

## **The Day is Yours**

The readable, little volume, *Day is Yours* is a welcome break from the pragmatic world of Christianised management theory, Christian-culture analysis, or preoccupation with the latest mission-shaped project. And yet it addresses powerfully and simply the pressures faced by Christian communities struggling to proclaim the Gospel in the contemporary world.

The introduction, critiquing contemporary hyper-active culture, covers familiar territory but does so amusingly, and without bitterness, cynicism or pretence. What does it mean to be hurried so quickly from the cradle to the grave without ever feeling free to stop and wonder where we came from or where we are going? And how might we hear the voice of Jesus in such a world? Stackhouse makes no attempt to attach bible verses to the pagan obsession with time management. Instead he invites us to celebrate Sabbath.

His ten page treatment of the Sabbath is surely one of the best available. Highlighting what Karl Barth called the ‘monstrous range’ of the Sabbath command, Stackhouse also unpacks the genuine and counter-cultural hope that true Sabbath celebration entails in our over-busy world. In fact, this superb chapter sets the tone for second part of the book, which is structured around praying at different times of the day.

“If a 24/7 world has all but obliterated the rhythms of night and day, then a crucial aspect of Christian witness in this next generation is to restore them.” There are no formulae here though, no set prayers, no ‘how to’ lists. The author instead portrays such a beautiful picture of God that readers are drawn to find their ‘rhythm’ of prayer, to encounter this God, this Lord of time and space. The final chapters help to root these rhythms in the real world. Sensitivity to praying differently at different times of the day enable a particular kind of attentiveness to God, the world, and God-in-the-world.

In a book about what it means to live ‘in time’, the word eschatology hardly appears. But the entire book is an eschatology, ‘realised’ in the sense that it becomes real in the life of the Christian community. The kind of person that we become by unreflective complicity with the 24/7 world is very different to the kind of person whose days are structured around a rhythm of prayer. This, in turn, is equally true of the Christian community and of the world.

Each moment being pregnant with eternity (and yes, all the orthodox fixed points of eternity are still in place!) means that we receive the future as a gift, rather than see it as a new territory waiting to be conquered.

This gives rise to astute theological insight. But this alone, is not what makes the book serious theology. Perhaps the greatest merit of this volume is that the reader is not being taught about a thing called theology or spirituality. If read with the attentiveness it deserves, it functions less as a book than as an experience. Stackhouse has produced heavyweight theology, in accessible language, in a way that cannot be read dispassionately. To read this book is to be drawn into the liberating, life-changing world of Sabbath celebration.

