but a mixture that can be breathed upon. Yet the

structure is already the structure later myths will dramatize: a first Human who does not touch corruption, a second human who does, and an image-relation that makes the second possible.

Philo also shows why the theme travels. Alexandria was a city in which Jewish scripture, Platonic paradigms, and Egyptian and Greek talk of a primal man could overhear one another. The Hermetic *Poimandres*, whatever its exact date, tells of an Anthropos who descends, unites with nature, and becomes the ancestor of a double humanity. Manichaean myth, later and farther east, will stage a Primal Man who goes out to fight darkness and is captured. These are not Philo's children. They are neighbors in a Hellenistic weather system where "Man" can mean a cosmic principle rather than a neighbor on the street.

What Philo protects, and what some later Gnostic systems will abandon, is the goodness of the Maker. That single decision divides the family tree. If the heavenly Human is the Logos of the God of Israel, descent is pedagogy. If the heavenly Human is a light stolen or parodied by a lesser craftsman, descent is catastrophe. The later chapters of this book are largely the story of that fork.

Paul and the two Adams

A Jewish contemporary of Philo's intellectual world, writing in Greek to congregations of a new movement, also works with two humans. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul writes that the first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam a quickening spirit; the first is of the earth, earthy, the second is the Lord from heaven. In Romans 5 the one man's trespass and the one man's act of righteousness organize history. In Colossians 1, whether by Paul or a close heir,

the beloved Son is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.”

This is not Kabbalah and it is not the Apocryphon of John. It is another way the image-language of Genesis and the glory-language of Jewish mysticism could be concentrated onto a single figure. Gnostic Christians will later populate the heavens with Anthropos, Autogenes, and Seth. Catholic Christianity will concentrate the heavenly Human into Christ. The comparison matters because it shows that the primordial Human is not a curiosity of two obscure sects. It is one of the available answers, in the first centuries, to the question posed by Genesis and Ezekiel together: if the human is an image, who is the original, and where does he stand in the structure of the world?

Philo’s original remains an intelligible seal. Paul’s second Adam enters history. The Gnostic Perfect Human remains in the Fullness and sends messengers. The Kabbalists’ Adam Kadmon will be light prior to history. Same grammatical slot; four different occupants.

IV. The Form on the Chariot

Between the Bible and the Kabbalah there is a long Jewish mystical practice centered on the vision Ezekiel saw and the palaces one must pass to see it again. Scholars call it Merkabah mysticism, from the chariot. Its texts—Hekhalot Rabbati, Hekhalot Zutarti, Shiur Qomah, 3 Enoch—are not systematic cosmologies in the Lurianic sense. They are liturgies of ascent, warnings, hymns, and measurements. Their contribution to the later idea of Adam Kadmon is the conviction that the Glory appears as a vast human form, and that this form can be contemplated without being mistaken for the Infinite as it is in itself.

The climactic sight in the seventh palace is not a blank light. It is the appearance of God as a fiery human figure upon the throne of glory, the same "likeness as the appearance of a man" that Ezekiel saw. The texts distinguish, with more or less stability, between the visible Glory and the God who remains beyond the seventh heaven and descends to be enthroned. The distinction is crucial. It allows an anthropic manifestation without collapsing God into a body among bodies.

Shiur Qomah, the "measure of the stature," takes the daring step of numbering the limbs of that appearance, using the beloved of the Song of Songs as a map and inflating every span into cosmic distances. The result can look grotesque if read as anatomy. Read as cosmology, it says something else: the Glory that can be praised has measure, and measure is already a kind of world. A form that has

a right side and a left side, a head and feet, is a form in which later thinkers can place the sefirot.

3 Enoch, a later Hekhalot work, adds a transformed human to the picture. Enoch is taken up and becomes Metatron, the Prince of the Presence, a youth of fire who bears a name that includes the Name. The earthly scribe becomes a heavenly anthropos. The line between primordial Human and exalted human blurs. Some readers of Colossians and of later Kabbalah will feel the same blur: is the first form a divine configuration, or a human who has been taken into that configuration? The tradition often answers: both, at different stations of the same ladder.

Rabbinic literature also knows an Adam of immense original stature, whose body filled the world from one end to the other until it was diminished after the sin. That aggadah is not yet Adam Kadmon. It is the earthly Adam imagined at full cosmic volume. The later Kabbalah will invert the direction. Instead of stretching the first man until he fills the world, it will say that the world itself is the unfolding of a higher Man.

Merkabah mysticism therefore bequeaths three things to the cosmology of the primordial Human. First, the legitimacy of seeing a human likeness at the summit of the visible heavens. Second, the discipline of not identifying that likeness with the unrepresentable essence. Third, the habit of mapping holiness onto a body-shaped diagram. When the Zohar speaks of Adam Ila’ah, the Supernal Man, and when Luria describes lights leaving the face of Adam Kadmon, they are speaking a language the chariot already made possible.

They are also speaking under a warning the chariot already knew. The Work of the Chariot burns the unprepared. The primordial Human is not a mascot. He is the most dangerous of metaphors, because the mind that loves him can forget that he is a metaphor of Glory and not a second god.

V. Anthropos in the Gnostic Cosmologies

Gnosticism is not one church. It is a family of late antique systems that share a family resemblance: a hidden first principle, a fullness of divine figures, a crisis that produces a craftsman ignorant of his source, a material world that is at best a copy and at worst a prison, and salvation as knowledge of origin. Within that family the Primordial Human is one of the most persistent characters. He is not always in the same rank. Sometimes he is near the summit. Sometimes he is a luminous Adam below the aeons. Sometimes there are three Adams stacked like days of creation. The name Anthropos gathers them without erasing their differences.

Sethian architecture: the Apocryphon of John

The Secret Book of John, preserved in four Coptic versions among the Nag Hammadi codices and the Berlin Codex, is the most complete surviving Sethian cosmogony. It opens with a revelation to John son of Zebedee. The revealer is one figure in three forms—Father, Mother, Son—and he has come to teach about what is, what was, and what will be, and about the immovable race of the perfect Human.

The first principle is the Invisible Spirit, a monarchy with nothing above it, a light into which no eye can look. From the Spirit’s self-contemplation in the living water of light there appears Barbelo: Forethought, the image of the Invisible, Mother-Father, first Human, womb of the All. Already the language

of Anthropos has begun, not as a male hero but as the first thinkable image of the unthinkable.

From Barbelo, by the consent of the Spirit, comes the Autogenes, the Self-Generated, identified with Christ. Around him stand four luminaries—Harmozel, Oroiael, Daveithai, Eleleth—each with attendant aeons. From Foreknowledge and perfect Mind, by the will of the Invisible Spirit and of Autogenes, the perfect true Human appears. The Virgin Spirit names him Adamas, or in the long version Pigeradamas or Geradamas, and stations him in the first eternal realm with Harmozel, near the Self-Generated. He is given invincible mind. His first speech is doxology: because of you the All has come to be, and to you the All will return.

This Adamas is not the Adam of Eden. He is the Perfect Human inside the Fullness. His son Seth is set over a second realm. The “immovable race” of the perfect Human is the spiritual posterity that the text addresses: readers who are to recognize themselves as seed of that higher Human rather than as property of the world-rulers.

The drama turns when Sophia, the lowest aeon of the fourth luminary, acts without her consort and produces an imperfect offspring. That offspring is Yaldabaoth, a lion-faced craftsman who steals a portion of power, creates archons and firmaments, and announces “I am God and there is no other.” He is a parody of the biblical Creator and of Plato’s demiurge at once. A voice from above then declares that the Human exists, and the Child of the Human. Yaldabaoth and his powers see an image in the waters and decide to make a man according to that image, so that the image may become a light for them. They model a psychic body and name it Adam. The body lies inert until a

breath or power from above, drawn down by their own desire to seize the light, makes him move. The higher Human has been copied. The copy becomes the battleground.

Cosmologically the scheme is a descent of resemblance. The Invisible cannot be seen. Barbelo is the first image. Autogenes orders the Fullness. Adamas is the Perfect Human within that order. The earthly Adam is an archontic replica of a reflection. Salvation is the recovery, by knowledge and by the descent of Forethought, of the identity that the replica still secretly carries.

Three Adams: On the Origin of the World

Another Nag Hammadi treatise, *On the Origin of the World*, multiplies the figure. After a long account of chaos, Pistis Sophia, and the arrogant rulers, it distinguishes three Adams. The first Adam, the Adam of Light, is spirit-endowed and appears on the first day. The second Adam is soul-endowed and appears on the sixth day. The third Adam is a creature of earth, the man of the law, appearing on an eighth day. The week of Genesis is rewritten as a stratification of anthropoi. Light-human, soul-human, earth-human: three densities of the same name.

The treatise also tells of a droplet of light that falls upon the water and becomes an androgynous human. Sophia’s light is not only a mistake. It is a seed that will later condemn the modelers. The cosmology is still tragic, but it is tragic in the direction of a return: the first Adam of Light remains the standard by which the later Adams are judged.

Immortal Man and Sophia: The Sophia of Jesus Christ

In *The Sophia of Jesus Christ* and the related *Eugnostos the Blessed*, the first appearance after the unnameable Father is Immortal Androgynous Man, through whom those who sleep may wake. His consort is Great Sophia. From their reflection come further androgynous pairs: First Begetter and First Begettress, Savior and All-Begettress. The language is densely aeonic, but the cosmological claim is simple. Before there is a world of poverty, there is Man. Not a male as opposed to a female—the pairs are androgynous—but Man as the first organized divinity that can be the medium of salvation.

Valentinian systems reported by Irenaeus and Hippolytus likewise know an Anthropos among the aeons of the Pleroma, sometimes as one of the first Ogdoad. The details vary by teacher: Valentinus, Ptolemy, Marcus. What remains stable is the placement of Human as a divine name, not a biological species.

What the Gnostic Anthropos is for

Across these variants the Primordial Human does four cosmological jobs.

He is a buffer. The truly unknown Father does not touch matter. Anthropos is among the first forms that can be spoken of, praised, and later imitated.

He is a standard. The earthly human is unintelligible without him. Genesis 1:26 is reread as the archons' attempt to capture a likeness they did not author.

He is a diagnosis. If the true Human is above, then the feeling that this world is not one’s home has an address. Alienation becomes metaphysics.

He is a promise. The immovable race, the seed of Seth, the pneumatic spark: these are ways of saying that the first form is not only elsewhere. It is hidden in the copy, waiting for knowledge.

The price of the system is the demotion of the Creator of Genesis. That price is exactly what Jewish Kabbalah will refuse to pay. The Gnostic Anthropos and the Kabbalistic Adam Kadmon can look like cousins in a museum of primordial men. They are cousins who left home in opposite directions.

VI. Adam Elyon and the Birth of Adam Kadmon

Kabbalah, as a distinct literature, becomes visible in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Provence and Spain. It presents itself as received tradition, not as invention, and it reads the Torah as a living divine organism. Within that reading the human form is not a late decoration. It is the shape of the revealed God.

The ten sefirot—Keter, Hokhmah, Binah, Hesed, Gevurah, Tiferet, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, Malkhut—are not ten gods. Classical Kabbalah insists on the unity of God with a severity that Gnostic systems do not share. The sefirot are modes of the one Infinite's self-disclosure, vessels or lights by which Ein Sof, the Endless, becomes thinkable without becoming finite in essence. When those ten are contemplated as a single organism, the organism is a man: head, arms, torso, loins, feet, and a feminine presence that receives and crowns the whole.

Early Kabbalists speak of Adam Elyon, supreme man, or in the Aramaic of the Zohar, Adam Ila'ah or Adam di-l'ela. The term can name the entire sefirotic array. It can also concentrate in one sefirah: Keter as the ungraspable crown, Hokhmah as the primordial point, Tiferet as the central configuration called the Holy One, blessed be He. Tikkunei Zohar can call Divine Wisdom Adam ha-Gadol, the Great Man. The scriptural warrant is double: Genesis 1:26, and Ezekiel's "likeness as the appearance of a man."

The technical name Adam Kadmon appears in an early thirteenth-century treatise, *Sod Yedi'at ha-Metzi'ut*. Kadmon means primordial, that which

precedes. Adam here is not first of all “a male person” but the one who is *domeh*, like: the likeness of what precedes him. The compound means the primordial likeness, the first form that is already in the image of the Infinite Light and is therefore the image in which later forms can stand.

In the Zohar the Supernal Man is the secret of the sefirot as they array themselves for the sake of worlds below. The earthly human is a copy of that array. To keep the commandments is, in this climate of thought, not only obedience. It is theurgy in a restrained sense: human limbs and human times act upon the higher limbs and higher times because they are of one pattern. The Torah itself is read as a divine body of letters. The anthropocosmic idea cuts in every direction. God as revealed is human-shaped. The human is sefirot-shaped. The book is body-shaped. Cosmology becomes a study of correspondences.

Moses Cordovero, working in Safed in the mid-sixteenth century, organizes this inheritance with philosophical patience in *Pardes Rimonim*. For Cordovero the sefirot, Adam Kadmon, and the four worlds unfold sequentially from Ein Sof. The tone is still that of graded emanation rather than of catastrophe. The Infinite discloses itself in ordered stages. Adam Kadmon is a stage in that disclosure, the first comprehensive human form of the lights.

Two warnings travel with the doctrine, and both are Jewish in a way Gnostic myth is not. First, Ein Sof remains beyond the form. Adam Kadmon is not a second deity and not the essence. He is the first appearance that meditation can bear. Second, the world below is not the work of an ignorant impostor. It is the last of the worlds that unfold from the same light. Evil will be accounted for—especially after Luria—but not by splitting the Creator off from the true God.

This is why Gershom Scholem and later historians could say that Gnostic-looking images return inside Kabbalah without Kabbalah becoming Gnosticism. The images of primordial Man, of a crisis in the vessels, of sparks in exile, are real. The frame that holds them is the unique God of Israel, the goodness of Torah, and the dignity of the bodily commandments. The same figure, Adam, means opposite things depending on whether the Maker of Genesis is a villain or the Holy One.

VII. Luria: Contraction, the Line, and the Primordial Man of Light

Isaac Luria, the Ari, taught in Safed for a few years before his death in 1572. His oral system, written down chiefly by Hayyim Vital in *Etz Hayyim* and related works, recast Kabbalah into a myth of exile and repair that became the dominant Jewish mystical cosmology of the following centuries and a deep source for Hasidism. In that system Adam Kadmon is not one symbol among many. He is the first world after the unthinkable beginning, and the source from which every later world is breathed.

Before the form

Prior to creation, says the Lurianic teaching, there was only the simple Infinite Light of Ein Sof, filling all. There was no empty place in which a world could stand. The first act is therefore not an emanation outward but a withdrawal inward: tzimtzum, contraction. The Infinite Light recedes from a central point and leaves a vacated space, a womb of possibility. The act is not abandonment. It is the making of a room in which something other than undivided light can exist.

Into that room a single ray descends, the kav, the line. The line does not refill the vacuum. It draws a measured beam from the circumference of Infinite Light into the darkness of the vacated space. All subsequent form is a modulation of that beam.

Adam Kadmon as first world

The first shape the ray takes is anthropic. Ten concentric circles of light appear, the configuration called igulim, circles. Then the ray is clothed in a linear, upright human form, yosher, the sefirot stacked as a body from Keter to Malkhut. This is Adam Kadmon: not a person who walks, but the first world of light, abbreviated A”K, so sublime that it is nearly indistinguishable from Ein Sof and yet is already a world, which means already a concealment.

Chabad expositions, following this school, stress the paradox in the name. Adam means likeness. Kadmon means that which precedes. Adam Kadmon is the primordial world that is in the likeness of the Infinite Light which preceded it and which was concealed in order that it might be. It is a world, therefore finite as world. It is so near the Infinite that it functions as the Infinite’s first readable will. In it there is not yet space and time as we know them. All details of creation, from the beginning of space to the end of space and from the beginning of time to the end of time, are superimposed in one primordial thought, the *mahashavah kedumah*. The blueprint is complete before the rooms are built.

Adam Kadmon stands above the four worlds that later Kabbalah names with the verbs of Isaiah 43:7 and a related verse: Atzilut, emanation; Beriah, creation; Yetzirah, formation; Asiyah, action. Those four can be mapped onto the four letters of the Name. Adam Kadmon is the thorn of the yod, the cusp before the Name fully writes itself. He is the highest of five worlds if one counts him with them, and he is above the four if one reserves the word “world” for what is already more disclosed.

Lights from the face

Vital describes the next stage with an image that startles even readers used to sefirotic bodies. From the orifices of Adam Kadmon's head—ears, nose, mouth, eyes—lights issue. Each outflow has a different character and produces a different subsequent configuration. The lights from the eyes, in particular, are associated with the world of points, Nekudim, the unstable sefirot of Tohu, chaos.

The image should not be flattened into cartoon anatomy. In this symbolic physics a "face" is a place where inner light becomes outer light. An "eye" is a mode of seeing that is also a mode of giving. What Luria is mapping is the transition from an all-at-once primordial thought to differentiated worlds that can fail. Differentiation is already a risk. The first form contains that risk in its very apertures. What is wholly interior cannot break. What has a face can pour, and what pours can be too much for the vessels that wait below.

Breaking and repair

The vessels of the world of Tohu cannot bear the lights that enter them. They shatter. This is shevirat ha-kelim, the breaking of the vessels. Sparks of light fall and are trapped in the shards, the kelipot. The subsequent world of Tikkun, repair, is the rebuilding of stable partzufim, configurations of the sefirot as interacting visages rather than isolated points. Atzilut is reconstructed as a field of these configurations. Lower worlds follow. History, exile, and the commandments are the human face of this repair.

Adam Kadmon is not the breaker and not the broken. He is the source-form from which both the excessive lights and the possibility of their later reorganization proceed. Later Lurianic writing can even speak of inner couplings within Adam Kadmon that send new light for the sake of resurrection and the raising of fallen kings. The first form is not retired after the beginning. It remains the reservoir of repair.

Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto, in the eighteenth century, gave one of the clearest systematizations: Adam Kadmon is the world in which the plan of all subsequent creation is fully laid out in advance. Sanford Drob and other modern interpreters have emphasized the philosophical daring of the symbol. Adam Kadmon is indistinguishable from the deity in one respect and is the very body of the worlds in another. The human below, made of the same sefirot, is not a stranger in the cosmos. The cosmos is already human-shaped, which means already capable of meaning, desire, and repair.

What Luria would not allow

It is tempting, from outside, to say that Luria has simply rewritten the Gnostic fall of Sophia in Jewish letters: a crisis in the divine pleroma, sparks in matter, knowledge as gathering. The temptation should be resisted at the exact point of likeness. In Luria the crisis is inside a monotheism that never installs a second god. Yaldabaoth has no seat at this table. The God who contracts is the God who sends the ray, who is the light of Adam Kadmon, who breaks the vessels as the cost of a world that can stand apart, and who commands Israel to gather sparks by ordinary holiness. Exile is real. Dualism is not.

That is the cosmological originality of Adam Kadmon in its Lurianic form. He lets Jewish mysticism speak of catastrophe without surrendering the Creator. He lets the human form be the first world without making the Infinite a man. He lets human action matter cosmically without turning ethics into a jailbreak from an alien universe.

VIII. Shared Grammar, Divergent Worlds

Set the two cosmologies on one table and a common skeleton appears. It is old enough to have been assembled from Genesis, Ezekiel, and the Platonic habit of paradigm and copy. It looks like this.

There is a source that cannot be depicted: the Invisible Spirit, or Ein Sof.

There is a first appearance that can be contemplated: Barbelo and the Perfect Human, or Adam Kadmon.

There is a structured fullness: aeons and luminaries, or sefirot and worlds.

There is a descent of light into a lower register: Sophia's overflow and the archons' modeling, or the kav, the lights from the face, and the four worlds.

There is a crisis of form: the abortion of a craftsman and the making of a counterfeit Adam, or the breaking of the vessels and the fall of sparks.

There is a human below who is more than he seems: a spark of the Perfect Human, or a limb of the Supernal Man.

There is a path of return: gnosis and the descent of Forethought, or tikkun through commandment, prayer, and intention.

This skeleton is why the figures have been compared since the nineteenth century and why the comparison is not a parlor trick. It is also why the

comparison, left unsupervised, becomes a false peace. The bones are similar. The living animals are not.

The Creator

In Sethian and related Gnostic myth the maker of this heaven and this earth is ignorant of his mother and of the Fullness. His proclamation of unique divinity is the joke of the text. In Kabbalah the maker of heaven and earth is the Holy One, whose unity is the first teaching. Adam Kadmon is not a rival to that unity. He is its first measurable radiance.

Everything else follows from this. If the Creator is a usurper, salvation is extraction. If the Creator is God, salvation is repair and obedience inside the world He still wants.

The status of matter

Gnostic matter is at best a failed copy, at worst a snare woven to hold light. Kabbalistic matter, even after the breaking of the vessels, is a mixture of shards and sparks. The shards are not the true intent. The sparks make the lower world a field of work rather than a waste. The body that keeps Shabbat is not a prison uniform. It is a tool of cosmic mending.

Gender and pairing

Both families of text are full of male-female pairs: Barbelo and the Spirit, Immortal Man and Sophia, Tiferet and Malkhut, the couplings within Adam Kadmon. In Gnostic narrative the decisive error is often a solitary act, Sophia bringing forth without her partner. In Kabbalistic narrative the health of worlds is often a coupling, zivug, the union of configurations that allows new light to flow. The shared intuition is that first form is not sterile solitude. The difference is that Kabbalah sanctifies pairing inside a covenantal world, including marriage and the times of the calendar, whereas Gnostic pairing belongs to the aeonic soap opera above and is only dimly echoed below.

Time

Adam Kadmon, in the Habad and Luzzatto readings, contains all times superimposed. History is the unpacking of a thought that is already complete. Gnostic time is more often a wound: a delay in the Fullness, a period of forgetfulness, an end when the sparks are gathered and the counterfeit world is dissolved or left behind. Both can be eschatological. Only one is comfortable saying that the days of the week and the years of exile are themselves the method.

The name Man

Why “Man” in both? Because both are reading Genesis 1:26 as a cosmological statement and Ezekiel 1:26 as a theological one. The image requires an original. The Glory appeared as adam. Once those two sentences are allowed to interpret each other, the first form will be human-shaped whether one is in Alexandria, in

a Sethian conventicle, in a Castilian study house, or in Safed. The name is inherited. The meaning is fought over.

A responsible overview must therefore speak of a shared Mediterranean and Near Eastern problem—the problem of the anthropic image of God—and of irreducibly different solutions. Syncretism that announces “they are the same teaching” is not more generous than sectarianism. It is less precise. Precision is the only generosity these texts accept.

IX. Reasonable Expansions

The sources stop where they stop. A modern reader who wants more than a museum label will ask what these cosmologies are still saying when they are not being used as passwords. The expansions that follow are marked as expansions. They do not claim to be Luria's secret or a lost page of the Apocryphon. They are ways of thinking onward from the structure already in view.

Cosmology as the problem of mediation

Every system in this book is an answer to a single difficulty: if the first principle is unbounded, how does a bounded world begin without either insulting the first principle or deifying the world? The primordial Human is a mediator who is not a second god. He is form as such—the first "this" that is not the Infinite and not yet a stone or a nation.

Read this way, Anthropos and Adam Kadmon are less cousins of each other than cousins of every philosophical attempt to name the first determinate being: Logos, Nous, the One's unfolding, the world-soul. Their peculiarity is that they refuse to let the first determination be an abstract principle. They insist it has the structure of a someone. The universe is not first quantity. It is first address. Something in the beginning can be spoken to, or can speak.

The human as a cosmological instrument

If the first form is anthropic, then the human being is not a tourist in a non-human universe. She is a reduced and mobile version of the universe's own first readable shape. This is the opposite of the modern feeling that consciousness is an accident on a minor planet. It is also not a license for human empire. In the Lurianic expansion especially, the point of the resemblance is responsibility. A being shaped like the first world can damage or repair what the first world poured downward. In the Gnostic expansion the point of the resemblance is awakening. A being who carries a spark of the Perfect Human can remember that the local heavens are not the last word.

A contemporary cosmology that wished to learn from both without mixing them might say: consciousness is not an afterthought, and alienation is not a mere mood. The first is a Kabbalistic emphasis. The second is a Gnostic emphasis. They correct different modern stupidities.

Face as physics

Luria's lights-from-the-orifices can be read, carefully, as a metaphysics of expression. A world begins when an interior becomes an exterior through a face. Seeing, hearing, breathing, speaking are not later biological tricks. They are the primordial ways light leaves a hiddenness and becomes a history. The eye that gives too much produces chaos. The mouth that measures produces a more stable world. One need not believe in sefirot to feel the force of the claim: every cosmos is an economy of disclosure. Too little disclosure and nothing exists for another. Too much and the receiving forms shatter.

Gnostic myth says the same thing in a darker key. Sophia's act without her partner is disclosure without measure. Yaldabaoth is the face that does not know it is a face. He speaks "I am God" because he can see no one above his own reflection. Ignorance is a failure of facing upward.

Image, copy, and the ethics of likeness

Genesis 1:26 is an ethical time bomb once it is read cosmologically. If the human is an image of a higher Human, then violence against the human is violence against the first form. That inference is available to both traditions, though they aim it differently. Gnostic texts often aim it against the archons who modeled the body in order to use it. Kabbalistic texts aim it toward the neighbor, the stranger, the body that keeps the image even in exile.

An expansion worth keeping: likeness is not flattery. It is a task. The copy can deepen toward the original or recede into caricature. The Gnostic name for recession is forgetfulness. The Kabbalistic name is the husk. Neither tradition thinks the image is automatic. Both think it can be lost in practice while remaining true in origin.

What not to expand

It is not reasonable to conclude that Judaism secretly taught a Gnostic demiurge. It is not reasonable to conclude that the Apocryphon of John is only Kabbalah in Coptic. It is not reasonable to treat Adam Kadmon as a Christ-figure in Jewish dress, or Anthropos as "the Kabbalists' Adam" without remainder. Those expansions flatter the synthesizer and insult the sources.

It is also not reasonable to modernize the figures into mere psychology, as if Adam Kadmon were only the true self and Yaldabaoth only the ego. Psychology can borrow. Cosmology is doing something else. It is making a claim about the structure of all that is, not only about the furniture of a personality. The intrigue of these teachings is that they refuse to let the inner life and the structure of worlds be two subjects. Collapse them into only the inner life, and the cosmology dies. Keep both, and the old question returns in a contemporary voice: what if the universe is the kind of thing that has a face?

X. Shared, Common, and Individual Beliefs

Beliefs in this field do not sit in a single cabinet. Some are held across wide stretches of late antique and medieval religion. Some are shared by the two families this book has followed, without being universal. Some belong to one school, one book, even one teacher. The following overview is a map of that distribution. It is not a census of every sect.

Widely common inheritances

These are not the private property of Gnostics or Kabbalists. They are the ground both walk on.

That the God of Israel, or the first principle read through Israel's books, is the source of beginning. Even systems that accuse the biblical Creator still need the Bible's opening in order to stage the accusation.

That the human being is in some way an image, and that this is the right place to begin anthropology.

That there is a difference between a hidden aspect of divinity and a revealed aspect. Ezekiel's hedges—"likeness," "appearance," "glory"—already teach the difference. Philosophy will call it essence and manifestation. Mysticism will call it the Infinite and the Glory, or the Invisible Spirit and Barbelo.

That Wisdom or Word or Glory was involved in the ordering of the world. Proverbs 8, the Logos of Philo and of John, the sefirah Hokhmah, the aeonic Sophia: variations on a companion of the beginning.

That the present human condition is not identical with the original or intended human condition. Fall, exile, forgetfulness, diminution of stature: different names for a gap between first form and present form.

That last things will restore a relation that first things promised. Resurrection, gathering of sparks, waking of the immovable race, the world to come: the first Human is not only a memory. He is a future.

Beliefs shared by Gnostic Anthropos systems and Kabbalistic Adam Kadmon systems

These are the family resemblances that make comparison legitimate.

The first determinate form of the divine world is anthropic. “Man” is a name of a cosmic station, not only of a species.

The earthly human is modeled on that station. Anthropology is applied cosmology.

There is a graded universe: Fullness and deficiency, or four worlds plus Adam Kadmon. Reality is layered. The layers communicate by image, light, name, and sometimes by error.

A crisis occurs in the process of manifestation. The crisis explains why a world derived from good light can contain ignorance, exile, or evil.

Knowledge or intention matters ontologically. Gnosis in one family, kavanah and mitzvah in the other, are not private opinions. They change the location of light.

Language is itself a cosmic substance. Names, letters, utterances, and silences do work. The world is not only described by speech. It is in some sense made of it.

Androgyny or male-female polarity belongs to the first form. Division into ordinary sexes is later and lower.

Beliefs characteristic of Gnostic Anthropos traditions

Not every Gnostic text holds every point. The cluster is typical of Sethian and related systems.

The highest God did not make this cosmos as it now stands. A lower craftsman did, in ignorance or arrogance.

The craftsman’s claim to be the only God is the central theological error of the world.

Sophia’s unpaired action is a principal cause of the lower order.

The Perfect Human, Adamas or Geradamas, dwells in the Fullness and is not the same being as the molded Adam.

There may be several Adams of different substance: spirit, soul, earth.

Salvation is awakening to one’s origin in the immovable race of the Perfect Human, usually by revelation from above rather than by public law.

The creator of Genesis 1, read as Yaldabaoth or his equivalent, is not worthy of the worship the churches and synagogues give him.

The body and the planetary heavens are at best a temporary envelope and at worst a design against the spark.

These beliefs are incompatible with normative Judaism and with classical Christian orthodoxy. They were meant to be. Their power is the severity of the diagnosis they offer a sufferer who cannot believe that the author of this world and the author of the soul are the same.

Beliefs characteristic of Jewish Kabbalistic Adam Kadmon traditions

Again, schools differ. The cluster below is typical of Zoharic and especially Lurianic teaching as later received.

Ein Sof is absolutely one. There is no second god and no ignorant craftsman.

Tzimtzum is the first creative gesture: withdrawal to make a place.

Adam Kadmon is the first world of light after withdrawal, the primordial thought in which all later worlds are included without yet being sorted into time.

The sefirot in the form of a man are the revealed God, not a pantheon.

Lights issue from Adam Kadmon and become the subsequent worlds.

The breaking of the vessels explains evil and exile without dividing God.

Tikkun is the purpose of human life in the lower worlds. Commandments, prayer, and ethical acts raise sparks.

The earthly Adam is patterned on Adam Kadmon or Adam Elyon. The resemblance obligates; it does not deify the person.

The Torah is a divine structure with an anthropomorphic secret. To study and keep it is to act upon the first form's lower echo.

The coming repair does not discard the world as a blunder. It completes the world as a dwelling.

These beliefs remain inside the Shema. Their power is the severity of the responsibility they offer a sufferer who will not give up the world's Author.

Individual and local beliefs

Some teachings belong to a narrower circle and should not be generalized.

The exact name Pigeradamas and his station under Harmozel belong to the Apocryphon of John's architecture, not to all Gnostic myth.

The three Adams of *On the Origin of the World* are that text's device, not a Sethian passport.

Valentinian placement of Anthropos in an Ogdoad is a Valentinian decision.

Manichaean Primal Man who goes to war with darkness is a related but distinct myth, with its own church, scripture, and practice.

Mandaean figures of Adam and of light-kings belong to a living baptizing community with its own river of tradition.

The term Adam Kadmon as the technical name of the highest world is Lurianic in its full force, even if earlier Kabbalah knew Adam Elyon.

Lights from eyes, ears, nose, and mouth as distinct world-producing outflows are Vital's report of Luria, not a Zoharic commonplace.

Hasidic identifications of Adam Kadmon with transcendent will, or with the rootedness of the Jewish soul, are later pastoral metaphysics built on Luria, not Luria's own classroom notes.

Abraham Cohen de Herrera's blending of Kabbalah with European philosophy is a doorway by which non-Jewish thinkers met the doctrine; it is not the doctrine's native tongue.

Christian Kabbalists and modern occult writers who treat Adam Kadmon as a universal Christ or as an astral template are individual appropriations. They have a history. They are not witnesses to what the Zohar or Vital meant.

Keeping these circles distinct is part of the work. A cosmology of the primordial Human is already a temptation to grand unity. The texts repay a reader who can

love a pattern without annexing every instance of the pattern to one church of meaning.

XI. The Face That Precedes the World

Return to Ezekiel’s riverbank. A priest without a temple watches a throne that does not need a temple. What sits above the crystal is not a blank and not an animal. It is “the likeness as the appearance of a man.” The sentence is almost embarrassed by itself. Likeness, appearance, man. Three veils, and still a face.

Everything in this book is an afterlife of that embarrassment. Gnostic teachers decided that the face was the true Human and that the maker of this age had only seen a reflection in dirty water. Kabbalists decided that the face was the first readable form of the one God, a man of light standing in a room that Light itself had cleared. Philo had already split the heavenly seal from the clay copy. Paul had already named a last Adam who was not dust. Merkabah singers had already measured the Glory in spans of fire. The later technical names—Anthropos, Geradamas, Adam Ila’ah, Adam Kadmon—are inventories of a vision that scripture itself could not leave undrawn.

The intrigue is not that ancient people were naive about physics. It is that they refused a universe with no interior. A cosmos that begins as temperature has no one to thank and no one to accuse. A cosmos that begins as a face can be prayed to, rebelled against, repaired, or fled. The Gnostic flees upward with a password. The Kabbalist stays and mends. Both have looked at the same scriptural spark: the human is an image, and the Glory looked like a human. From that spark they built opposite houses.

A reader does not have to live in either house to feel the pressure of the spark. Modern cosmology can say how hydrogen became stars. It cannot say why anything should bear a likeness. The old systems are weakest when they pretend to know the floor plan of invisible palaces in excessive detail. They are strongest when they keep asking the question their floor plans were built to protect: if we can recognize a face, is that because a face was already in the beginning?

Adam Kadmon, in the strict Lurianic sense, is the first world after withdrawal, the primordial thought, the source of later lights, not a man in the street. Anthropos, in the strict Sethian sense, is the Perfect Human of the Fullness, not a synonym for the Safed doctrine. Held apart, they sharpen each other. Held too quickly together, they become a vague giant who means everything and therefore nothing.

The discipline this subject teaches is the discipline of likeness itself. A likeness is not an identity. Genesis said “image” and “likeness,” not “the same.” Ezekiel said “as the appearance,” not “this is the essence.” Kabbalah said Adam Kadmon is in the likeness of the Infinite Light, not that the Infinite has a body. Gnostic texts said the archons copied an image, not that they captured the original. The first form is a resemblance. Cosmology, in these traditions, is the study of how far a resemblance can travel before it breaks, and how a broken resemblance can still remember its source.

That is the exploration. The universe, they dared to say, did not begin as a thing. It began as a form that could one day look back. Whether one answers that dare with gnosis or with tikkun, or with a silence that keeps both at a respectful distance, the dare remains the most anthropic hypothesis in the history of God:

that the beginning already knew the shape of the one who would ask what the beginning was.

Note on Sources

This book is a synthetic exploration. It does not replace the primary texts or the academic studies on which any serious reader must finally rely. The following list names the principal wells from which the chapters were drawn, without reproducing copyrighted translations.

Scripture

Genesis 1:26–27 and 2:7; Proverbs 8; Ezekiel 1:26–28; Daniel 7:13; Isaiah 6 and 43; 1 Corinthians 15; Colossians 1; John 1. English wording in the chapters follows the public-domain Authorized Version.

Early Jewish interpretation and mysticism

Philo of Alexandria, especially the distinction between the human according to the image and the molded human in the *Allegorical Interpretation* and *On the Creation of the Cosmos*. Merkabah and Hekhalot traditions; the restriction on the Work of the Chariot in Mishnah Hagigah; Shiur Qomah and 3 Enoch as later witnesses to the Glory as human form. 1 Enoch on the figure whose countenance has the appearance of a man.

Gnostic and related texts

The Apocryphon of John in its short and long recensions; *On the Origin of the World*; *The Sophia of Jesus Christ* and *Eugnostos*; reports of Valentinian systems in Irenaeus and Hippolytus; related figures in Manichaean and Mandaean myth treated only as neighbors, not as identical. Accessible English orientations include the Nag Hammadi collections in public discussion and the long scholarly conversation associated with names such as Carl Kraeling on Anthropos, Gilles Quispel on Ezekiel 1:26 in gnosis, and later Sethian studies.

Kabbalah

Early Kabbalistic use of Adam Elyon; the appearance of the term Adam Kadmon in thirteenth-century writing; Zoharic Adam Ila'ah; Cordovero's systematic emanation; Lurianic tzimtzum, kav, Adam Kadmon, lights from the face, shevirah, and tikkun as reported in Hayyim Vital's school; later clarifications in Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto and in Habad expositions of Adam Kadmon as primordial thought. Historical framing is indebted to the modern academic study of Kabbalah inaugurated by Gershom Scholem, including his entry on Adam Kadmon, and to later interpreters who have treated the symbol philosophically without baptizing it into another religion.

On method

Where the chapters paraphrase a narrative—the appearance of Barbelo, the naming of Geradamas, the lights leaving the face of Adam Kadmon—they follow widely attested structures of those systems. They do not claim to be critical editions. Individual beliefs were separated from family resemblances in

order to prevent the most common error in this subject: the announcement that all primordial humans are one teaching. They are one question. The teachings remain plural.

A reader who wishes to go further should read a translation of the Apocryphon of John in full, a reliable introduction to Lurianic Kabbalah such as the expositions used in Jewish study of *Etz Hayyim*, and Scholem's historical essays on the origins of the primordial Man. The present book is a map of the terrain between those works, drawn so that the two great names—Anthropos and Adam Kadmon—can be seen in one field of vision without being forced to wear one another's clothes.