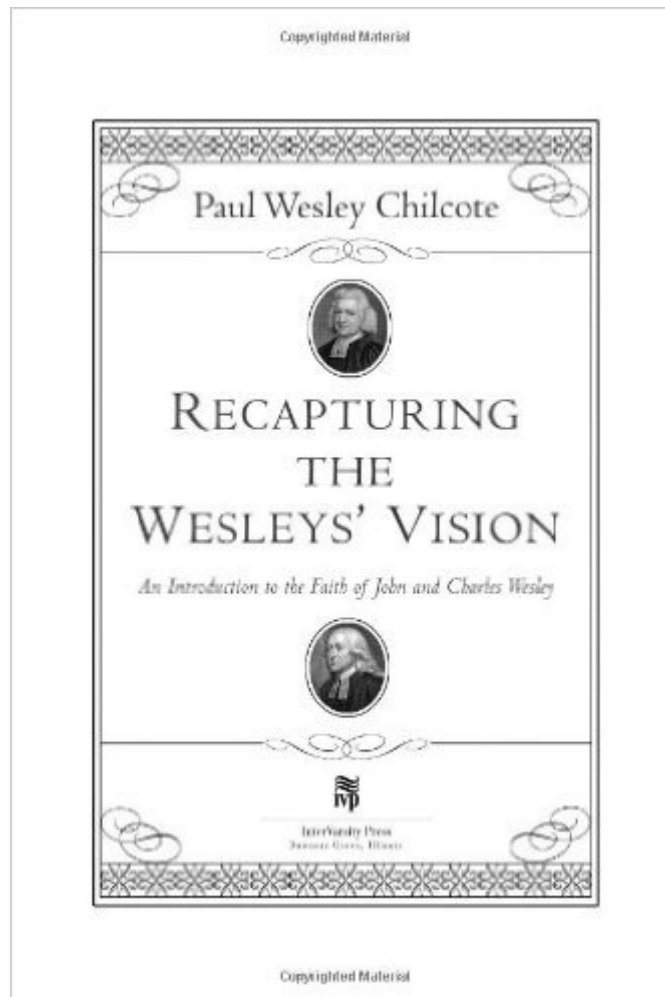


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# Recapturing The Wesleys' Vision: An Introduction To The Faith Of John And Charles Wesley



## Synopsis

Scholar and teacher Paul Wesley Chilcote provides a full and clear introduction to the dynamic faith of John and Charles Wesley. The vital theology of John is skillfully gleaned from his voluminous writings. The corresponding faith of Charles is culled from his enduring hymns. For students and general readers this book illuminates the vital balance the Wesleys found in Christian teaching that overcomes the often mutually exclusive options presented in other theological traditions. Chilcote shows that such a synthetic faith is not boring or irrelevant but transforming and life-giving, bringing together faith and works, Word and Spirit, the personal and the social, the head and the heart, mission and service.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Paul Wesley Chilcote's book, *Recapturing the Wesley's Vision: An Introduction to the Faith of John and Charles Wesley* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004; ISBN 0-8308-2743-9) is a unique contribution to the church and to Wesley studies. I say "unique" because of its balance. Chilcote strives to highlight the contribution both of the Wesley brothers made to the Methodist movement. He selects quotes from both the sermons and writings of John and the hymns of Charles to illustrate his argument that their goal was to restore balance to Christian discipleship, witness, and ministry. Chilcote identifies four characteristics of Christian discipleship in which the Wesley's sought to restore balance: 1. The Message (Kerygma) 2. The Community (Koinonia) 3. The Discipline (Paideia) 4. The Servanthood (Diakonia) Each of the four characteristics are broken down into two

complementary parts. For example, The Message is composed of Free Grace and Inclusive Love. Within the proclamation of free grace the Wesleys sought to maintain a balance between faith and works. Within the preaching of God's inclusive love they sought a balance between word and Spirit. Seeking to find and maintain balance between seemingly opposing ideas is one of the important hallmarks of Wesleyan theology and practice. Chilcote says "This synthetic or conjunctive approach is one of the most relevant aspects of Wesleyan theology for the contemporary church. I describe this approach as synthetic because it attempts to find a third alternative to opposing points of view that often tear people apart. This does not mean that you compromise the truth in order to walk an easier middle ground that is offensive to none; rather it means holding on to the truth you find on the left hand and on the right. This Wesleyan method can also be called conjunctive (as opposed to disjunctive) because it seeks to join things together, rather than permitting them to be pulled apart" (page 16). Given these polarized times in both The United Methodist Church and the world, in which either/or thinking seems to be the norm, Chilcote helps all who claim to live within the Wesleyan family of the Church that such behavior is contrary to their tradition. Professor Chilcote reminds us that the Wesley's consistently struggled to hold such things as faith & works, personal piety & social justice, heart & head, Christ & culture, and piety & mercy together rather than viewing them as in opposition to one another. When such balance is forsaken for the sake of gaining power or winning an argument, the church does damage to its relationship with Christ and its witness in the world. Chilcote summarizes the Wesley's approach to Christian faith and life: "Everything begins with the message (kerygma) of God's good news in Jesus Christ, the story of his death and resurrection. The experience of the gospel immediately draws us into a community (koinonia) where we can learn how to love. In the context of this new family, those who learn of Christ receive the discipline (paideia) that is necessary for them to be nourished and grow in their faith. All Christians, however, find their ultimate purpose in servanthood (diakonia). Just as in Jesus' image of the vine and the branches (John 15), we are gathered together to learn how to love and are then sent out into the world to share that love with others. Or to use another familiar image, think for a moment about a wheel and the forces that make it spin. The centripetal force, which persistently draws in toward the hub, is joined with an opposing centrifugal force that thrusts out toward the rim. The wheel of the Christian life turns as we are both centered in Jesus and sent in his name into the world in mission. You need both forces in your discipleship in you are going to live out an abundant life in Christ" (page 21). This little volume (only 125 pages) needs to be required reading for all pastors and leaders, both lay and clergy, in The United Methodist Church. The end of each chapter includes pertinent quotations from Scripture and both John and Charles Wesley along with questions for

personal or small group reflection and discussion. Paul Chilcote has given the people who claim the Wesleyan tradition as their home another wonderful gift. I pray that we will read, study, and learn from this gifted teacher.

In this book, Chilcote has brought the theology of John and Charles Wesley to everyone-without watering it down. To the contrary, the Wesley's beliefs are concentrated and clarified. The sediment and debris have been removed to offer a clear view of what the Wesley brothers held dear about our relationship with God and each other. It is not unlike looking into a perfectly clear spring-the water might be very deep, but you can see straight to the bottom. This book is wonderful for pastors, laypeople, students, and anyone who wants to better know the Wesleys.

Although this book contains some of the history of the Wesleys, the content is more focused on the beliefs of John and Charles and how those beliefs developed into a movement. It contains much information of how Methodists strive to live their lives in relationship with God and with each other. This book is worth a 2nd and 3rd reading. There is much to absorb.

An ideal book for self or small group study of the Wesleys and the central principles of Methodism. Written in an extremely thoughtful manner, exploring 8 essential juxtapositions of core ideas critical to both John and Charles Wesley. Uniquely, the book explores both brothers' texts equally. Relevant biblical texts, John's sermons, and Charles' lovely hymns are included in each chapter, along with some wonderfully thought-provoking study questions designed to help you see how the Wesleys' vision is still (and can be) relevant and alive today. I will revisit this book.

Paul Chilcote has given us an excellent look at the vision that the Wesley's had when they began to preach in the 18th century. He has been able to recover the both/and in the theologies of John and Charles Wesley. In other words, there are many places in which Wesley keeps differing concepts in tension, but holds them together. This tension or both/and is what makes Wesley unique and so deep as a theologian who has a lot to say about our theological thinking today. So often in the past Wesley has been explored to find only one of the poles and written as if he were only thinking about one, rather than doing the work necessary to find that Wesley really is holding concepts in tension and a creative tension at that. This is a solid work that should be kept close at hand for the scholar. J. Robert Ewbank, author "John Wesley, Natural Man, and the 'Isms'"

The Wesley brothers were amazing in their following after Christ. Their example is one we should be getting back to today, pure devotion to our Savior is what they were all about. We could stand a lot more of this in our lives. A must read for someone looking for real growth, real fast.

This is a delightful book to learn about the gentle side of the Wesley's. You will need to read others to get the bigger picture.

I cringe when I think how far so many of us trail behind the Wesleys in the path they walked before us, in not just recognizing the poor and their needs, but in doing something about it. If life is a bit hectic, if you can't seem to find the time to read this book in its entirety, then at least read the last chapter. I promise you won't regret doing so. Thank you Mr. Chilcote, well done!

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