

Franz Pieper¹

Biographical Note

Francis August Otto Pieper was born on 27 June 1851 in Karwitz, Pomerania, as one of seven children born to August Pieper and his wife, Bertha Lohf. His father was the town's mayor. After finishing grammar school, he attended the junior colleges (Gymnasien) at Koeslin and Kolberg. In the spring of 1870 he accompanied his widowed mother and three of his siblings (Karl, August and Anton) as they emigrated to America. His older brothers, Julius and Reinhold, had left for America earlier, and his oldest sister, Minnie, remained in Germany.

In the fall of 1870 Pieper enrolled in Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin, and graduated from this institution in 1872. He next studied at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, where he graduated in June 1875.



Pieper's first call brought him to the Wisconsin Synod congregations of St. John and St. Peter at Hika (then Centerville), Wisconsin, which he served until November 1877. He then he accepted a call to the First German Evangelical Lutheran Church, Manitowoc, Wisconsin. In June 1878 Pieper was called to fill the vacant professorship in the dogmatics department at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

At this time Pieper was the youngest professor called to teach at Concordia Seminary. Only nine years later, after the death of Dr. C. F. W. Walther, he was named president of the seminary and remained in this position until his death in 1931. From 1899 to 1911 he also held the position of president of the Missouri Synod. From 1882 to 1899 he also served as secretary for the Board of Colored Missions of the Lutheran Synodical Conference.

On 8 September 1903 an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred on him by Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin. Just three weeks later representatives of the Norwegian Synod presented Pieper with an honorary Doctor of Theology degree bestowed by Luther College, Decorah, Iowa. During Pieper's administration as president the new seminary facilities on DeMun Avenue in Clayton were built and dedicated in 1926.

Pieper was well known outside of Missouri Synod circles because of his publications and editing. He wrote many articles for *Der Lutheraner* and *Lehre und Wehre*, and translations of his work also appeared in the *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Among his most valuable literary contributions were the essays he presented at numerous synodical and district conventions. His most well known work is the three-volume *Christliche Dogmatik*, published between 1917 and 1924 and translated into English in the 1950s.

¹ Taken from Concordia Historical Institute.

On 2 January 1877 Pieper married Minnie Koehn at Sheboygan, Wisconsin. The marriage was blessed with thirteen children: Paula (Mrs. Julius Cloeter, b.3 Jan. 1878), Francis (27 July 1879-15 Nov. 1932), Theodore (17 Aug. 1912-23 Aug. 1946), Eric (17 Mar. 1897-23 Mar. 1965), Clara (Mrs. Rudolf Ressmeyer, m.4 Aug. 1915), Lucie, Emma (Mrs. George F. Schmidt, b.9 Nov. 1888, m.17 June 1909), Else (Mrs. L. Blankenbuehler, b.19 July 1892, m.18 July 1913), Irene (medical doctor, Mrs. George C. Koenig, d.18 June 1967), George, Arthur, Julia (d.1908), and Ada (d.1926). On 6 August 1884 Pieper became a naturalized citizen of the United States.

Pieper died after a short illness on 3 June 1931 at St. Louis and was buried in Immanuel Cemetery (Western Lutheran Cemetery) in St. Louis, where the family had been members and where he served as assistant pastor to J. F. Buenger.