

Contemporary Writers in Spirituality



Among those who write in the area of spirituality today, who's being read? Here's my list of spiritual writers who are highly influential today in the English-speaking world:

- Henri Nouwen- Dutch/American, Roman Catholic, priest. Perhaps the most widely-read and most-influential among all contemporary authors in spirituality.
- Thomas Merton – Roman Catholic, monk, one of the most influential spiritual writers in the past 100 years.
- C.S. Lewis – British, layman, Anglican. Well-known across both religious and secular circles. Brought a literary genius to his articulation of the Christian faith.
- Jim Wallis – American, Evangelical, layman, popular-evangelist, social activist, social organizer. The closest our age has to a “Dorothy Day”. Widely read and respected across all denominational lines.
- Thomas Halik – Roman Catholic, priest, Czechoslovakian, recent winner of the prestigious Templeton award.
- Parker Palmer – Quaker, layman, American, much-respected across all denominational lines. Has written brilliantly on the spirituality of education and on achieving a Christian balance in life.
- Alan Jones – Episcopalian, priest, American. Wisdom drawn from the deep wells of Christian tradition. Practical spirituality with depth.
- Carlo Carretto – Roman Catholic, hermit/monk, Italian. Carretto spend many years living as a hermit in the Sahara desert and writes out of that experience.
- Ruth Burrows – British, Carmelite, nun. Deep insights into mysticism, faith, and contemplative prayer. Eminent common sense, blended with a deep knowledge of the

mystical tradition.

- Richard Rohr – American, Franciscan, priest, popular evangelist. Numerous books on prayer, masculine spirituality, addictions, overcoming dualism, overcoming sectarianism, finding balance in your life, scriptural commentary.
- Wendy Wright – American, lay woman, Roman Catholic. A specialist regarding Francis de Sales and Jane Chantel, but with wider writings, especially about the place of devotions within our spiritual lives.
- Peter Tyler – British, Roman Catholic, layman. A specialist in Carmelite spirituality. An emerging young voice.
- Thomas Keating – American, Roman Catholic, monk. The widely-accepted “canon” on contemplative prayer.
- John Main – British/Canadian, monk, a popular, trustworthy guide on Contemplative prayer.
- Laurence Freeman – British, monk, another trustworthy guide on Contemplative prayer
- Kathleen Norris – American, Presbyterian, lay, Oblate of St. Benedict. Deeply immersed in the tradition of the Desert Fathers and equally attuned to our spiritual struggles within contemporary culture.
- Trevor Herriot – Canadian, layman, Roman Catholic. A powerful apologia for protecting nature, but his more explicit spiritual writing are highly reflective essays apposite the place and role of our sexual energies in either protecting or despoiling nature.
- Barbara Brown Taylor – American, Episcopalian, priest, popular-evangelist. Strong literary writer with an audience within secular circles. A unique blend of insight, scripture, tradition, and balance. Always a worthwhile read.
- David Steindl-Rast – American, Roman Catholic, monk, had the distinction of being Henri Nouwen’s spiritual director. Writes with depth, drawing many of his insights from the richness of monasticism.
- Anthony de Mello – Indian, Roman Catholic, Jesuit. Brings the insights of Buddhism and Eastern spiritualities into his articulation of Christian spirituality.
- James Martin – American, Roman Catholic, Jesuit. A key, young voice within spirituality today. Widely popular, and deservedly so.
- Anne Lamott – American, Episcopalian, lay woman. A unique blend of insight, Christian commitment, and blistering iconoclasm.

- Marilynne Robinson – American, novelist, Congregationalist. Not a spirituality writer per se, but an exceptional novelist whose characters express her spirituality. An exceptionally bright apologetic voice.
- Simone Weil – French, Jewish, lay woman. Her writings manifest a spiritual sensitivity and depth that includes her in most discussions about contemporary spirituality.
- Etty Hillesum – Dutch, Jewish, lay woman. Her writings exhibit an extraordinary insight into spirituality. And she backed them up with martyrdom.
- Scott Hahn – American, Roman Catholic, layman. Very popular, catechetical and instructional.
- Rabbi Abraham Heschel – American, Jewish, Rabbi. Exceptional spiritual commentaries on the Jewish scriptures. Widely read and respected.
- Rob Bell – American, Evangelical, popular-evangelist. A brilliant young voice. Good balance, good insights, and an exceptional capacity to speak to a contemporary audience.
- Rick Warren – American, Evangelist. Stunningly popular across denominational lines. His book, *The Purpose-Driven Life*, has sold over 30 million copies worldwide, and is worth the read.
- John Allen – American, Roman Catholic, layman, journalist. Most everyone's ear-to-the ground vis-à-vis what's happening ecclesially around the world.
- Joyce Rupp – American, Roman Catholic, nun. Good, insightful, particularly popular with women.
- Michael Higgins – Canadian, layman, Roman Catholic. Does a lot of highly insightful journalistic commentary on contemporary spirituality. The official biographer of Nouwen.
- Joan Chittister – American, Roman Catholic, nun. Powerful social justice and feminist voice. Knows the tradition of monasticism very well and draws key insights out of its deep wells.
- Paula D'Arcy – American, Roman Catholic, lay woman. Inspires a near-cult following among devotees particularly apposite her spirituality of healing.
- Annie Dillard – American, Roman Catholic (convert), lay. Her writings invariably articulate an aesthetic and moral insight that is a natural friend of religion.
- Elizabeth Johnson – American, Roman Catholic, nun. An exceptional mentor for those who searching for a better intellectual apologia for their faith.
- Bill Plotkin – American, “Naturalist”, layman. Challenging writings vis-à-vis the place of nature in shaping our souls.
- Belden Lane – American, Layman, “Naturalist”, akin to Plotkin.

My apologies to those whom I didn't name, particularly those young, emerging voices such as Kerry Weber, David Wells, and Bill McGarvey, among others. Who should be more widely read.

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