Dear Tomer,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to review your fascinating proposal on *In God’s Image: The Making of the Modern World*, an ambitious project that has the potential to reach a broad audience with an English translation. Your focus on the intellectual history of ancient Judaism and more contemporary philosophical figures offers much to consider for the engaged reader who wishes to understand the theological underpinnings of the values upon which the Western world operates. With some focused revisions and an eye toward current trends in current academic debates, this prospectus will represent a strong proposal for an English translation and publication of *In God’s Image*.

Enclosed you will find some feedback to consider as you develop your proposal for publication consideration. Included also are prompts throughout for probing deeper into the impetus of your research, how it fits into current trends in both academic and popular publications, and what paradigm shift your take on this topic might offer readers. In what follows, I point out the topics that struck me as most prescient as I read through your materials. I offer these ideas and questions in the spirit of collegiality and knowledge sharing, so do not feel obligated to address and/or revise based on every suggestion provided in the following pages.

**BACKGROUND**

The overview you have given is excellent. This is a very capacious project, and may need some further detail (although what you have provided is very clear). You may want to consider addressing the following issues:

* Establishing the current paradigm (individualism in the Western world) against the lens of secularism;
* Introducing the project’s interesting proposition that Western philosophical ideas, the Judaic tradition, and “God’s image” intersect in important way;
* Informing the reader about the stakes of the book: As scholars, we understand individualism as a hallmark of early modernity; however, even the average intellectual reader may not fully recognize the salience of this concept.
* Perhaps unpacking the meaning the “West.” especially since the oldest Abrahamic tradition—Judaism—has a longer history of being incorporated by Western traditions than of having been accepted by institutions of power.
* Additionally, a paragraph exploring the meaning of “individualism” in the Background section (it is addressed in the Chapter Summaries) may be useful. Consider addressing What is an “individual” for the purposes of your project, whether “individualism” an ideological extension of individual personhood.?
* Explaining why such disparate fields—from Enlightenment philosophy to early Protestantism, from Roman *paterfamilias* to ancient Judaism—need to be studied in such a unique integrated manner.

**THE AUTHOR**

A short biography has been included here that includes information about you that is pertinent to the book. Emphasis should be given to your general media and social media presence and activity here – this is of great, if not central, importance to publishers.

**AUDIENCE AND POTENTIAL MARKET**

This has not been addressed in the prospectus, and is critical for publishers. As suggested in the comments in the prospectus, you presumably expect this book to appeal to a very wide public audience, including academics and the intellectually curious public interested in issues of intellectual, political and religious history, spirituality, values, etc. In addition, you should note that it is likely to be of interest also to academic institutions, intellectual centers, libraries, and the like. You may want to consider addressing its potential online impact.

**CONTRIBUTION** **TO CURRENT DEBATES (SCHOLARLY AND POPULAR PRESS)**

In the Contribution section, you mention Holland’s *Dominion* and Siedentop’s *Inventing the Individual.* However, it is unclear where their works end, and your project begins. For example, you offer broad outlines of their combined works and how your own book responds to those sketches. But beyond these generalizations, it is uncertain where your work stands in relation to those books, especially with regard to whether your project agrees, or disagrees with, or qualifies them. This step is crucial to establishing the originality of your argument and may prove key in persuading editors.

To further ward off skepticism, you may want to consider discussing intellectual treatments of the conception of the Western world during early modern and Enlightenment-era Europe, especially given the fact that scholars by and large agree that the modern individual emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In particular, a fair amount of research in early modern intellectual thought and the history of science credits the reappraisal of ancient pagan—that is, *secular*—philosophical beliefs as the foundation to Western individualism (for those studies, please see the suggested bibliography in the next section). To convince these readers of your in-depth and compelling project, a survey, acknowledgement, and resolution of these studies may help convince the editors of the value of the project. Other works you may consider addressing other works include:

Beaumont, Justin and Klaus Eder. *Routledge Handbook of Postsecularity*, edited by Beaumont. London: Routledge, 2018.

Coffey, John and Alister Chapman. *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion*. Edited by Chapman, Coffey, and Brad S. Gregory. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009.

Derrida, Jacques. *Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone*. In *Acts of Religion*, edited by Gil Anidjar, 42-101. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Passannante, Gerard. *The Lucretian Renaissance: Philology and the Afterlife of Tradition*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

While you will probably include the chapter titles in the Chapter Outline section, a short Table of Contents can help provide the editors with a sense of the structure of the book, and it is useful to include it.

**CHAPTER OUTLINE:**

From the material you have included in the prospectus, it appears that the chapter summaries are already present and simply need to be moved to the proper chapter heading. This is critical, as it helps the editor navigate the nuances and historical specifics of your argument, and identify the book’s position in the English-speaking market. Make sure that the summaries do the following:

* 1. Start with the title of each chapter and use those titles to consider how each chapter functions as a piece of the overall puzzle of your project.
  2. Use the chapter titles to begin explaining each chapter’s major “thrust”: what it will accomplish, who the key figures are, and why they are important.
  3. Elaborate briefly on how these key figures and their significances point back to the overarching thesis of the book. It is in these 1–2 sentences that you can show how each chapter illustrates your main interest—that our supposedly secular world continues to be deeply rooted in the religious and theological Judaic ideas from ancient Mesopotamia and surrounding areas.

**ELEMENTS OF BOOK**

As noted in the prospectus, more technical details about the book need to be provide: type of publication (book, digital), length, technical contents (text, photographs, figures, index, etc.)

**EXPECTED COMPLETION**

Here, you should consider addressing the time you anticipate a translation will take (this depends on the book’s length, of course. One can anticipate that approximately 600 words can be translated every day (this takes into account weekends, other obligations of the translators, etc. Further time should be allotted for editing. This additional time will indeed depend on whether the translator also edits the document. Perhaps also suggest that it can be timed for a particularly propitious opening in the market – before the holidays, the academic year, the summer, etc.

**CONCLUSION (MINE)**

Certainly, your work provides an important and novel approach to this fascinating history of ideas throughout the millennia of human civilization. Addressing the points raised above and in the prospectus will help make your project all the more compelling to editors.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance. And I look forward to reading your book in English in the near future.

Sincerely,

Alexander McAdams