

# CHURCH TIMES

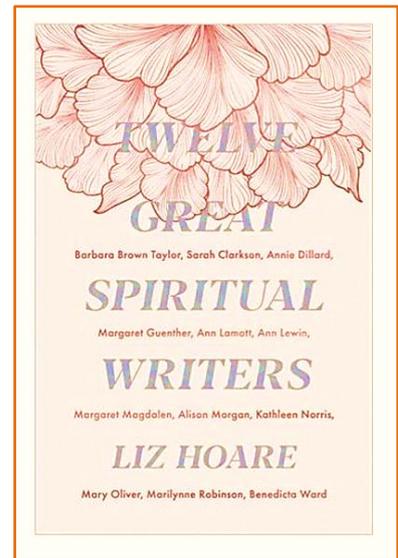
## *Twelve Great Spiritual Writers*, by Liz Hoare

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Plenty to discover here, declares *Anne Spalding*

I PROBABLY would not have thought to read a book summarising other writers, assuming that I would prefer to read the authors themselves. But I found that this overview of 12 contemporary women writers did make me think about the range of reading that can give shape to our reflections, learning, and spiritual growth.

The writers chosen range from theologians (Alison Morgan, Margaret Guenther, and Barbara Brown Taylor) and religious Sisters (Benedicta Ward and Margaret Magdalen) to writers reflecting on life (Kathleen Norris, Annie Dillard, and Anne Lamott), writers of fiction and non-fiction (Sarah Clarkson and Marilynne Robinson), and poets (Mary Oliver and Ann Lewin). Some of these writers are explicitly Christian; others are seen by some people as areligious, using a more general language for God and spirituality. Liz Hoare's point is that all these can nurture and stretch us.



Hoare interviewed many of the writers and gives some biography for each one, besides providing short sections on their key books. Each chapter summarises “Key Themes” of the writer as well as “Questions and Action Points” that readers might want to follow up from those themes. The chapters end with a bibliography.

My summary of the types of writers denies the overlaps between them. One theme that comes up frequently is that of the importance of the small things in everyday life, such as the laundry (Norris) or where to have a bath (Guenther). A number of the writers also learn from the wonder of the natural world, be it the kingfisher (Lewin) or the baby blue tit (Morgan) or a giant water bug (Dillard). Also, several (Clarkson and Robinson as well as Hoare herself) treasure books to encourage, challenge, and shape us in life and in faith. The Christian tradition (e.g. Ward) and the Bible (e.g. Margaret Magdalen and Brown Taylor) play a significant part in this mix.

There is plenty more to discover if you read the book for yourselves, and it will have achieved its purpose if you read some of these “great” writers, too.

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***Twelve Great Spiritual Writers***

**Liz Hoare**

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