

FRANZ AUGUST OTTO PIEPER

Teacher and Leader in the Church

BORN: JUNE 27, 1852 Karwitz, Pomerania, Germany

DIED: JUNE 3, 1931 Saint Louis, Missouri

FRANZ PIEPER WAS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT LEADERS IN THE HISTORY OF THE LCMS during its first century, serving both as president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (1887–1931), and Synod president (1899–1911). Born in northern Germany, Pieper emigrated to the U.S. in 1870 with his widowed mother and several brothers. The family settled in Watertown, Wis., where Franz attended a Wisconsin Synod college for men preparing for the pastoral ministry. Since the Wisconsin Synod did not have its own seminary at the time, Pieper was trained at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis (CSL), after which he served as pastor of Wisconsin Synod congregations in Centerville and Manitowoc, Wis.

1878 was a turning point in Pieper's life, when he was called as professor of theology at CSL. There he taught and worked under Seminary President C.F.W. Walther. Eventually, Pieper would succeed Walther as president of the school.

Pieper committed himself to theological education. One of his students recalled that in the classroom, he was “a great teacher, a sound theologian, a true Lutheran, a sincere Christian” (Theodore Graebner, *Dr. Francis Pieper: A Biographical Sketch*, 58).

In addition to teaching seminary students biblical and doctrinal theology, Pieper quickly began to work as a writer and essayist. He wrote numerous articles for seminary and Synod publications. He was a regular presenter of essays at theological conferences and at district and national conventions. He was a key defender of the Synod's doctrinal position in the controversy over predestination and election in American Lutheranism starting in the 1880s.

Pieper was a strong supporter of home and foreign mission work, serving on boards and committees to promote the work of bringing the Gospel to the world.

His work in doctrinal theology made Pieper a leading voice in the LCMS and he was elected Synod president in 1899, a position he held for 11 years even while he served as professor and president at Concordia Seminary.

The culmination of his work as a theologian was the publication of his three-volume *Christliche Dogmatik* (1917–1924), later translated into English as *Christian Dogmatics*. He began the work as he was convalescing after serious illness; he started by writing on the doctrine of Christ.

Pieper's *Dogmatics* became the standard theological textbook for the Synod's seminaries even into the present time and has helped to maintain a strong Lutheran confessional basis in the Synod for over a century.

Pieper's legacy as a teacher, theologian and seminary and church administrator will not be soon forgotten in the Synod to which he dedicated himself in service.

For more information about the 175th anniversary of the LCMS, visit lcms.org/175.

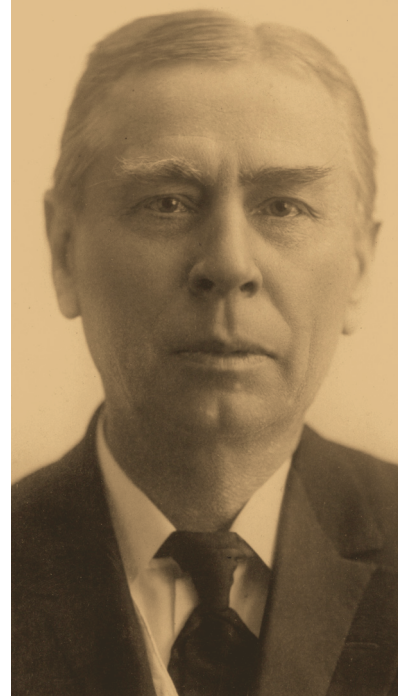


DISCOVER MORE

Francis Pieper, *The Church and Her Treasure: Lectures on Justification* trans. O. Marc Tangner (Fort Wayne, IN: Luther Academy, 2007).

“Francis August Otto Pieper,” *The Lutheran Witness* 50 no. 12 (June 9, 1931): 197–198.

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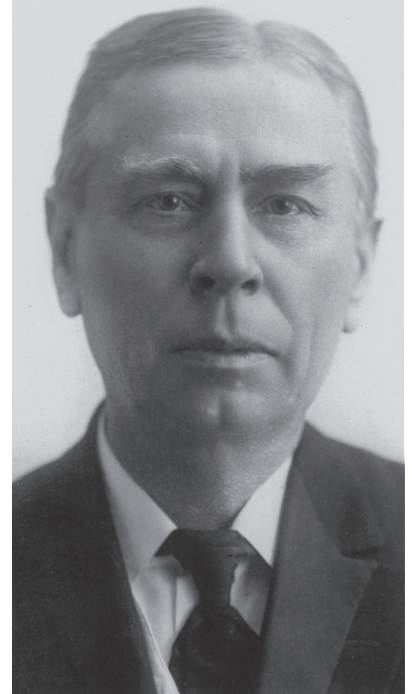


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