

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE GREAT LIGHT

Adam Kadmon as the Extension of the Primordial Trinity, and the Self as Its

Microcosm

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Catharturgy Corpus · Kenotic Effluent Panapotheism · 2026

Abstract

This treatise sets out what may be the keystone of the Corpus: that the primordial form the Lurianic Kabbalah calls Adam Kadmon is the extension of the primordial Trinity, and that the structure of the human person is its microcosm. The point of departure is Chayyim Vital's own account in the Etz Chaim, where Adam Kadmon is not one of the emanated worlds but the manifestation of the great light that precedes all that exists, the entity that occupies the whole of the empty place, prior even to Atziluth, corresponding to Keter and the transcendental cusp of the letter Yud — the divine will that motivates creation. Read in the terms of Kenotic Effluent Panapotheism, Vital's manifestation of the great light is the primordial Trinity in its extended, decadic form: the Triune Godhead — Being, Knowledge, and Love; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — unfolded by the Pythagorean logic of the Tetractys from the triad to the decade, which is the ten Sefirot, which is Adam Kadmon, which is the Tree of Life, the form from which all creation is modelled at every register. All ten are the one primordial Man, and the Trinity is his head and his two hemispheres: the Father the crown of unified being, the Son and the Spirit the two whole hemispheres of his one mind. The human soul, as the image of Adam Kadmon, bears this form in its supernal triad — the whole cerebral hemispheres held in union beneath the unifying crown — which is the true image of the Trinity at the human rank. The moral triad of the self — the I, the Me, and the Myself — is the frontal and operational expression of that same bilateral structure, the modes through which the one self leans and acts, integrated by the salience network; it follows from the supernal image rather than being that image directly. The treatise argues, finally, that the head-and-hemispheres figure models the timeless triunity of God better than the traditional grammar of procession, and offers in its place the mutual and simultaneous constitution of the three. The likeness is real along the whole line of images, from the Trinity through Adam Kadmon to the human; the incommensurability the system everywhere guards is the relation of this line to the lower created registers into which the form is projected.

Keywords: Adam Kadmon · Chayyim Vital · Etz Chaim · The Primordial Trinity · Being

I. Vital's Difficulty: The Form That Precedes All That Exists

The Lurianic Kabbalah, as Chayyim Vital sets it down in the Etz Chaim, makes a claim about Adam Kadmon, the Primordial Man, that is easy to misread and that took the present writer years to understand. The common summaries place Adam Kadmon as the first of the emanated worlds, the first configuration to emerge in the void after the Tzimtzum — one item, however exalted, in the chain of emanation. But this is not what Vital says. Vital is explicit that the ten Sefirot called the ten of Atziluth are not the most initial or highest of what was manifested, that many degrees precede them, and that Adam Kadmon is the entity that precedes all that exists and occupies the whole of the empty place. Adam Kadmon, in Vital's own framing, is not an emanation among emanations but the manifestation of the great light — the form prior to Atziluth and to all the enumerated worlds, the template from which they are drawn, corresponding to Keter and to the transcendental cusp of the letter Yud, named by the tradition as the divine will that motivates creation.

This is the difficulty that must be held precisely, because everything follows from getting it right. Adam Kadmon is of so great a degree, Vital says, that its upper aspects have scarcely been treated; it stands at the threshold of the Ein Sof, the manifestation of the great light itself, and is generally not even enumerated among the worlds because it precedes them all. It is therefore neither the infinite ground simply (it is the great light's manifestation, not the unmanifest Ein Sof) nor a created world among worlds (it precedes all that exists). It is the form — the primordial, decadic, anthropic form — that stands between the unmanifest infinite and everything that is modelled after it. The question this treatise answers is the question that the difficulty poses: what is this form, that it should precede all existence and yet be the manifestation of the great light, the pattern stamped at every register of the created order? The answer KEP gives is that the manifestation of the great light is the primordial Trinity in its extended form.

Adam Kadmon, in Vital's own words, is not an emanation among the worlds but the manifestation of the great light that precedes all that exists and occupies the whole of the empty place — prior to Atziluth, corresponding to Keter and the cusp of the Yud, the divine will that motivates creation. Neither the unmanifest Infinite nor a world among worlds, but the primordial form between them. The question is what that form is. The answer is the primordial Trinity, extended.

II. The Primordial Trinity: Being, Knowledge, and Love

The primordial Trinity is, in the Christian theological tradition that KEP carries, the Godhead itself: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God in three. The most exact articulation of its inner

structure for the present purpose is the psychological analogy developed by Augustine and refined by Aquinas, in which the triune life of God is read through the structure of mind. In Aquinas's account the Father is the divine being, the source; the Son is the Word, God's perfect self-knowledge, the act by which the divine intellect knows itself; and the Holy Spirit is the Love that proceeds between the Knower and the Known, the act of the divine will. Compressed to its essence, the Trinity is Being, Knowledge, and Love: the Father is Being, the Son is Knowledge, the Spirit is Love — not three beings but one Being knowing and loving itself, the self-knowledge and the self-love so perfect and substantial as to be themselves of the one essence.

These three are not three parts of God nor three stages in God; they are one God under the irreducible structure of a mind that is, knows, and loves in a single eternal act. Being without knowledge and love would be inert; knowledge without being would be groundless; love without the knower and the known would be empty. So the three mutually entail one another: Being is the being of a self-knowing and self-loving God, Knowledge is the self-knowledge of Being-in-love, Love is the love of Being-knowing-itself. This mutual entailment, in which each of the three is what it is only with and through the other two, is the structure that the rest of this treatise will show to be the form of Adam Kadmon and the form of the human self — and it is, as the final section argues, better stated as mutual and simultaneous constitution than as the procession the creeds describe.

III. From the Triad to the Decade: The Pythagorean Extension

How does the primordial Trinity become the decadic form that Vital calls Adam Kadmon? The answer is given by the Pythagorean logic of the Tetractys, and the joining of that logic to Vital's Adam Kadmon is one of this treatise's central welds. The Tetractys is the figure of the first four numbers — one, two, three, four — whose sum is ten, the decade, which the Pythagoreans held to be the complete and perfect number, the form containing all. The triad does not remain a triad; by the generative logic that takes the point to the line, the line to the plane, the plane to the solid — one, two, three, four — it unfolds to the decade. The primordial Trinity, the triad that is the Godhead, unfolds by this same logic through the four ranks of the Tetractys to their sum, and that sum, the ten, is the complete form.

The ten is the ten Sefirot. The ten Sefirot are Adam Kadmon. Adam Kadmon is the Tree of Life. These are one thing under several names: the decade, the primordial Man, the Tree — the form from which all creation is modelled at every register. The Pythagorean tradition supplies the generative logic, the reason the form is decadic — why the triad becomes the ten — but it does not name the ontological status of the result. The Lurianic tradition supplies that status: the decade is Adam Kadmon, the manifestation of the great light, the primordial form that precedes all that exists and is the template of the worlds. Neither tradition alone holds both halves. Pythagoras gives the unfolding of the triad to the decade without the primordial Man; Vital gives the primordial Man without the derivation of why he is ten. Joined, they state one thing: the primordial Trinity, by the Pythagorean unfolding, is extended into the decadic form that is Adam Kadmon.

The triad does not remain a triad. By the Pythagorean unfolding — one, two, three, four, summing to the decade — the primordial Trinity is extended into the ten, and the ten is the ten Sefirot, which are Adam Kadmon, which is the Tree of Life. Pythagoras gives why the form is decadic; Vital gives what the decade is — the manifestation of the great light. Joined: the primordial Trinity, extended, is the Primordial Man.

IV. The Trinity as the Head and Hemispheres of the Primordial Man

Adam Kadmon is not a vessel within which the Trinity is housed, nor is the Trinity a region located inside a prior Man. The order of dependence runs the other way: the Trinity is primordial and primary, and Adam Kadmon is its extension — the Triune Godhead unfolded into the full decadic form. All ten Sefirot are the one primordial Man, and the Trinity is his head and his two hemispheres. The Father, Being, is the head: the crown, Keter, the cusp of the Yud, the unified consciousness that is the integrating whole. The Son, Knowledge, and the Holy Spirit, Love, are the two hemispheres of that one head — Chokmah and Binah, the right and left of the supernal mind, the focused knowing and the relational loving that are the two hemispheres of the one divine consciousness. The lower seven Sefirot are the body of the same Man, the continued reach of the same extension; but it is one Adam, head and body together, the complete ten-fold form, and his head-and-hemispheres are the primordial Trinity itself, extended into him as his summit.

This figure — the Father as the head, the Son and Spirit as its two hemispheres — is not a loose metaphor borrowed from anatomy. It is the form itself, and the reason the anatomical correlate will hold at the human and bodily registers is that the same form is stamped at every register. A head with its two hemispheres is one mind, not three minds in a row; the hemispheres do not precede or follow one another, do not originate one another, are not ordered before or after — they are simultaneously co-present aspects of a single integrated consciousness, each doing its distinct work, unified in the whole. This is precisely the structure the doctrine of the Trinity has always sought and the grammar of procession has always strained to express: three genuinely distinct, genuinely one, with no temporal or ordinal relation between them. The head-and-hemispheres of Adam Kadmon give it directly. The Father is the integrating crown in whom the Son and the Spirit are one; the Son and the Spirit are the two hemispheres of his mind, eternally three as one.

The Trinity is not housed in Adam Kadmon; Adam Kadmon is the extension of the Trinity. All ten Sefirot are the one Man, and the Trinity is his head and two hemispheres: the Father the crown of unified being, the Son and Spirit the two hemispheres of his one mind — not three minds in a row but one integrated consciousness, eternally three as one.

V. The Self as Microcosm: The Supernal Triad and the Moral Triad

The human soul is the image of Adam Kadmon, and Adam Kadmon is the extension of the primordial Trinity; therefore the structure of the human person is the image of the Trinity, and it

is the same head-and-hemispheres form at the human rank. But the correspondence must be located at the right level of the soul, and this requires distinguishing two triads that the Corpus is careful not to conflate. The first is the supernal triad of the soul: the two whole cerebral hemispheres held in union beneath the unifying crown — Chokmah and Binah as entire hemispheres under Kether. This is the true image of the Trinity at the human rank: the Father imaged in the crown of unified consciousness (Keter, the cusp of the Yud), and the Son and the Holy Spirit — Knowledge and Love — imaged in the two whole hemispheres in their union. The hemispheres themselves, in their wholeness and union, are the image of the Triune Godhead; that is where the likeness to the Trinity properly sits.

The second triad is the moral triad of the self — the I, the Me, and the Myself — and it must not be mistaken for the supernal one. The I and the Me are not two separate regions used in isolation but two modes through which the one self leans: the I the focused, agentic mode (the left frontal cortex in the lead), the Me the relational and contextual mode (the right frontal cortex in the lead). One never operates a single hemisphere without the other; as in standing, the body rests on both feet and merely leans, so the self is always whole and merely leans into one mode or the other. The Myself is the salient mode in which both are held in balanced integration — and its seat is the salience network, the hub that integrates the two frontal modes. The moral triad is therefore the frontal and operational expression of the same bilateral structure whose supernal form images the Trinity: the same two-sidedness, appearing at the supernal level as the whole hemispheres in union (the image of the Trinity) and at the moral level as the modes through which the self leans and acts (integrated by the salience network). The integrating function appears at both levels — the unifying crown at the supernal, the salience network at the moral — the one being the higher analogue of the other.

So the human person images the Trinity through its supernal triad — the whole hemispheres held in union beneath the crown, Knowledge and Love as the two sides of the one mind, the unifying consciousness as their crown. The moral triad, the I and the Me and the Myself, is the operational life of that same structure: the self leaning, acting, and being integrated in its agency and its moral life, the salience network conducting the modes as the crown unifies the hemispheres. Human selfhood is triune at both levels because both are the one bilateral form, and that form, at its summit, is the image of the God whose stamp it bears.

VI. The Line of Images and the Locus of Incommensurability

It is essential to locate the dimensional incommensurability that the system everywhere guards, for it is easy to draw the line in the wrong place, and the wrong place would sever the very likeness this treatise asserts. The incommensurability is not between the human image and the Trinity. It is not anywhere along the line of images that runs from the primordial Trinity, through its extension as Adam Kadmon, to the human soul that is the image of Adam Kadmon. That entire line is a line of true likeness, of real resemblance, because it is one form at successive ranks — the decadic, triune, anthropic form repeating from the Godhead outward and downward. The Trinity is genuinely imaged in the head-and-hemispheres of the primordial Man, and genuinely imaged again in the I, the Me, and the Myself of the human soul, because in each the same form truly

appears.

The incommensurability is the relation of this line of images to the lower created registers into which the form is projected — the physical, the elemental, the dimensional manifolds that the Corpus treats elsewhere. The form, cast into a lower register, is dimensionally other than the form itself, in the way a projection is dimensionally other than what it projects; and that perpendicular, projective relation, not the relation among the images, is where incommensurability falls. This is why the human bears the Trinitarian pattern as true likeness while the lower physical register stands incommensurable: the human is a point on the line of images, the same form at the human rank, whereas the physical register is the form projected into a lower dimensionality. The likeness runs down the central line; the incommensurability is the descent into the registers beneath it. The image of God in the human is therefore not a faint copy across a gulf but the genuine presence of the one form at the human rank — and the gulf, where it exists, is below, between the line of images and the registers it is projected into.

VII. Against Procession: Why the Hemispheres Model Triunity Better

The traditional grammar by which the tradition has related the three Persons — the Son begotten of the Father, the Spirit proceeding — carries a difficulty that is rarely named and that the head-and-hemispheres figure resolves. Begetting and proceeding are temporal and causal verbs; they describe one thing coming from another, an order of origin. The tradition insists that this begetting is eternal and this procession timeless, that there is, in the words of the Athanasian Creed, none before or after, none greater or less among the Persons — and yet the very language of begetting and proceeding is ordinal language, the grammar of from and of sequence, and the creeds qualify the eternal Persons in temporal and causal terms only to deny, in the next clause, that the terms mean what they say. The grammar of procession is temporal grammar wearing an eternity disclaimer. Whatever one finally concludes, the tension is real: to order the Persons by origin, even an eternal origin, is to import the very sequence the doctrine of timeless eternity forbids.

The head-and-hemispheres figure models the triunity without this difficulty, because the relation among a head and its two hemispheres is intrinsically non-temporal and non-ordinal. The hemispheres do not proceed from one another; they do not originate one another; they are not before or after one another. They are simultaneously co-present aspects of one integrated mind, each its own, all one. Applied to the Trinity, this yields not procession but mutual and simultaneous constitution: the three constitute one another at once, none prior. The Father, Being, has his Knowledge from the Son and his Love from the Spirit; the Son and the Spirit have their Being from the Father; and all three are what they are only together, in a single act, as the two hemispheres and the integrating whole of one mind are what they are only together. Being is knowing-and-loving Being; Knowledge is the self-knowledge of Being-in-love; Love is the love of Being-knowing-itself. There is no first and no after; there is one God, eternally three as one, constituted in the mutual simultaneity of his own life. This is offered as a limited analogy, as every analogy of the Trinity must be, and as Aquinas insisted of the psychological analogy he gave; but it is offered as a better one, because it models the timeless triunity the doctrine intends without

subjecting the eternal Persons to the grammar of time.

Begetting and proceeding are temporal, ordinal verbs; the creeds qualify the eternal Persons in the grammar of sequence and then deny the grammar means what it says. The head-and-hemispheres figure needs no such denial: hemispheres do not proceed from one another or come before or after — they are simultaneously one mind. Not procession but mutual and simultaneous constitution: the three constituting one another at once, none prior, eternally three as one.

VIII. Conclusion

Vital's Adam Kadmon — the manifestation of the great light that precedes all that exists, the form prior to Atziluth and to all the worlds, corresponding to Keter and the cusp of the Yud — is, read in the terms of Kenotic Effluent Panapotheism, the extension of the primordial Trinity. The Triune Godhead of Being, Knowledge, and Love, by the Pythagorean unfolding of the triad to the decade, is extended into the ten Sefirot, which are the Primordial Man, which is the Tree of Life, the form from which all creation is modelled at every register. All ten are the one Man, and the Trinity is his head and his two hemispheres: the Father the crown of unified being, the Son and the Spirit the two hemispheres of his one mind, eternally three as one. The human soul, as the image of this Man, bears the same form, and its supernal triad — the whole hemispheres held in union beneath the crown — is the true image of the Trinity at the human rank, while the moral triad, the I and the Me and the Myself, is the frontal and operational expression of that same form, the modes through which the one self leans and acts, integrated by the salience network.

The likeness is real along the whole line of images, from the Trinity through Adam Kadmon to the human; the incommensurability the system guards is the relation of that line to the lower registers into which the form is projected, not anything within the line. And the figure that holds the whole — the head and its two hemispheres — models the timeless triunity of God better than the grammar of procession, which subjects the eternal Persons to temporal and ordinal terms; in its place stands the mutual and simultaneous constitution of the three. If the treatise is right, the deepest thing that can be said of the human self is also the simplest: it is triune because it is the image of the primordial Man, who is the extension of the Triune God — and the structure each of us is — the whole hemispheres held in union beneath the crown, lived out as the I and the Me harmonised in the Myself — is the manifestation of the great light at the last and nearest register, the rank at which the form of God arrives in us.

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Christopher E. Etter | Catharturgy Corpus | 2026