

I Am That I Am: The Ultimate Reality Self-Revealed

Henry Martens

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Celebrating deep relationships with God, I Am That I Am is a curious and provocative collection of spiritual meditations.

Henry Martens's appealing spiritual book *I Am That I Am* discusses the benefits of spirituality in an experimental, hybrid format. Divided into three concise parts, it's an amiable book that weaves excerpts from Bible passages and psalms into its own interpretations of the "Word of God." It includes lyrical reflections on lifelong relationships with God to complement its perspectives.

Both the structure and tone of the text replicate conversation, making use of casual language and treating byzantine topics as straightforward. However, the "conversation" stays one-sided throughout—a self-directed, somewhat rhetorical spiritual inquiry into issues thought to appeal to younger seekers and socially conscious individuals. For example, when the topic of gender arises, the book posits that God is neither male nor female, but "a spiritual being with a divine gender." Later, a person's relationship with God is likened to a Facebook invitation: "We have the choice to accept or reject the request." But traditional perspectives are also reflected: the book exalts, and is awed by, the idea of God's omnipotence; it pushes for enduring spiritual faith in an age of scientific empiricism.

The playfulness of the book's structure is most prevalent in its first third, which contains twenty-six concise chapters listed in alphabetical order; each has a one-word title, from "Absolute" to "Zealous," and each distills complex ideas into sound bites on faith or contemporary hypotheticals—a garden of moral guidelines. The two sections that follow it are epistolary and take a direct turn toward God, and finally toward Martens's relationship with God; they are emphatic, but their focus is softer, focused on childlike wonderment over analytical measures: "I am writing this to glorify you, not to try and impress you with my very limited knowledge; in fact, I cannot know anything unless you reveal it to me." And in the last section, the letters begin in pattern form, addressing God in terms of God's divine qualities, as with "Dear Sustainer God, / You are my Sustainer; I am your sustained" and "Dear Creator God, / You are my Creator. I am your created." As the book progresses, it bends more toward the realm of memoir and praise poetry, jumping from awe to anxiety and between fear and exaltation; its touches upon compelling topics, including internal guilt and moral decay, become more intermittent.

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XENIA DUNFORD (March 11, 2024)

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