

‘Just tell me you are a Christian’

The Sermons of George Whitefield, Parts 1 & 2

Edited and with an introduction by Lee Gatiss

Review by **Faith Cook**, *Evangelicals Now*, December 2010

Imagine the delight of any reviewer on opening a package from *EN* to discover two beautifully produced hardback volumes of *The Sermons of George Whitefield*! Described as ‘the greatest English preacher that ever lived.’ Whitefield reported that he had preached 18,000 sermons during the course of his ministry.

In these volumes we have 61 sermons, chosen from a number of printed sources, ranging from his earliest ministry in 1736 until shortly before his death in 1770. Arranged mainly in biblical order, 17 come from the Old Testament and 44 from the New. All are carefully edited by Lee Gatiss with clear sub-headings and slightly updated language.

Bold and direct in his approach, Whitefield was unafraid of confronting hostile crowds with the relentless demands of the gospel. Intensely pastoral, the preacher interlaces his message with application throughout, not merely attaching it to the end of the sermon. It does seem, however, that his material has suffered by transcribing it into print and lacks the immediacy and passion we read about from those who actually heard him. Yet here and there the raw, graphic nature of his words shines through a somewhat sober text. ‘Can you bear’, he cries,

‘to think of a bleeding, panting, dying Jesus, offering himself up for sinners and not accept him?... Do not harden your hearts. Oppose not the will of Jesus. O that I could speak to your hearts, that my words might enter there. I could speak till I could speak no more so I could but bring you to Christ’ (vol. 1, p.185-6).

May a time yet come when preaching of such urgency and pathos is heard again in the pulpits of our land!