TRANSCRIPT

Rev. Todd Wilken, Host

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"Profiles in Presidential Leadership in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod"

Guests:
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SPECIAL PROGRAM

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WILKEN: Listen to this: "The question is very important. What does theology have to do with leadership? Here's an answer. If we were to answer that question from Lutheran history, we would have to say almost everything. A survey of the Lutheran story in the United States suggests that theological insight and synodical leadership are closely related. It was in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the most confessional and theologically minded of all the Lutheran church bodies in North America, that one finds the closest connection between the two roles of theologian and church president." Now that's from John Drickamer and C. George Fry in an article that they wrote in 1978, called "Walther's Ecclesiology."

And Dr. C. F. W. Walther will be the way we kick off our "Profiles in Presidential Leadership in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod." Dr. Martin Noland will join us here in just a moment to talk about that first president and founder of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. We'll also deal with four other presidents in the Missouri Synod's long history. Dr. Larry Rast will join us to talk about Friedrich Wyneken. He was the second president. Dr. John Wohlrabe will be our guest. We'll talk about Dr. Friedrich Pfotenhauer, who was the fifth president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Of course, it wouldn't be complete if we didn't talk about Dr. J. A. O. Preus, Jr., the eighth president, also president during a very tumultuous time in the history of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Dr. Paul Zimmerman, who was there by his side during those days, will be our guest a little bit later. And we'll round off our "Profiles in Presidential Leadership in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod" by talking with Dr. Ken Schurb about Dr. A. L. Barry, the tenth president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

I. DR. C. F. W. WALTHER

WILKEN: Joining us to talk about C. F. W. Walther, who served two different terms as president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and many other things at the same time, Dr. Martin Noland, who formerly served as the Director of Concordia Historical Institute. He's pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Evansville, Indiana, and a regular guest. Marty, welcome back.
NOLAND: Thank you.
WILKEN: Dr. Noland, can you describe the character of the times and the challenges that were facing the brand new Missouri Synod when C. F. W. Walther became its first president and one of its founders?
NOLAND: The period in the United States of Walther's first presidency was '47 to '50. It was what historians call the "Antebellum Period." It was a time of optimism and increasing prosperity and expansion. You also had a lot of Germans coming into the Midwest and Mississippi River valley because of the 1848 revolution, and so it was really a propitious time for the Synod to get going and to be growing, because all they could barely do was to keep up with the people that were coming in right in that decade. There was also the gold rush to California. We know about the '49ers – not the football team, but the original '49ers – and a lot of those people were passing through St. Louis. So it was really a very optimistic and kind of an exciting time to be alive.
And then the second presidency of the Missouri Synod for Walther was at the very end of the Civil War, as he became president in 1864—about the time that Sherman was going through his march to Atlanta—and then he continued on for fourteen years to 1878. And this is the period known as Reconstruction. And so there was a lot of conflict in the United States between those that had been Union and those that had been Confederate. But there was also in the West—and anybody that had any interest and

wanted to be successful, they were looking to the West. The Transcontinental Railroad was completed in 1869. The high plains country, which would be the western half of Kansas and Nebraska, the Dakotas, was all opening up due to farming with windmills and well drilling machines. There were still Indian wars going in the West. And the farmers began this thing called the grange movement in the Midwest and the South, which were local coops dealing with economics, politics, and the techniques of farming, and this was very populist. And so the Missouri Synod, which was a populist church body by polity, was really well received because of this. So it was an exciting time, and Walther just didn't happen to be president during the worst time, which was the Civil War.

WILKEN: So let's talk about the theological questions that Walther found himself dealing with and answering along with the other theologians at this fledgling period in the Missouri Synod's history.

NOLAND: The greatest challenge to the Missouri Synod was from a pastor in Buffalo, New York, who had believed that the immigrants should have come under his authority. That was Bishop Johann Grabau. And when he found out about their organization, he tried everything he could to bring them under his authority. And so part of that included criticism of the formation of the Missouri Synod and in particular its polity, both at the congregational and synodical levels. And Walther realized that he need to answer this because the Germans traditionally had had bishops, and, in fact, most of those who came over were very happy to be under Martin Stephan and his leadership as a bishop. So the big issue that Walther dealt with early in his career as president was the issue of what we call "church and ministry" today. And that was resolved in 1851 and '54 with the theses on church and ministry and the book that he finally published called, "Our Position on Church and Ministry."

In later years they were dealing with the issues of the organization of Lutheranism in America, because the General Synod had adopted, or tried to adopt, the Definite Platform, which was really a semi-Calvinist position, and this even provoked reaction among the traditional east coast Lutherans, and they formed the General Council in 1867, which is about the midpoint of his second presidency. The Missouri Synod was invited to join the General Council and they decided they could not join an organization that was a church organization without prior doctrinal agreement. And so all this discontent in American Lutheranism finally led to the establishment of the Synodical Conference in 1872, and Walther was president of that. So they were really dealing a lot with issues of What does it mean to be a Lutheran? How can we be in fellowship with some of these other Lutherans? And if we're going to be separate from them, what makes us distinct? And those were all things for which Walther provided great leadership.

WILKEN: The one thing that has always struck me about the character of Walther and his time – I think it also might apply to at least the first five or so presidents of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; Walther is two of those first five – is the degree to which he saw as his task theological writing and theological instruction of the church body. You cannot read any of his essays of the conventions of the Synod or of the various districts in time without realizing that he was not a man who considered himself head of an institution; he was a man who considered himself a theologian, a pastor and a teacher. Talk about that.

NOLAND: Well, this has been the traditional understanding of the leaders of the Christian church, certainly the older understanding going back to the times of the Early Church, St. Augustine. You know the papacy led the church off in a different direction where the expertise was not in theology but in administrative competence and political competence because the pope was also a lord. But with the Reformation the emphasis

again on the leaders of the church was theological competence, and this was the case among pretty much all the Reformation churches until the twentieth century when the Ecumenical Movement came about. And the Ecumenical Movement said, Well, we're going to put theology on the back burner, and maybe take it off the stove, because the whole purpose of the president is to be involved in theological – maybe we should say, really, organizational – negotiations. And so he's really more of an administrative leader under the Ecumenical Movement, and that really has kind of defined how people think of Protestant church leaders in the twentieth century. But Walther is prior to that, and so the leaders of all the Lutheran Churches in America in the nineteenth century saw themselves as theologians, and they had to write, and they had to deal with theological issues, and he was just an outstanding leader because he had a great theological mind.

WILKEN: Then let's talk about what the man did, and, if you would, begin by describing the tireless work that eventually led at least to one break down, if I'm not mistaken, and the fact that he often held more than one job. He was called upon to do an awful lot. Talk about his career, if you will.

NOLAND: Yeah, I don't know how he did everything he did, frankly. He must have had some assistance, but you have to say that the majority of this came right from his pen. He was a pastor of Trinity Lutheran, downtown St. Louis for thirty-six years. He was also the leader of the "Gesamt Gemeinde," which was an organization of four congregations. He was that for 27 years. He was a teacher of seminary students. So I mean that's a big job, I mean, that's one job in itself, for 26 years. As I said, he was the founding president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference. He was the editor of *Der Lutheraner*. He was the editor of *Lehre und Wehre*. The first was like our *Lutheran Witness*, and the second was like our seminary's *Concordia Journal*. He was the editor of J. W. Bayer's *Compendium of Accepted Theology*, which was the first dogmatics text. In addition he wrote books that are on most of our pastors' shelves: *American Lutheran Pastoral Theology, Theses on Church and Ministry, Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel,* many other shorter works. He also oversaw the publication of the *Weimar Bible Works*, the Walch edition of the St. Louis Edition of Luther's works, and the Trinity Hymnbook and Catechism, that was eventually adopted by the Missouri Synod. I don't know how he did all of this in 25 to 36 years while being still a great pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, downtown St. Louis. But he did it. It's an amazing accomplishment.

WILKEN: And if you could summarize what it was, and if you will – we can do this in Walther's case – the pattern that he set for the presidents of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and their leadership of that church body. If you could summarize that pattern, please do so and then, if you would, Marty, speak to how that pattern should still apply today.

NOLAND: The pattern was that he had a theological mind that applied itself to the issues of the day. Part of the character of a theological mind is the ability to see what the problems are. You don't always know clearly what they are, but you can say, "Oh, there's some problem over there and it's got to be theological, because there's a whole lot of people. If it's only one or two people, it could be a personality issue. But if it's a bunch of people, there's got to be something on it that's at root theological. So then the theological mind goes after that and says, "Okay, what's going on here? Let's try to find out why are you guys disagreeing. Why are you getting into each others knickers on this?" And then drawing from the resources that we have as our church body, first the Scriptures, and then the Book of Concord, and then Luther's Works, and then Walther himself had great command of the Orthodox Lutheran theologians. And from those, and in most cases those answer most of the questions, drawing from there and saying, "Hey, brothers, this is where our Lutheran Church has stood on these issues and now let's bring about some peace on this."

And the other side of it is the ability to work with people and have some sympathy for their situation. You can see that definitely in his letters which have been published. He really had sympathy for the difficulties that pastors and teachers face out in the field as well as the difficulties that many laymen face in congregations when dealing with errant pastors and teachers. So his sympathy, I think it's his compassion for trying to deal all these problems is what led to his breakdown. I mean he just really couldn't deal with all of that, but he really was a pastor for the Synod in addition to being its leading theologian up until the time of his death.

WILKEN: Then finally, you just mentioned this, his way of doing theology definitely has until quite recently been the method that in particular confessional Lutherans have employed in the United States. You mentioned before, he begins with Scripture then to the Lutheran Confessions of the sixteenth century, then to the Orthodox Lutheran fathers beginning with Luther himself and kind of working his way forward through Chemnitz and then in time to others as well. Why is that a good way for us still to do theology, to keep ourselves firmly and soundly confessional Lutherans?

NOLAND: My opinion is that it's a humble way to deal with the work of the church, because when you go to the heritage that we've been given, you assume that maybe these people in the sixteenth century or the eighteenth century or, in Walther's case, the nineteenth century, that they were certainly dealing with much the same problems that we have today, and they had a lot of wisdom in it. So that's humility to place yourself under those and to try to mine them for answers. And maybe they don't have the exact answers, but they'll lead you in the right direction. And so I really see that as humility. And then secondly it's just simply obedience to Christ when you finally subordinate your own thoughts to the words of Scripture where they stand as the norm to what you can teach and practice in the church today. And think it was Walther's humility that led him toward that direction, and our traditional way of approaching theology followed in that vein.

WILKEN: Dr. Martin Noland is formerly the Director of the Concordia Historical Institute, and he's pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Evansville, Indiana. Marty, thank you very much for your time.

NOLAND: Thank you.

WILKEN: Now that's a great way to kick off these "Profiles in Presidential Leadership in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod." Did you catch what Dr. Noland talked about so often there in the last few minutes? A keen theological mind, a man who thinks theologically, and a pastoral heart—key to leadership in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. I think you'll hear a lot more of that in the course of our "Profiles in Presidential Leadership." When we come back, Dr. Larry Rast will join us. We'll profile Dr. Friedrich Wyneken, the second president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Stay tuned.

II. DR. FRIEDRICH WYNEKEN

WILKEN: Welcome back to *Issues, Etc.* I think the theme will continue: a pastoral heart and a man who thinks theologically as kind of the touchstone for what it means to be a president and leader of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod historically. Joining us to talk about the second president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in our profiles on presidential leadership, Dr. Larry Rast. He's Associate Professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Larry, welcome back.

RAST: Hi, Todd. Great to be with you.

WILKEN: You're the historian. Take us back to the mid-nineteenth century. What was

the character of the times, the challenges that were facing the fledgling Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at that time?

RAST: Yes, it was a new synod, and one of many at that point in time. In fact between the years 1840 and 1875 there were no less than fifty-eight distinct Lutheran synods formed here in the United States—no less than fifty-eight! Just incredible the number of Lutheran Synods that were popping up, no less the number of Lutheran congregations that were being formed and Lutheran pastors who were entering in to their ministries. So it was a very dynamic time, a very, very, very uncertain time in a lot of ways.

And one of the things that characterized that uncertainty was about just what it meant to be a Lutheran. There were some different voices that were offering different perspectives on that. Some said it was your ethnicity that was determinative. You know, whether you're a German or a Fin or an English speaker, you kind of carve out your Lutheranism according to the language that you spoke. Others said, no, it was a matter of really holding to the spirit of Luther, rather than the doctrine of Luther. Theologians like Samuel Schmucker, who taught at Gettysburg, who was a leader in the General Synod, a large Lutheran synod on the United States scene, said that we don't want to be beholden to older thinking. What we want to do is develop Lutheranism into a progressive movement that really has the courage to step beyond its founder, even if that means discarding some of the doctrinal points that he made. And then there was Wyneken in the Missouri Synod, who said, no, we want to be faithful to the Scriptures above all as rightly confessed by we Lutherans over time in our Lutheran Confessions. So we locate our Lutheran identity in the doctrinal position taught by the Scriptures and affirmed in the Lutheran Confessions, both in the sixteenth century by Luther and his co-laborers as well as by us here in the mid-nineteenth century in the face of a lot of confusion and a lot of discord over what it is that the Bible actually teaches. So it was a dynamic time. It was an uncertain time, and Wyneken and his coworkers stepped forward and said, what defines us is our theology.

WILKEN: So they firmly located, to use our term today, Lutheran identity in the historic confessions of the Lutheran Reformation.

RAST: Right, right. They looked back to those Confessions because they believed they were *the* faithful exposition of the Scriptures, and that in order to be considered a faithful Lutheran meant to affirm the Lutheran Confessions, which had its roots in the Bible itself.

WILKEN: So these men were no strangers, and Wyneken in particular no stranger, to what we face today as confessional Lutherans in America—all sorts of influences from the broader American religious landscape.

RAST: Yeah, yeah. In fact, that's one of the elements of Wyneken's genius, in my mind, is that he was completely engaged in the world of his time. You know, a lot of times folks will think, well, you had German immigrants who primarily were using the German language and the like and therefore they were kind of out of the mainstream, if you will, of the American experience. Well, not Wyneken. He knew exactly what was going on, and he engaged his context vigorously, and he did so very intentionally from a confessional Lutheran perspective. That is to say, he made himself aware of what was happening both in the Lutheran tradition here in America as well as the broader American Christian tradition. So he knew about the revivalists like Charles Finney. He knew very well of the work of Lutheran theologians like Samuel Schmucker. He wasn't uninformed, he wasn't disengaged; he was right there in the thick of things, and he knew then how to apply this theology. It wasn't an abstract theology for him, but this was a matter of applying the unchanging Gospel to people's lives, folks who were out on the frontier, folks who oftentimes weren't receiving consistent pastoral care, or if they were being cared for by a pastor, it was sometimes a pastor who was confused on the distinction between Law and Gospel, who had confused the doctrine of justification. And

Wyneken said, above all what we need to do is take our theology, our confession, and apply it and preach it and integrate it into the lives of God's people, and he did that brilliantly.

WILKEN: Just to kind of clarify something, because it's very common nowadays for those who want to be and remain distinctly, theologically, and in application pastorally Lutheran, we're often accused by people inside and outside Lutheranism of essentially being sectarian—you just want to be Lutheran for the sake of being Lutheran. Why was it that Wyneken and others at his time rejected the different theology, in essence the different confession that was so popular in revivalism?

RAST: Sure. That's a good question. See, the problem as they saw it was not the motives of the people who were proclaiming that particular version of Christianity, if you want to put it that way. So they weren't questioning people's motives or anything like that. But what they said was there had been a profound confusion of the Word of God in these theological movements, something that turned people away from the pure word of the Gospel, that turned people away from, or at the very least confused the clear teaching of salvation by grace through faith alone because of the work of Christ. That is to say, this theology wasn't just an abstract principle, but rather the people were being told, there has to be something more, something you do, something you contribute, in terms of your own salvation. And for Wyneken, this put the heart of the Gospel at stake. So, you know, theology as an end in itself, that wasn't what he was talking about here. He was talking about a theology that had implications for the life of the person right now, but above all that had implications for the clarity of the Gospel and the right understanding of what the Word of God taught.

WILKEN: Let's talk about, if we could, kind of the man himself. How was he, if you will, equipped? What kind of character, what kind of convictions did he bring to his time as president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod?

RAST: As the old story goes, you know, the other presidents of the Synod around this time, Walther, for example, the first president and then again the third president, would be like the gentle shower that watered the land and fed the plants and things would spring up and grow beautifully around his words. And Wyneken was more like the thundershower that would come raging through. For him the proclamation of the Gospel clearly was a matter of life and death, literally a matter of life and death. And in that respect that was driven by his own experience as a horse-riding pastor in the woods of northeastern Indiana, northwestern Ohio, southern Michigan. He went out, he got on the horse, and he went and found people. He wasn't satisfied to be passive in this, but because the Word of God was at stake, he got up on his horse and, as I said, just rode and rode and rode and rode. In a lot of ways just wore himself out in the endeavor, because of his deep, deep conviction of the need for the proclamation of the Truth.

And he knew this because he had been well equipped, not only as a sturdy human being in the first place, but also he had an excellent theological education that he had received in Germany. He was well-trained, very familiar with the Lutheran theological tradition, with the Scriptures, had served as a private tutor, taught Latin as well. Just a brilliant guy. But at the same time, this is not education for the sake of itself, but again – I sound like I'm flogging the poor man's dead horse – but again for the sake of the proclamation of Christ to people who were in need. So he had that clarity of mind, that theological insight that you can only get with a rich theological education, and he coupled that then with an indefatigable spirit – the guy worked like crazy – and an ability to exegete a circumstance, understand his circumstances, and apply God's Truth to needy people.

WILKEN: So as president, what did he do? I mean he was president for fewer years, I think, than a lot of other presidents at that time—only, if I read it correctly, about fourteen years. What did he do during that time?

RAST: During his presidency he, I think, brought together, beautifully together, two of the really key aspects that have defined our Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, that is, theological clarity with an incredibly vigorous sense of reaching out with that confession. So that the wedding of doctrine and practice, the wedding together of theology and mission, you see that exemplified best in Wyneken, in one who has, again, clarity of thought but sees that always in service of the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments, and to do it in a way that administratively also will be done most effectively. It's during Wyneken's tenure, for example, that the first districts are formed in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. And so his presidency is characterized by that wedding of those three things that are so important in the figure of a president, namely, he has theological insight, he couples that with a vigorous sense of mission, and he is administratively capable as well. In that regard, I often hold up to my students here at the seminary Wyneken as a model to be followed for all of us, whatever circumstances we find ourselves in, as a seminary prof, as a parish pastor, whatever God calls us to.

WILKEN: I think something sadly lacking in the church, kind of Wyneken's ancestors, I'm sorry, descendants, if you will, both in the church and in the church leadership today, is an understanding of the presidency of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as teacher, as teacher of God's Word. Now we emphasize very strongly administrator, not of the Sacraments, but of an institution. We emphasize this so strongly that teacher is largely lost. Now we've had it occasionally, sometimes by necessity, sometimes because the man actually taught. But this is what I think about when I think about these first several presidents of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. These where men who sought as the their primary goal to teach the church. Talk about that, if you would.

RAST: Yeah, that's a great point. One of the really remarkable things about the early presidents of the LCMS – Wyneken, Walther, Schwan, Pieper as well – is the centrality of making that good confession, and of making the confession available as well. All of these presidents see in the end that structure is not an end in itself, but rather the structure is there simply to serve the confession and making that confession more and more known, more and more accessible, whether that be in verbalized form, speeches, whether it be in written form in the form of booklets and pamphlets and the like. These guys are making sure that the pure Gospel, the unaltered confession of the Lutheran tradition as based upon the Scripture gets out and shapes and transforms people's lives.

WILKEN: Finally, then, how can we summarize Wyneken? I remember the extent of my knowledge of Friedrich Wyneken was that there was a building named after him at the seminary that I attended. If you could summarize the man's life and work, in particular the time spent serving as a president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, how would you put it into a nutshell, Larry?

RAST: In a nutshell, it's a man who always thinks of himself as a pastor, and a pastor is one who cares for the people by proclaiming the Truth of God's Word as rightly interpreted in the Lutheran Confessions. He brings those things together in such a beautiful and a powerful way that there's really nothing in his life that isn't characterized by that. So wherever he finds himself, either as a circuit-riding pastor out on the American frontier, as pastor at an established Lutheran congregation in Baltimore, as president of the Synod for fourteen years, and then later again as a pastor again in Cleveland after he had declined to allow his name to stand for the presidency in 1864, in all of these things he brings together God's gracious Word of forgiveness in Jesus Christ and that energizes him for mission, and it allows him to be the powerful leader he was as he led his fellow clergy in taking the Truth to the nations, to all of these folks who were making their way in and around and through the United States so that they could know Jesus Christ and the forgiveness that God has for them through Jesus Christ.

WILKEN: Okay, we always ask about a favorite quote. But before we get a favorite quote from Friedrich Wyneken from you, Larry, do you have a favorite story about Friedrich Wyneken?
RAST: Oh, I have a lot of favorite stories about Wyneken. Brother, which one do you pick? Just to give you kind of a feel for the man, there's a time when he's out riding the horse and gets lost and is trying to make his way back home to Fort Wayne, but it gets dark, and he can't find his way. And as he's riding along in the dark he actually falls off the horse and falls into a pool of water that he thinks is just a swamp but it turns out to be a lake. And in fact he spends the night lying on a log out in the middle of a little pond, and then in the morning he's able to see his horse on the shore, and he hops back on the horse, makes his way back to Fort Wayne. But it just underscores the manner in which this guy gives every bit of his being for the sake of the proclamation of the Gospel. And that really captures Wyneken the man in a powerful way to me.
WILKEN: And a favorite quote?
RAST: My favorite quote is a simple one that comes from his little pamphlet "The Distress of the German Lutherans in North America," when he's writing to his colleagues in Germany and also to colleagues in America saying, "In this reawakened hope I'm again presenting to the church, with a prayer to God who desires to help, the need and once more calling out in the name of Jesus: Help. Help quickly. Help with Christian generosity." And that just shows you the intensity of the man in terms of the mission that is before him, that only the pure Lutheran confession of the Gospel, based on the Scriptures, only that can give.
WILKEN: Larry Rast is Associate Professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Larry, you know what I hope for you?
RAST: What's that, Todd?
WILKEN: Someday, there's a building at some seminary named "Rast." [Laughter from guest.] I really do.
RAST: Well, I don't need such a thing. I don't think I measure up to those who have gone before, but I appreciate the sentiment nonetheless, Todd.
WILKEN: Well, if I have anything to do, and I plan to outlast you, if I have anything to do about it, someday on one of the two seminary campuses, we'll have a building – maybe just a maintenance shed or something like that – but we'll call it "Rast Hall."
RAST: There you go. That'd be about appropriate. [Laughs]
WILKEN: Thanks for being our guest.
GUEST: Thanks, Todd.
WILKEN: Well, when we come back, we're going to talk about a man who served the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as president during some of our nation's most tumultuous years, in the years of the First World War, times of great change for Germans in America, for immigrants in America, and for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as well. And he did it as a gentleman's gentleman. He did it with the gentle heart of a pastor and the keen mind of a theologian. Dr. John Wohlrabe will be with us on the other side of the break. We'll talk about Dr. Friedrich Pfotenhauer, who was fifth president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, from 1911 to 1935. We'll be right back.

III. DR. FRIEDRICH PFOTENHAUER

WILKEN: I just love it when you find a man whose place in history, who is a contrast to the times in which he lives. And the man we're going to be talking about next in our "Profiles in Presidential Leadership" is indeed that – a gentleman's gentleman, a very

kind-hearted, soft spoken man, Dr. Friedrich Pfotenhauer, the fifth president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, who served that church body when this nation, the United States, was going to one of the bloodiest wars it every fought, the First World War, and the world was being turned upside down. Joining us to talk about Friedrich Pfotenhauer, Dr. John Wohlrabe, pastor of Concordia Lutheran Church in Genesio, Illinois. He's Third Vice-President of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod himself. Dr. Wohlrabe, welcome back.

WOHLRABE: Hi. Thanks, Todd. How are you doing?

WILKEN: Doing well. We have to go back to, well, about a hundred years to the year and talk about the character of the times, especially for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, when Friedrich Pfotenhauer became president.

WOHLRABE: Right, yeah. 1911. A number of things were going on. First, the United States was becoming a world power. If you remember, Teddy Roosevelt sent the White Fleet around the world and we were growing internationally as a nation, but yet you still had many parts of the United States that were almost frontier and people settling them. The train was slowly being spread through many areas, but most of the United States was rural. The Missouri Synod was predominantly a rural denomination, pockets of Germans that had settled all over. The Synod was about 900,000 baptized members at that time, 1911, and the Missouri Synod was basically recovering, if you will, or still dealing with the aftermaths of what was called the Predestinarian Controversy which broke out around 1881 but really impacted the Synodical Conference around 1882 and then thereafter with Ohio Synod, Norwegian Synod, and others breaking off from the Synodical Conference and basically accusing Missouri Synod theologians of being Crypto-Calvinists, and there were attempts to try to bring all of that together in the early 1900s, various conferences and things like that, but still there was a lot of acrimony and hard feelings from the Iowa Synod, Ohio Synod toward the Missouri Synod.

WILKEN: Then how would you characterize the major issues that faced Pfotenhauer during his time as president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod?

WOHLRABE: Well, first of all, he had just been elected Vice-President of the Synod, First Vice-President, three years prior in 1908. Franz Pieper was both the President of Synod and President of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, but then he had a breakdown and they sent him to Germany to recover. And so Pfotenhauer not only chaired the 1911 convention for the first time, but also they were in the middle of a merger that had already been started mainly with what was called the English Missouri Synod and the German Missouri Synod. So the English Missouri Synod became the English District, a non-geographical district, and then Pfotenhauer was elected because Pieper would not run again because of his health. And so within three years of his election not only working on the amalgamation of the English Missouri Synod as the English District – and they were one in doctrine, but you still had the difference of language – but then in 1914 with the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Austria you had the beginning of World War I, and so a strong push from the Missouri Synod for the U.S. to maintain neutrality. So they supported Woodrow Wilson in that, but there were still many calls within the United States to enter the war. Then once the United States did enter the war in 1917 all of a sudden a number of states were passing anti-language legislation. Over eighty parochial schools were closed because they were predominantly Lutheran parochial schools. There were churches that were fire bombed or dynamited in Ohio and Kansas. And so at the Synodical Convention in 1917 one of the first orders of business was to change the name of the Synod from "Die Deutsche Evangelishe Lutherische Synod von Missouri, Ohio, und Anderen Staten" to "The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States." And so the language changed.

Plus we had about 30,000 Missouri Synod men in the service and so providing chaplains

and ministry to them. And then there was a strong union movement among many Lutherans at that time, going up to the anniversary of the Reformation in 1917, which was the 400th anniversary of the Reformation. And so dealing with that with union movements while trying to do it according to our Scriptural and Confessional position that it must be in unity in doctrine and practice. And Pfotenhauer had to deal with all that. And then as part of this Americanization that was going on you also had a movement developing within the Missouri Synod starting with the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau in 1914. They began publishing their own publication in 1917, *The American Lutheran*. And they eventually would politick leading up to the 1935 convention to work to oust Pfotenhauer from the presidency. So dealing with all of those types of things, that's what Pfotenhauer had to deal with as a president.

WILKEN: How would you describe his, if you will, his aptitudes, his particular characteristics that he brought to these many challenges that he faced as president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod?

WOHLRABE: Well, first and foremost, Pfotenhauer was a pastor, a missionary. He had been a pastor in the Minnesota frontier and a *Reiseprediger* [travelling preacher]. He started off as a pastor in Odessa, Minnesota, which is near the South Dakota border, and then he started preaching stations all across the Dakotas and Montana. And after seven years of doing that, the wear and tear, he had a physical breakdown. And then he was called to a congregation further east in Minnesota, Lewiston. And then eventually he became District President of what was then called the Northwest District, which was the largest district of the Synod at that time, and yet he was always a pastor during that time. And so he was first and foremost a pastor, but also a committed confessional theologian. And he had studied under Walther. In fact, he had been one of the stenographers to record Walther's lectures on Law and Gospel that was eventually published during his presidency.

WILKEN: Really?

WOHLRABE: Yes.

WILKEN: So, he had literally been a student of C. F. W. Walther?

WOHLRABE: Yes, literally. He graduated from seminary in 1880, but, yeah, he started in 1877 at Concordia Seminary.

WILKEN: Let's talk then about kind of the man in his own words, if you will. Do you have a favorite quote from Friedrich Pfotenhauer?

WOHLRABE: I do, but let me just also add: Pfotenhauer was known as a gentleman's gentleman, and he was never known to speak a harsh word against anyone. If somebody said something derogatory about him, he would not want to respond with any kind of negative word. He was just a true gentleman. He maintained a calm dignity. And then also as president he always sought advice from the faculties, from other pastors, other District Presidents, other things. So those are the characteristics.

Yeah, I do have a favorite quote. This is from his 1929 President's Report to the Synodical Convention. It was right after the inter-synodical movement, the theses had proved to not work out, because the Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods were deciding to merge, and meanwhile Iowa put forth a different view on the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, and also Lenski of the Ohio Synod had published a number of articles holding to the *intuitu fidei* position on Predestination. So Pfotenhauer in speaking to the convention said this: "God grant that the remembrance of the great events in the history of our church may be to us all a call of admonition and encouragement not to seek the well being of the church in all manner of unions at the expense of truth, but rather to let it be our great care to hold fast for ourselves and our children our rich inheritance as embodied in our Lutheran Confessions."

WILKEN: Finally, then, how would you summarize the activity, all that Friedrich

Pfotenhauer did during his time as president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod?
WOHLRABE: Well, he was a profound man. He had a gentle pastoral spirit and yet a deep commitment to confessional Lutheran theology. He strove for Lutheran unity and worked toward it throughout his presidency, but it was not on the basis of compromise, but on agreement in doctrine and practice. When he was criticized, or when things were brought up by either, for example, August Pieper of the Wisconsin Synod taking issue with Missouri's doctrine of church and ministry, or Lenski from the Ohio Synod taking issue with Missouri's position on predestination, he did not want to retaliate in public. He wanted private discussions. He wanted to handle things in the most pastoral, gentle way. And he, unfortunately, in my research of him, he had kept his office in Chicago and his papers were burned in a house fire. And so we don't have complete records of his presidency like we do of other presidents of the Missouri Synod, but he was a wonderful, profound man, and yet also he had a wonderful sense of humor. One time visiting St. Paul's College and High School in Concordia, Missouri, he had met with the faculty and afterward they stepped out to smoke a cigar, and one of the professors didn't. And he said, "Your Lutheranism is in suspect," jokingly. You know, so he was just, from what I know of him, he was a wonderful man and a gentle spirit.
When Behnken was put up against him at the 1935 convention and then they found out there was politicking, Behnken offered to Pfotenhauer to withdraw, and Pfotenhauer said, "No, let the Synod decide." And that was always his position—let the convention decide. And God's will will speak through the delegates at the convention.
WILKEN: Dr. John Wohlrabe is pastor of Concordia Lutheran Church in Genesio, Illinois. Dr. Wohlrabe, thank you very much for your time.
WOHLRABE: My pleasure.
WILKEN: Well, fast forwarding fifty years or so in the history of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod we come to another very tumultuous time, both in our country and in that Lutheran church body, the so-called "Walkout." A man who was actually there, Dr. Paul Zimmerman will be our guest to talk about the man he stood next to through much of those times, Dr. J. A. O. Preus, the eighth president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. So we'll go to the '70s and '80s and talk about this giant in "Profiles in Presidential Leadership." I'm Todd Wilken. This is *Issues, Etc.*

IV. DR. J. A. O. PREUS

AUDIO CLIP: The only way we know God is through His Word. We don't get it out of the air, and we don't get the ideas of what God's will is for us out of our own judgment or our own wisdom. We get it out of God's Word. The very statement that it is God's Church ought to mean that our church then be faithful to God's Word.
WILKEN: That's the voice of J. A. O. Preus, Jr., the eighth president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Our "Profiles in Presidential Leadership" continues with a conversation about him and his times, with Dr. Paul Zimmerman our guest. Now these are some of the most painful years in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's history, and I think J. A. O. Preus, Jr. gained a reputation, not deservedly so, of being less than pastoral. But I don't think that's true. I think it was actually a pastor's heart that required of him some of the difficult things he did have to do during the tumultuous times of the so-called "Walkout" in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. And he always did it with a mind toward – what did he say in that quote? – toward remaining faithful to the Word of God, a theologian from beginning to end. Joining us to talk about Dr. J. A. O. Preus, Jr., Dr. Paul Zimmerman, retired college president and pastor, one of two living members of the Fact Finding Committee appointed by Dr. Preus to investigate charges of false

doctrine being taught at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. He's author of the book, *A Seminary in Crisis*. Dr. Zimmerman, welcome back.

ZIMMERMAN: Thank you very much. Glad to be with you.

WILKEN: Can you describe – and this is a big, tall order – can you describe the circumstances prevailing in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in and around the time that Dr. J. A. O. Preus, Jr. came to the presidency?

ZIMMERMAN: Well, actually the problems began to manifest themselves as early as the 1950s, and they grew. The root problem basically was a new view of Scripture, which some of the professors at the St. Louis seminary had picked up in their studies in Europe and so on, called the historical-critical method. Basically, it denies the total verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, says that they are spiritual values and things that are told us, the Gospel, for example, but that the historical end of it, even the characters involved, such things as miracles, Old Testament prophecy and so on, were simply added later, and not to be considered inspired. You had then coming as a result of this through out the Synod individuals denying the inerrancy of Scripture. Some even went so far – this was not at the St. Louis seminary, but some of their products – denied the resurrection of the flesh and said there's a resurrection, but it's not of the body. Some denied the immortality of the soul. Some even went so far to deny that Jesus is the only way of salvation, and denied the factuality of Genesis 1 and 2 – there was no real Adam and Eve, man came into existence by evolutionary process, and so on. In other words, you had all of these things developing. And in the various conventions of the Synod there were many overtures brought. People were vastly disturbed by the great problems which existed at that time.

But nothing was being really done about it. The St. Louis faculty said, "Oh, we're teaching the Scripture. We're adhering to the Holy Scriptures." And Dr. Oliver Harms, who himself was very good theologically, somehow either didn't grasp the severity of the problem or didn't know what to do about it. And so they were faced with inaction and as a result of that in the 1969 convention of Synod Dr. J. A. O. Preus, who was then president of our seminary at now Fort Wayne, but then located in Springfield, Illinois, was called to be president and asked to do something to straighten out this very great theological crisis in the Synod. It's the greatest crisis the Synod has ever had.

WILKEN: So let's talk a bit about J. A. O. Preus, Jr. Apart from simply being the president for that time, he was in his own right a scholar and quite a theologian. How would you describe that?

ZIMMERMAN: Yes, he was. He had a doctor's degree in the classical languages, Greek and Latin. And, as a matter of fact, his wife Delpha, who was a wonderful aid to him through all of this, herself had a Master's degree in Latin and for recreational purposes at night they would translate. And there's a book called *The Second Martin*, which is still available through Concordia Publishing House, a book he wrote as a result of that translation on Martin Chemnitz, who was one of the assistants at the time of the early days of the Reformation. So he was a great scholar.

At the same time he was a person who was very much a loving type individual, a pastoral man. He'd had a pastorate. And then he taught for a while at the seminary at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, because we were allied then with the Norwegians at the time. Then he was called to Springfield and then, of course, later was called president there. But I remember in 1973 when things came to a head and the problems at the St. Louis seminary were addressed and declared to contain false doctrine and something to be done about it, there was a great walkout, some 200 delegates – liberals – walked out and interrupted the whole convention. And the convention was just aghast at what was happening – was the church splitting? And I stood alongside him in those days, he actually had tears streaming from his eyes, he was so concerned about what

was happening to his dear Synod, and something which he had tried desperately to avoid. But people simply were not listening. They were not willing to straighten out their theology. So he was a very compassionate, loving person.
And one of the other things that's a characteristic of him was, and he said later, and he said during that time, that if it were not for the laity, our church – synod – would not have been saved from liberalism. But they stood alongside the pastors and the professors who were still true, and they voted the right way and eventually got things straightened out. But he was a very compassionate, loving, personal man. When he signed his letters, he didn't simply sign them, "Dr. J. A. O. Preus, President." He signed it, "Jack." Very nice, loving individual, but still very concerned about Scripture and convinced that something had to be done about it before our Synod simply went down the theological tube.
WILKEN: Well, what did he find himself – kind of in these dire straits of the Synod's theological problems – what did he find it necessary to do? What was the difficult task that was laid upon him, ultimately?
ZIMMERMAN: Well, the problem was you had a great many of the professors at St. Louis at that time… And incidentally, let me say, that's all been straightened out and St. Louis today is a fine, glorious institution; so nothing negative about the institution today. I want that understood. But in those days there were quite a number of individuals who were teaching these things, disturbing the Synod, and disturbing their students, and causing confusion. There were others who were teaching the right thing, but still were putting up with it. As a matter of fact there were only some five individuals who really stood firm and with the doctrinal position of Synod on Scripture.
And what was [he] to do about it? How could you try each of these individuals in a separate hearing and so on? So what he did was he appointed this committee of five individuals, the so-called Fact Finding Committee, and told us, "I want you to interview each one of these individuals of the faculty of St. Louis, find out where they stand on these issues and in general." And so in the late part of 1970 he appointed the Fact Finding Committee and we reported to him sometime later, I think it was in the spring. We met for two days every weekend for this period of time, interviewed some forty-five professors, and published the results, gave it to him. And then he heard from the St. Louis people that they were going to deny it and say, "Well, the Fact Committee didn't understand what we were talking about. They really weren't very bright theologically. And so, we'll deny all of this." So what he and I decided to do was to publish the results of the Fact Finding Committee because this had all been recorded. Every bit of it was taped and then later printed out. So we published the results on the critical questions in the so-called "Blue Book," which was presented to the Synod, and keeping the people anonymous – we didn't say who was who – but we did point out what was going on. And as a result of that at the 1973 convention Synod passed Resolution 3-09, which said that the theology and stance of the faculty majority at St. Louis violated Article II of Synod's Constitution, that's the article on the inspiration and authority of Scripture. They said that their teaching was subversive of Scripture's formal principle, that is, the inspiration of Scripture, it's inerrancy. And then they said that they were guilty of Gospel reductionism, that is, they were preaching, still teaching the Gospel that man is saved by justification by faith, but they were denying other things. For instance, some said Jesus didn't walk on water. Others said the Old Testament prophecies really were written later and were not true prophecies, Adam and Eve were not historical characters, and so on right down the line. They had some problems with the Third Use of the Law, which is that the Third Use of the Law is to indicate exactly what God wants us to do and not to do. So that was accepted by the 1973 convention. And the point was made then that something had to be done about it.

Now what happened, of course, after that was that the faculty refused to accept this, led by John Tietjen, who was their president. And they asked Synod to rescind this, take it all back and apologize. And when that didn't happen, they walked out in – this was in '74, I think in February of '74 – and formed a new seminary, called "Seminary in Exile," or "Seminex," and said, "Well, we're just going to leave the old St. Louis seminary and you can't do anything it; it's going to go under. Well, what happened, of course, is with the help of the other seminary, Concordia Theological Seminary, now at Fort Wayne, then at Springfield, was with their professors and then other people that were called in, other scholars in the Synod, the St. Louis seminary didn't go under. As a matter of fact it recovered with remarkable speed and success. Meanwhile, Seminex was trying to place its graduates in Synod, and there was a problem as to whether or not they could be accepted. The result was, Synod said, "No, you cannot. You have to, if you want to be a pastor and you go through Seminex, you're going to have to go through a colloquy." They refused to do that. They then went to join the American Lutheran Church, but they told them, "Well, we don't need another seminary, and you're just going to have to exist on your own." And eventually, in about seven or eight years. the whole thing went away. They ceased to exist as a separate entity. So it took that long for things to settle down.

But the point was made and the Board of Directors and others met with these people after the convention, and I have a note in my book that in forty days, or in thirty days, they held a total of forty meetings, trying to convince these people to straighten out, but they were totally unwilling to accept any kind of thing, not even a compromise.

WILKEN: Finally then, when we look back on kind of the circumstances that were thrust upon Dr. J. A. O. Preus, Jr. during his time as president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, how would you summarize what was required of him and how he approached, as president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, how he approached those very, very difficult times?

ZIMMERMAN: Well, what was required, of course, was some great theological knowledge. He had to understand the issues and show some leadership in this connection. He also had to have a great deal of courage and conviction that no matter what the cost the truth of the Scripture must be upheld, that we could not compromise and we could not go down the road of historical-criticism which really destroyed the inerrancy and validity of Scripture, that we must abide by what the Fathers had rightly taught. And then he had to know how to do it. As a matter of fact, in all of these things the Lord was with him. It's something that no one individual could do. He had the good advice, and, as I say, also very strong support from the laity.

I have here in the book the quotation from the closing days of a convention. This was the last convention, was the convention which he last presided in. He retired in '81, but 1977 was the convention in Dallas. And briefly here is what he told the delegates, and I think this summarizes the kind of man he was. He says, "As a church we have been known and are still known as people who are vitally concerned that the Word of God be preached in its truth and purity, that the entire program be based on God's holy, inspired, inerrant, powerful Word. The Word brings the Church into being. The Word is truly our rule and norm for faith and life. In all activities we carry on, we cannot yield one jot or tittle of God's holy Word, and the Word by means of carrying out our mission. It's all we have and it's all we need. We have emerged from a serious doctrinal controversy, in which we're probably the only Christian church in America, probably the only Lutheran Church in the world which seriously and earnestly confronted the issues raised by modern historical-critical methods of Biblical interpretation and honestly, forthrightly dealt with them. The strength of our beloved Synod has always been a unique blend of concern for pure doctrine which has brought about our strong confessional stance coupled with the overwhelming desire to carry out the Great Commission." Now that's, I

think, a great statement, but that shows where he came from and where he stood.
WILKEN: Dr. Paul Zimmerman is a retired college president and pastor. He's one of the two living members of the Fact Finding Committee appointed by Dr. J. A. O. Preus, Jr. to investigate charges of false doctrine that were brought against some of the faculty at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He's author of the book, *A Seminary in Crisis*. Dr. Zimmerman, thank you for your time.
ZIMMERMAN: Thank you very much. Good Lord bless.
WILKEN: Now when we come back from the break, the final chapter in our "Profiles in Presidential Leadership." We'll talk about Dr. A. L. Barry, the tenth president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He served from 1992 to 2001, until his untimely death. One of his close associates, Dr. Ken Schurb, will be our guest.

V. DR. A. L. BARRY

WILKEN: Well, we've come to the final chapter our "Profiles in Presidential Leadership in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod." We're joined by Dr. Ken Schurb to talk A. L. Barry. Dr. A. L. Barry was the tenth president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He served from 1992 until his untimely death in 2001. A gentle man. I met him many times to talk to him on these airwaves as well about several topics. A man who was, I think you can safely call him, a pastor's pastor. He was pastoral in all of his approach, even as he led the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod from its president's office. And he had a deep love for his church and for its confession and its theology. He saw himself as a teacher of the church.
Dr. Ken Schurb is pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Moberly, Missouri. He served as an assistant to President A. L. Barry. Ken, welcome back.
SCHURB: Hi there, Todd. Good to be with you.
WILKEN: This is much more recent history for us all, but if you would, how would you talk about the character of the times, the challenges that were facing the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod during the time that A. L. Barry was serving as president?
SCHURB: Well, you're right, Todd. It's not that different from today, because it's not as far back as Walther or Wyneken or something like that. All the same kinds of challenges in society, post-modernism taking hold in the 1990s, a kind of an indifference to truth, a kind of a "Whatever!" attitude about spiritual things in the world at large. In the church also kind of a "Whatever!" attitude. Questions of altar and pulpit fellowship were very prominent in the 1990s while President Barry was president. Also in President Barry's time the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, which the Lutheran World Federation bodies, many of them anyway, and the Roman Catholics agreed on with much pomp and circumstance, which in effect constituted another downplaying of differences between these segments of Christendom in part because they just didn't seem to be important to anybody anymore.
WILKEN: As a pastor, a theologian, I don't know a lot of the back story on A. L. Barry except that he was a District President in one of the Iowa Districts prior to coming to the presidency of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. But having spoken with him several times, on the air and off the air, I got the sense that this was a man who was no stranger to the Lutheran parish.
SCHURB: Yeah, his heart was always in the parish. He was actually a parish pastor for eleven years. Most people who met him and who heard him speak or saw what he wrote would have thought that it would have been like twice that long. He brought a real wealth of background. He was a parish pastor for eleven years. He was a mission executive at both the district level for thirteen years up in Iowa and at the national level for the Synod,

a mission executive. He had always a tremendous concern and heart for missions. He was, as you say, a District President for ten years. One of the things people very often don't think of when they think about President Barry, though, was the fact that he had a graduate degree in theology. He had a Master of Theology degree from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, which at the time President Barry attended there in the '60s for his Master's degree work was an institution of the American Lutheran Church, and, of course, that's now all been involved in merger with the ELCA. But he had the benefit that not many presidents of the Missouri Synod have had. He actually went to school under the auspices of other Lutheran church bodies in America. He went to seminary with the Wisconsin Synod. [Laughs] So, he kind of had seen it all.

WILKEN: Then let's talk about what he did during his time as president—obviously cut short by his untimely death, and you got to see it first hand. I mean, if I'm not mistaken, your office was somewhere across the hall. What happened and what did he do during his time as president?

SCHURB: Yeah, I hasten to add, Todd, not right across the hall. I was kind of down a little bit. They wanted to be able to distance themselves from me if they could.

WILKEN: [Laughs]

SCHURB: Faithfulness and outreach. That was the violin string that Al Barry admitted that he played all the time, and he had many different ways of saying it. He talked about doctrine and evangelism, always in the same breath. Maybe his most evocative way of saying it was, "Keep the message straight, Missouri, and get the message out, Missouri." And that really was a summation of his career in service to the church and especially his years as synodical president.

He championed what he called a "five-fold vision statement," which the Synod actually adopted, in fact. And nobody was more pleased with this than Al Barry. They changed it slightly when they adopted it—made it stronger. He wanted to be strong in the Word. That was point number one. Point number two was people-centered and people-sensitive, but the Synod changed that to Christ-centered and people-sensitive. And President Barry thought that was great. It actually made a more strong statement: *Christ*-centered and people-sensitive. Reaching out boldly with the Gospel—there's that strong emphasis on outreach and mission. Faithful to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, and a church body marked by peace and unity. And just about everything he did really was done with that thought in mind.

President Barry was not a profound theological thinker, and he would be the first to admit that. But he did have a tremendous concern for theology and a great pastoral heart. And he showed that it's possible to exert theological leadership even though you're not necessarily the most learned person in theology in the world. He was not afraid or reluctant to surround himself with people who were more accomplished in their theological learning formally than he, but that didn't stop him either from producing things especially aimed at laypeople right were they were—the "What About" pamphlets, which are still being sold by Concordia Publishing House, books on things like catechesis and worship and the devotion and prayer life, a book on the Book of Acts called *To the Ends of the Earth*, all designed to get people thinking theologically, thinking about Christ and His love, and how that goes out to people.

He did love to communicate with laypeople. In that way I think that if you wanted find any former president of the Synod to whom to compare President Barry, it would be Schwan, H. C. Schwan, who I guess you're not talking about in this series but who was president of the Synod already back in the 19th century, and he was president for like 20 years, a tremendously important figure in the history of our church. Schwan was the chairman of the committee that produced the Synodical Catechism Explanation that in one way or another is in use to this day. But Schwan loved to sit around at district conventions and

synodical conventions, just go out under the trees, sit in the shade, light up his pipe and gather a group of laypeople around him and talk theology. Well, except for the pipe part, that was Al Barry. I mean he loved to do that.

He was a practical theologian, in the best sense of the word. And he always used to emphasize practice. He would always say we stop short in our typical formulation, "We believe, teach, and confess." We need to add one more verb in there, he said: "We believe, teach, and confess, *and practice*." And that led him to do things organizationally within the structure of the Synod as its president. He championed the idea of there being a Commission on Worship. When he first became president, there was some significant doubt about whether the Synod would continue to have a discreet Commission on Worship. But he said, "No, we've got to have that." And, by the way, when the Commission on Worship, which continued to survive, was sitting around thinking about when it might want to publish a new hymnal, which finally we did get here in the year 2006, they went to something that Al Barry had said, because he had just sort of said off-handedly, "Now, I think we're probably going to need a new hymnal, you know, in about the year 2006 – 2007." [Laughs] He was saying that already back in the '90s. And the Commission on Worship, when they thought about it and rolled it around and did their analysis, said, "Yeah, that's when we're going to need a new hymnal. That's what we need to be focusing on and pointing toward."

He also organized and chaired and gave the keynote speech for a 150th Anniversary Theological Convocation, because he was president during the 150th anniversary year of the Synod back in 1997. He appointed, about that time, a church growth study committee, which produced really a very, very good report that I think still bears reading and reflecting on to this day.

One of the things for which I think he may be best remembered, and in living memory, and deservedly so, was what he had first called the "3-10 Emphasis," because he saw the calendar page turning on that new millennium. Already in the late '90s he saw it coming up in the future and he said, "Well, now what's the best way for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to go into a new century and indeed a new millennium?" And he said the best way to do it is with an emphasis on outreach. So three years of intensive preparation followed by ten years – and we would I guess be now in the tenth year of those years – of extensive outreach with the Gospel. Now since then that emphasis has kind of gotten taken over by other things, but the Synod did formally adopt, back in 1998, the idea of, you know, three years of extensive preparation, then ten years of extensive proclamation of the Gospel. There was nothing better that Al Barry could figure: faithfulness and outreach, you know. He kept playing on that string again and again

WILKEN: Let's talk a little bit about something that is much in the mind of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod today and, it turns out, was also in the mind of its president, A. L. Barry, at the time, and that is the need for, if you will, the way that the church body is structured to be rethought and restructured.

SCHURB: [Laughs] Well, President Barry kind of had that one foisted upon him. He wasn't really looking for that one as a challenge. But while he was president, during his first term, the Commission on Constitutional Matters of the Synod basically said, "You know something? We've got some things that have been adopted here recently with respect to some of the associated corporations that the Synod has, like its publishing house and its Foundation and things like that, that just don't fit together." And so the Commission on Constitutional Matters said, "You know these things as they stand are unconstitutional." And so he acted very quickly. He appointed a blue ribbon committee. And I worked with that group, and I can tell you, it was a *blue* ribbon committee. I think you just had Paul Zimmerman on. He was part of that group. Some really profound

thinkers not only in theology, but also in administration and business and law, but certainly not excluding theology. And when he appointed that group in 1995 he was looking ahead to them having something for the Synod to go to the 1998 convention, but he told them, "I want you to have the complete report done, at least in its penultimate version, a full year prior to the convention." Now they were dealing, that group, with a relatively small slice of the pie; they were not dealing with the entire structure of the Synod. But he said, "No, you need to have something for people to look at and critique and respond to a full year ahead of time, because you need that. He was very convinced, again, with his sensitivity to the parish, that most parish pastors, most lay people do not spend their time pouring over the synodical structure. When somebody's proposing changes, they need time to wrap their minds around it. He thought, The more changes you're proposing, the more time ahead you've got to give the Synod to really catch up to what you're talking about and be able to evaluate. So he was all in favor of taking things very slowly, very deliberately, not rushing in, and, well, having haste make waste.

WILKEN: And what can we learn from the time that he spent as president, A. L. Barry, and how he comported himself during that time?

SCHURB: I used to say that, I used to tell him this directly, his greatest attribute as a leader was his model. People wanted to be a pastor like Al Barry was a pastor. They wanted to be in some cases a preacher like Al Barry was a preacher. They certainly wanted to be a caring Christian like Al Barry was a caring Christian. A father like he was a father. He was a great model. That's one lesson.

Another lesson is what I said before: Al Barry was not the most learned or profound theologian in the world. His example, and that of so many of his predecessors, like that of Schwan who lived in the days of, you know, Walther and Pieper. There were better theologians around than Schwan, of course, but he was able to exert theological leadership because he was interested in theology, he was interested in the Gospel and in teaching people that Gospel and in getting that message out to the world. And again, that was Al Barry all over.

WILKEN: Is it true, the kind of legend of Dr. Barry, that you couldn't sit next to him on an airplane without at some point in that flight, short or long, getting the Gospel from him?

SCHURB: Oh, yeah. Yeah, he called that his niche. That was on of his niches. And I think it's a very good, practical piece of advice that I still give to laypeople today. You know, you can't constantly be "on," looking for every conceivable opportunity to share the Gospel, or you're not going to be able to do that with equal efficiency. But what you can do is kind of target particular things, particular, as he called them, niches. And one of his niches was that seat next to him on the airplane. Because you're right, Todd, if you sat next to him, he would tell you that he had made it a goal to speak about Christ with whoever sat in that seat, and doggone it you were sitting in that seat, and so you were going to hear.

WILKEN: Ken, you know it actually occurs to me here as we end this series that one more question is in order, and that is, why is it important that the leaders of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have both a theological mind and a pastoral heart?

SCHURB: Well, we are after all talking about churchly things here, which if the church is doing what it ought to do, will center on Christ and the proclamation of His Gospel and the teaching of justification by grace through faith. That's the teaching upon which the church stands or falls. Now a leader of a church body as big as the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in this day and age particularly, needs to have all kinds of skills, and I'm not going to say that any of the sort of ancillary skills is unimportant. But if the president doesn't have a theological mind, isn't interested in that, and doesn't place that first, then what is going to end up being first, by default almost, just for lack of attention? And if the

president doesn't have a pastoral heart, if he doesn't bear in mind the fact that this is all ultimately aimed at the salvation of people right where they are, those who are right now in the pews or those who might be around the corner waiting to be reached by those who are in the pews, if the president doesn't have that vision in mind, then where will the organization go? And it may not be that anybody's deliberately sort of pushing it downstream; it can just drift.

WILKEN: Dr. Ken Schurb is pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Moberly, Missouri. He served as an assistant for President A. L. Barry. Ken, thank you again.

SCHURB: It's always a pleasure, Todd. Thank you.

WILKEN: Now if the case weren't already made from history itself that what the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod needs and is best served by is a man who is first and foremost a pastor at heart and a theologian in his mind and approach to his church, let's make that case. This is precisely what Christ has called His pastors to be. To be a theologian isn't an expert in all matters theologically. It is a man who is immersed in the Word of God, and of course our expertise runs the gamut, but it is a man who is immersed in the Word of God, who is concerned first and foremost about what God says. That's the definition of a theologian, someone who is concerned first and foremost about what God says, and then says those things that God says in His Word. It means he will think theologically, he will think like someone who wants to know what God says about any given situation. He will think according to God's Word, and not first and foremost according to bylaws and regulations and constitutional subsections. Scripture will be his vocabulary, and the way he thinks about himself, his leadership, and his church. And has Christ not also called every pastor to be pastoral, to have a pastoral heart that is a heart for the sheep of God who sees himself first and foremost as a servant serving God's call, the flock of God with the Word of God, and not as the bureaucrat that happens to sit at the top of the corporate heap, not as someone who views himself as a C.E.O. of an institution, but as a servant and a shepherd. Those two things—the theological mind, the pastoral heart—they have always served God's church well from the time of the Apostles, they have always served the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod well from its very beginnings, and God willing and we pray that a man with a pastoral heart and a theological mind will continue to serve the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in leadership. I'm Todd Wilken. Thanks for listening to *Issues, Etc.*

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