

ARTHUR CARL PIEPKORN  
and  
“THE SCHISM OF AUTHORITY”  
IN LUTHERANISM

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The topic assigned to me for the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions is, “A Pilgrimage Not Taken: Arthur Carl Piepkorn.” When I told Dr. David Scaer that I did not have the foggiest idea what it meant, he explained that “The title suggests that because of Piepkorn’s unexpected death, he was not faced with the decisions his colleagues were.”<sup>1</sup>

Arthur Carl Piepkorn, of blessed memory, was translated to his everlasting reward on December 13, 1973.<sup>2</sup> The colleagues referred to by Scaer are the ones in the faculty majority who processed off the campus of Concordia Seminary into exile—or “pilgrimage,” if you

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<sup>1</sup> May 2008 email. Because I am unable to show the PowerPoint slides I used when I presented this paper, I have rearranged the order of some of the sections and added some material to the text, but most of the paper is the same as what I delivered at the Symposium at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana, on January 21, 2009. The Piepkorn Papers consist of 148 boxes of Piepkorn’s personal and professional writings located in the Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in Elk Grove Village, Illinois. Herein they are cited as PP, followed by the box and folder number. The 28 boxes of his files for *Profiles in Belief* are located in the Archives of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. I have only looked at the boxes in that collection that deal with Lutheranism.

<sup>2</sup> The Seminary Board of Control asked professors to explain how they would address, in their classes, certain issues. Piepkorn was on sabbatical beginning December 1, 1973, and so did not need to reply at the time, but did so anyway, perhaps to suggest to his colleagues how they might respond to the Board of Control on this matter. The Board offered Piepkorn the choice of “honorary retirement or modified service.” He replied in a December 1 letter that he would not accept “honorary” retirement unless his good name was cleared by the Board. PP 7-20. He died before the Board could act on his request. See “Arthur Carl Piepkorn, Confessor,” *Lutheran Forum* 38:3 (Una Sancta/Fall 2004): 28-36, for details.

will—on February 19, 1974, after they had been fired for breach of contract for failing to meet their classes.<sup>3</sup>

Scaer added a caution:

You may take into account that today's seminary students and pastors under the age 55 would have little if any knowledge of Piepkorn and his importance. Thus you cannot presuppose any previous knowledge from the audience except with those who have a firm liturgical commitment.<sup>4</sup>

Scaer added that I may develop the assigned topic anyway I wish. I will do that by changing the title to “Arthur Carl Piepkorn and ‘the Schism of Authority’ in Lutheranism.” First I will seek to introduce Piepkorn to those who are unfamiliar with him. Then I will describe what he called “a kind of schism of authority” in Lutheranism, a schism that, if anything, is worse today than in his time.

I was a full-time or part-time student at the seminary for eleven years. Piepkorn taught at least 18 different courses at the seminary while he was there, probably more. I took or audited almost every one I could, but was only able to take or audit fewer than half of his courses. I have not read all of his published articles, let alone all of his thousands of unpublished essays, studies, sermons and letters. Consequently, what I will say today is neither exhaustive nor definitive. Its main purpose is to interest you in reading his writings for yourself.

## I. Arthur Carl Piepkorn<sup>5</sup>

### **Piepkorn’s First Parish**

Arthur Carl Piepkorn served as an interim pastor twice, as the sole pastor of congregations for more than seven years, and as a full time chaplain in the U.S. Army for eleven years. From 1933-1936, he was the missionary-in-charge of Grace Lutheran Church in Chisholm, Minnesota, is a small iron ore mining town 50 miles northwest of Duluth. His ministry there will set a pattern that we will see repeated throughout his life.

Grace Church was a wood frame structure with no basement, heated by a wood stove in the nave. In the only photo that I have found of it, it appears to have shiny black sides.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The procession is often referred to as a “walk out,” but that term is normally used of employees who still have their jobs. The professors had been fired for failing to meet their classes during the class boycott. The action was also a ceremonial action, ending off campus, so “procession” is a more accurate word.

<sup>4</sup> May 2008 Email.

<sup>5</sup> See the Addendum for an overview of his life.

Pastor Piepkorn persuaded the congregation to have the building dragged back from the curb so the sides would be hidden by the two adjacent buildings.

Piepkorn also served four mission stations and two Civilian Conservation Corps camps in the surrounding area. His parish was 900 square miles in size.<sup>7</sup>

The years 1932-35 were the four worst years of the Great Depression in terms of unemployment, which may have been twice as bad in Chisholm as in the nation as a whole. Piepkorn arrived with a debt of \$11,000 in 2007 dollars, had to pay for his own office expenses, secretarial help, and advertising, and owed more than \$16,000 in 2007 dollars in late August of 1936.<sup>8</sup>

When Piepkorn arrived he was able to find only “nine bona fide communicants and twenty souls” who were members of Grace Church. In 1936, however, he was able to write: “Three years of work have multiplied both figures by nine.”<sup>9</sup> He baptized 138 candidates in the 38 months he was there. Part way through his tenure, he was able to report that the per communicant giving average of Grace Church was higher than the average of the Minnesota District as a whole.<sup>10</sup>

I grew up in Grand Rapids, in the lake country 35 miles southwest of Chisholm. My home congregation sent mission offerings to Grace Church on at least two occasions while Piepkorn served it. He was in my home church many times and ate many meals in the parsonage because the pastor and his wife took pity on Piepkorn, who was a bachelor.<sup>11</sup> But I never heard of Arthur Carl Piepkorn until 1959 and never met him until 1960.

### **The Priority of the Church of the Augsburg Confession**

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<sup>6</sup> A map and photo of the building is posted on the Biography section of [www.Piepkorn.org](http://www.Piepkorn.org). At some point a basement was installed. When Grace Church built a new church in 1948, the old building was moved to a new foundation and the sides bricked up. It is still used as a residence today.

<sup>7</sup> He said that he wore a clerical collar in Chisholm because the Methodist minister did and the members of Grace wanted him to look as professional as the Methodist minister. It was also much more practical for the bachelor, Piepkorn, who sent his laundry home to his mother for washing and ironing. He saw temperatures as low as 56 degrees below zero, absolute, and his second hand car repeatedly broke down miles from help, often in winter.

<sup>8</sup> A loan from Arthur Carl Kreinheder reduced the size of this debt before Piepkorn left Chisholm.

<sup>9</sup> “Missionary Miseries By One Who Had Them,” *Lutheran Forum* 43, (Una Sancta/Fall 2008): 22-25. Here 23. This previously unpublished document was written by Piepkorn in late August or early September of 1936.

<sup>10</sup> “The Lutheran Church A Sacramental Church,” *Augustana Quarterly* 17, (January 1938). Reprinted in Arthur Carl Piepkorn, *The Church*, Volume 1 in the *Selected Writings of Arthur Carl Piepkorn*. Ed. Michael P. Plekon and William S. Wiecher. ALPB Books: New Delhi, 1993 edition: 78; 2006 edition: 88. Hereafter this volume is cited as *SWAPC*, followed by the volume number, the edition in parentheses, and the page number(s).

<sup>11</sup> For details, see the Anecdotes page on [www.Piepkorn.org](http://www.Piepkorn.org).

Arthur Carl Piepkorn cannot be understood apart from his understanding of the doctrine of the Church, so it is essential to take a brief look at a basic element of it now.

He preferred to call our Church “the Church of the Augsburg Confession,” rather than “the Lutheran Church.” From as early as 1947 he asserted that the Church of the Augsburg Confession was both logically and chronologically prior to the Roman Catholic Church.

The Church of the Augsburg Confession, he reasoned, took on its distinctive form after the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. The Roman Catholic Church that we know, he said, took on its distinctive form when it adopted a series of new dogmas during the Council of Trent in of 1545 and following.<sup>12</sup>

Piepkorn’s most famous saying is: “We are Catholic Christians first, Western Catholics second, and Lutherans only third.”

In 1973, he explained that statement, in part, with this:

On the “high articles of the divine majesty” I see myself as standing in agreement with all Christians; in the articles which the Lutheran symbolical books discuss I see myself as standing in agreement with all who with me are committed to the acceptance of the doctrinal content of the Book of Concord; in many points of teaching beyond these issues I see a wide range of positions both on points of synthesized and formulated theology and on the interpretation of individual passages of the sacred scriptures where there is no unanimity.<sup>13</sup>

In this paper, the word “Catholic”—with or without a capital C—means the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

### “The Beloved, *Legendary Figure*”

Piepkorn’s academic career lasted only from 1951-73, yet he published in at least thirty different fields of publication.<sup>14</sup> Articles he wrote appeared in at least thirty-three different journals, and seven encyclopedias. He delivered scores of essays and papers that have never been published. He wrote thousands of letters to professors, clergy and lay people who wrote to him. Many of these letters are mini-theological treatises. The controversy we are discussing at this Symposium occupied much of his time and energy. He did all of this

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<sup>12</sup> For details, see my, “Introduction,” in Arthur Carl Piepkorn, *The Sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Confession*, volume 2 in the *Selected Writings of Arthur Carl Piepkorn*, edited and introduced by Philip James Secker (CEC Press: Mansfield, 2007): xxxiv, note ac. Hereafter this volume is cited as *SWACP*, followed by the volume and page number(s).

<sup>13</sup> Arthur Carl Piepkorn, “[I Believe],” in *Personal Confessions of Faith and Discussion of Issues*, Part 2 in *Faithful to Our Calling, Faithful to Our Lord: An Affirmation in Two Parts*, by the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, [1973]. n.p., pp. 107-19. Reprinted in *SWACP*, 2:282-96. Here 288.

<sup>14</sup> See the Addendum for additional information on his publications.

while carrying an academic and administrative load that is unbelievable to professors who teach in secular universities. He was always generous with his time with his students.<sup>15</sup>

A good way to quickly become acquainted with his contributions and importance is to read what others who were not involved in the controversy in the Synod have said about him. Here are some quotations from some of those people:

*Raymond E. Brown, S.S.:* “We Roman Catholics on the Dialogue Committee were not prepared for Arthur Carl Piepkorn. He bowled us over, not only by his immense erudition, his knowledge of the fathers of the Church—East, as well as West—, with his knowledge also of the medieval scholastics, and not least by the profundity of his churchmanship.”<sup>16</sup>

*Raymond E. Brown, S.S.,* as reported by John H. Elliott: “Fr. Ray Brown, my old friend and an ardent admirer of Piepkorn, knew him as a fellow member of the Lutheran/Roman Catholic Dialogues. Ray considered him—these are his words—‘the most brilliant theologian’ he had ever met. And Ray had met most of the biggies. Quite a tribute to Arthur Carl.”<sup>17</sup>

*Robert Louis Wilken, William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of the History of Christianity at the University of Virginia:* “For those who knew him it was Piepkorn the person and teacher and priest and confessor who is most fondly remembered. For he was a holy man, a saint who lived among us, and changed our lives. He embodied the Christian virtues of humility, faithfulness, obedience, love and patience. He loved the Church not as an idea but as a mother that gives life, and he taught us to ‘think with the Church.’ He was a man of prayer and from his example we learned the discipline of regular prayer, doing things simply because they were the things one did as a Christian. He once wrote, ‘When our hands our folded and knees bent we learn most efficiently what it means to be a Christian and what the Church has called us to do as Church.’”<sup>18</sup>

*George Lindbeck, Pitkin Professor of Church Historical Theology at Yale:* Piepkorn “very quickly established himself as the *dominant* figure in [the Lutheran-Roman Catholic] Dialogue.... and he did this without *anything* like personal presence, unusual personal presence. His demeanor was always modest and gracious. One soon discovered that he knew more about a larger number of fields that were pertinent to our work than anybody else did. He knew the Latin and the Greek fathers better than anybody else. We had no Patristic specialists. He knew the Biblical materials *better* than any of the non-biblical scholars. [The Biblical scholars] soon found that Piepkorn was a non-biblical scholar that they had to speak to as an equal, and they didn’t speak like an equal to any of the rest of us. He knew Denziger better than any of the Catholics who were present—that’s the Roman Catholic compendium of official statements. And of course he knew the Book of Concord better than any of the Lutherans.

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<sup>15</sup> His use of true and false quizzes, in which one point was deducted for incorrect answers, making a score of less than zero possible, is well known. The deduction was to discourage guessing. As a Junior High student and beyond Piepkorn had always read beyond the assigned readings, but knew many seminary students were not as highly motivated and needed an added incentive to do the assigned readings in a timely fashion. I remember once when Arthur Repp, who had a doctorate in education, gave in to the students’ complaints, and agreed not to have a quiz on the following Monday. On Monday he asked all who had read the assigned readings to raise their hands. Only a few hands went up. Repp re-instigated the quizzes. See the Anecdotes page on [www.Piepkorn.org](http://www.Piepkorn.org) for additional information on Piepkorn’s quizzes, which often employed Latin and German. I am sure that some students in Piepkorn’s classes had below zero quiz averages.

<sup>16</sup> As reported by David Lotz at the observance of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Death of Arthur Carl Piepkorn at Immanuel Lutheran Church at 88<sup>th</sup> and Lexington, Manhattan, on December 13, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> 12/9/08 email.

<sup>18</sup> At the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, as printed in “Arthur Carl Piepkorn: On the Anniversary of His Death,” *Lutheran Forum* 33:2 (Pentecost/Summer 1999):46-52. Here 52.

He taught it more. He had studied it more carefully. And he had a better memory. He could quote it in German and Latin and English, sometimes—it seemed—simultaneously.

“And so Piepkorn was a person that one turned to as a *resource*. When one wanted to know something about almost anything, one asked Piepkorn. In addition he had a fluency of thought, a rigorousness of thought, and when the occasion called for it, an eloquence that was as great as that of John Courtney Murray, one *indeed* magisterial. And, this was *not* resented.... *Everybody* liked him and came to appreciate him *enormously*. So he became a rather legendary figure in that small group of dialogue, in that Lutheran/Roman Catholic Dialogue. The *beloved*, legendary figure.”<sup>19</sup>

*George Lindbeck in the Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 41, (2004):3-4. “Some Lutherans took their role as catholic reformers very seriously and were at times better informed than at least some of their Roman Catholic counterparts about aspects of Catholic teaching. This could be embarrassing when someone like Arthur Carl Piepkorn, whose reading and memory were prodigious, would outquote Denziger (in Latin) against a powerhouse such as John Courtney Murray when both of them were on the North American dialogue before their untimely deaths.”

### **From Habitual to “In-Formed” Faith, 1907-1928**

In 1971, two years before Piepkorn’s death, the Fact Finding Committee appointed by Jacob A. O. Preus, President of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, asked Piepkorn how he looked “upon [his] ordination vow and [his] obligation to the Lord and to The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod with reference to the Scriptures and the Confessions.”<sup>20</sup>

Piepkorn replied: “I think there are one or two items in my biography ... that do have a bearing on these matters and with your permission I will bring those up.”<sup>21</sup>

The first biographical item was the influence that his parents, especially his father, had on him. Here is how he described it to the committee:

I think I learned from him one important point, [namely, that] the privilege of dissent is something that can be purchased only at the cost of two things. One is loyalty to the ideal for which the institution stands, and the other is doing your homework and making sure of your ground.<sup>22</sup>

The second biographical item that Piepkorn referred to involved two incidents that took place when he was a graduate student in Oriental languages and literature at the University of Chicago in the fall of 1928. Here is how he described the incidents to the committee:

I went up to the University with a habitual faith, but I found myself, very shortly, ill-equipped to meet either the problem of personal religion—I learned this in a personal religion group—or confrontation with other Christians. And my own basis, really, for my affection for the Lutheran symbolical books came as a result of the efforts of a

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<sup>19</sup> At the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Emphasis added on the basis of the tape recording.

<sup>20</sup> Dr. Paul Zimmerman, “Interview with the Fact Finding Committee,” April 1971. PP 22-74.

<sup>21</sup> “Interview,” p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> “Interview,” p. 1.

University of Chicago fellow-student of mine to persuade me to become an Episcopalian.<sup>23</sup>

Piepkorn does not give us any details about this personal religion group. I assume it was a Bible study or prayer group. What is important is what he did. He might have turned to the Bible, because he was a highly skilled exegete of both Greek and Hebrew and was enrolled in the department of Old Testament at the Divinity School of the University. He could have turned to C.F.W. Walther's edition of John William Baier's 17<sup>th</sup> century dogmatics.<sup>24</sup> He could have taken out the dogmatics of Francis Pieper, whom he referred to as his "revered professor." But he had learned from Walther that our pastors and teachers are obligated to interpret the Sacred Scriptures according to the Book of Concord. So he took out his copy of the Book of Concord. This set him off on a new pilgrimage that was to change his whole life. Here is how he described it to the committee:

And it was, as I went into the symbolical books of the Lutheran church, which I had *merely cursorily skimmed* through in the *very brief course* we had at the seminary at the time, that I discovered that here lay the real strength of the Lutheran tradition, and I am profoundly grateful that I had this experience. The other thing that I learned at this point was the sacramental position of the Lutheran Church, which in 1928 was still not particularly strongly developed. As a result these two elements that came out of this sharp encounter have tended to inform my whole ministerial career.<sup>25</sup>

Piepkorn had learned from his father the importance of being loyal to the ideal for which an institution stands, and of doing one's homework. He began that homework intently in 1928. We have already seen an example of his loyalty and hard work in his faithful service in the very difficult conditions he encountered in northern Minnesota. He will continue this pattern throughout his life.

### **From Habitual to "In-Formed" Faith, 1907-1928**

Arthur Carl Piepkorn began the pilgrimage of life on June 21, 1907, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Sixteen days later, on July 7, he began his pilgrimage as a Christian.

From some time in the 1930's, he began to use his full Christian name in his signature.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> "Interview," p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Compendium Theologiae Positivae*.

<sup>25</sup> "Interview," p. 2. Emphasis added.

<sup>26</sup> A question he raised in a reply to a correspondent in 1970 suggests what his reason may have been: "Would it not be better to spell out the Christian names in full if initials are deemed necessary?" July 19, 1970. PP 109-750.

Some of his ancestors were among the Huguenots who fled religious persecution in France.<sup>27</sup> In 1971, he told a correspondent that “My great-grandfather was the first commoner to sign the charter of the Old Lutheran Church in Gross-Justin, Pomerania, in protest against the Prussian Union (the local *Graf* [Prince] signed first!).<sup>28</sup>

On a wall in his home, he proudly displayed a medal his paternal grandfather had been awarded for service in Union forces during the Civil War, and the musket he had used.

In “Missionary Miseries,” Piepkorn wrote: “The fact of my vocation has always been a matter of mild surprise to my relatives, since I am the first parson in thirteen generations of ancestors in any traceable direction.”<sup>29</sup>

Piepkorn was the only natural child of John Albert Piepkorn, a realtor and appliance store owner, and Bertha nee Taenzer Piepkorn, a seamstress and inventor with at least one patent. Sometime prior to his birth, they were excommunicated from the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod for dancing on Whitsun Eve.<sup>30</sup>

He completed five years of public school in four, two of parochial school, then skipped 8<sup>th</sup> grade and entered Concordia High School in Milwaukee two months past his 12<sup>th</sup> birthday. When he graduated from Concordia Junior College in Milwaukee, the yearbook reported that he had made “daring excursions into Assyrian.”

At the seminary, which he entered at the age of 18, he was most deeply and permanently influenced by New Testament professor William Arndt, but was also very close to Old Testament professor Dr. Walter A. Maier, whom he had known since the age of eleven.

Years later, Piepkorn was criticized for a book review in which he said there was useful information in a book that was written by a man who moved in a circle with another man who wrote a book that Maier was very critical of. Piepkorn replied as follows:

I was a close friend of the late Dr. Walter A. Maier from 1918 [when Piepkorn first met Dr. Maier] to the time of his lamented death in 1950. From 1925 to 1928, while a seminarian, I was his private secretary and [tests] corrector. From 1928-1930 I was closely associated with him in the production of the Walter League Messenger. I helped put the Lutheran Hour on the air in 1930 and served as radio secretary of the Lutheran Laymen’s League in 1930-31 and again in 1936-37. Dr. Maier was the God-father of my oldest daughter. At the time of his illness, I took over for him on the Lutheran Hour and subsequently served as the first interim speaker following his

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<sup>27</sup> Presentation at Virginia Junior College, Virginia, Minnesota, February 16, 1934, PP 34-1, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Letter to Cornelius Freiherr von Heyl, June 28, 1971.

<sup>29</sup> “Missionary,” p. 22.

<sup>30</sup> Email from Mary Piepkorn Eckart, October 16, 2003.

death. I knew him well enough to be certain that his confidence in his Heavenly Father in Christ was such that no man could break his heart!

Furthermore, Dr. Maier's rejection of rightist subversion was as explicit as was his rejection of leftist subversion.<sup>31</sup>

Both Maier and Piepkorn were loyal to the ideal for which the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod stood. Both did their homework and made sure of their grounds. And both rejected rightist and leftist extremes.

When Piepkorn graduated from the seminary, he wanted to go to China as a missionary. But because he had skipped two grades along the way, he was too young to be ordained. So his professors encouraged him to study for a doctorate instead. He enrolled in the department of Old Testament at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, but specialized in Oriental languages and literature at the Oriental Institute, as his mentor, Walter Maier had done in a similar institute at Harvard.<sup>32</sup> The two incidents I described earlier, took place after his arrival there in the fall of 1928.

### **From Assyriology to Professor of Symbolics**

After two years at the University, Piepkorn accepted a position as Radio Secretary for the Lutheran Laymen's League, and helped put the Lutheran Hour on the air. Since the position required ordination, he was ordained into the Sacred Ministry on the First Sunday of Advent in 1930.

By the time he had completed his doctorate and a post-doctoral fellowship, the Great Depression was still deepening and universities were not hiring specialists in Assyriology. Nor were missionaries being sent to China. So he listed his name with the proper authorities "for assignment to foreign missions or to some domestic appointment," and on the last

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<sup>31</sup> Piepkorn's February 17, 1955, reply to the Rev. L. of Wisconsin is in PP 93-479. Piepkorn's January 1955 review of Ralph Lord Roy's *Apostles of Discord: A Study of Organized Bigotry and Disruption on the Fringes of Protestantism*, is in the January 1955 issue of the *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 24:1, 74-76. Piepkorn is critical of many things in the book, but says the book "is a handy prophylactic to have around when [the bigots condemned by book] approach us personally or through the mails." After my presentation at the Symposium but before I edited paper for posting on the seminary website, I asked Paul L. Maier if he knew of any theological differences between his father and Piepkorn. Here is Paul's reply: "More importantly, I never recall any time, in our home life or beyond, that my father criticized Piepkorn for his theology or practice. Quite on the contrary! The only reservation he had was one that we both know about: cautioning ACP not to move too quickly with his liturgical reform. My father knew all about our conservative church, and, like St. Paul, wanted no one turned off or excluded by something perceived as 'new' in the church. This also explains why he used phrases like 'accept Christ,' which had the widest possible appeal. The theological niceties behind that phrase can be explained to people later on." February 6, 2009. email.

<sup>32</sup> 12/12/66 letter, PP 100-694.

Sunday of August, 1933, was installed as “missionary-in-charge” of Grace Church in Chisholm, Minnesota.<sup>33</sup>

While he was in Chisholm he met Miriam Sodergren through her sister, Anita, who was married to a Lutheran pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in a small town north of Chisholm. In due time, the couple wanted to marry. But there was a problem. He describes it in “Missionary Miseries” as follows: “My Church does not forbid her priests to marry, but the salary that her Board for Home Missions pays to those priests does.”<sup>34</sup>

In the closing paragraphs of “Missionary Miseries,” he wrote:

If this screed is ever printed, I fear that it will be misunderstood. It is not a complaint. I am not dissatisfied; like Saint Paul, I endeavor in whatsoever condition I am therewith to be content, and my endeavor has been moderately successful. As long as my Lord wants me to remain in Bartonville, I am content to remain. If it is His will that I should not marry, I am content, and I anticipate that I shall be as successful in living chastely in the future as I have been in the past. If it is His will that I must desist from following those particular paths of intellectual interest which have claimed my feet so far, I am content, and I trust that my healthy curiosity about everything will find me some field where the bibliographical demands are not beyond my ability. And in all these things I am not wearily resigned, but I shall accept the indications of His will with joyful enthusiasm.<sup>35</sup>

But every once in a while I wish that I could pay my debts and be an honest man again!<sup>36</sup>

At the time, he had not been paid for several months because the Home Mission Board did not have the funds. But within a week or two, he received a call to once again serve as Radio Secretary for the Lutheran Laymen’s League at a salary almost three times his missionary stipend. He resigned his call, effective in October 1936, and accepted the new one. On St. Stephen’s Day, 1936, he and Miriam were united in Holy Matrimony.

In 1940, while serving St. Faith Lutheran Church<sup>37</sup> in Cleveland, he was called to active duty in the U.S. Army. He received the highest grade in his class at the U.S. Army

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<sup>33</sup> While at Grace, Piepkorn commissioned Ellen Florence Roeder to paint a triptych for the Church. It shows Martin Luther in full eucharistic vestments, elevating the chalice. It was on loan to the Concordia Historical Institute until his widow withdrew it. If you know where it is, please let me know. It should not be confused with Piepkorn’s Siegfried Reinhardt’s triptych of the triumphant Christ, which is on display in the headquarters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

<sup>34</sup> P. 25.

<sup>35</sup> His letters reveal how deeply he was in love with Miriam from early in their relationship. Yet he knew that he was to love God more. He once said in class that he never understood why Jesus obeyed His Father until he realized that Jesus did it out for love for His Father. Robert Wilken helped me realize at the Symposium that love for God is an element that is insufficiently stressed in most Lutheran theology.

<sup>36</sup> P. 25.

<sup>37</sup> “St. Faith” is a mistranslation of the German for “Holy Faith.”

Command and General Staff College, competing against line officers.<sup>38</sup> In Germany in 1944-45, as staff chaplain of the U.S. Army XXIII Corps, he supervised sixty chaplains, and interrupted and stopped the torture of a German prisoner of war.<sup>39</sup> At different times he was on the personal staffs of Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Lieutenant General Omar Bradley, and General Dwight David Eisenhower. In the latter position he was the Senior Chaplain in the European Theater.<sup>40</sup>

After returning to the United States, Piepkorn served as Commandant of the U.S. Army Chaplain School, and then as President of the U.S. Army Chaplain Board.<sup>41</sup> He was largely responsible for the Army Regulations that today protect the free exercise of religion by chaplains. One again, he did his homework, and was loyal to the ideal for which the Missouri Synod stands.

In July of 1951, Piepkorn received a call to serve as “Professor and instructor in the Department of Systematic Theology” at Concordia Seminary in Clayton, Missouri, with the added stipulation that he was “to begin his work in teaching in Symbolics and Biblical theology.” He wrote later that he was “astonished” to receive this call.

In his 1971 interview with the Fact Finding Committee, he said that “the usual progression of the new man in the systematics department was that he taught symbolics (which was presumably the easiest subject) for a semester or a year or two and then moved over into dogmatics,” which at the time was considered “the most prestigious sub-discipline in the seminary.” He accepted with the stipulation that he be allowed to stay in the area of symbolics primarily.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> This story is well known among chaplains to this day. The line officers complained to the faculty that the highly coveted designation of “Distinguished Graduate,” which would have gone to Piepkorn, should be awarded only to a line officer. The faculty agreed and awarded the designations “Distinguished Graduate,” and “Honor Graduate,” to the highest and second highest scoring line officers, respectively.

<sup>39</sup> Hearing of a line company that was having unusually successful results in interrogating German prisoners of war, Piepkorn made an unannounced visit to the tent of the company commander and found a prisoner being forced to kneel on a lieutenant’s baton. Personal recollection.

<sup>40</sup> The two weeks he spent on Bradley’s staff was probably a transitional move before his assignment to Eisenhower’s staff. When the latter headquarters was deactivated in August of 1945, he was assigned to a Theater level General Board commanded by Patton.

<sup>41</sup> The Chief of Chaplains and the Commandant of the Chaplain School are the only chaplains in the Army who exercise command of a unit. Other chaplains have only the general command authority that all officers have.

<sup>42</sup> “Interview,” p. 2. Cf. “The Crisis in Systematic Theology,” 1970, *SWACP*, 2:254. Piepkorn had taken one of the last classes of Pieper, author of the standard dogmatics of the Missouri Synod for many years, and still the test of orthodoxy for what Hermann Sasse referred to as “the old theology of Missouri as represented by Pieper and his school.” Letter to Professor Robert D. Preus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, January 19, 1975, as cited by Ronald Feuerhahn, “Hermann Sasse’s Critique of Arthur Carl Piepkorn”,

## II. The Sacramental Character of the Church

As we have heard, Arthur Carl Piepkorn made two discoveries at the University of Chicago in the fall of 1928. The second one, “the sacramental position of the Lutheran Church,” is more important than the first, since the Church Catholic is prior to and more important than the Lutheran Church. Time permits only a few words about it and the related doctrine of the ministry.

I am indebted to Dr. Scaer for the following quotation from Francis Pieper’s *Christian Dogmatics*:

Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, important as they are, do not have the same importance and necessity as basis of faith [sic] as the Word in the form of the Gospel and are therefore called secondary fundamental articles.<sup>43</sup>

While reading the Symbols in the fall of 1928 and after, Piepkorn became convinced that according to them the Word and Sacraments are *both* constitutive of the Church. In 1937 he wrote that “Christianity is in its historic aspect essentially sacramental.”<sup>44</sup> He also became convinced that the office of the ministry—although understood primarily functionally in the Lutheran Symbols—is logically and chronologically prior to the Church.<sup>45</sup>

## III. The Schism of Authority in Lutheranism

We turn now to Piepkorn’s other discovery, that the real strength of the Lutheran tradition lay in the Lutheran symbolical books.

*Shepherd the Church: Essays in Pastoral Theology Honoring Bishop Roger D. Pittelko*, (Fort Wayne: Concordia Seminary Press, 2002): 98, note 53.

<sup>43</sup> *Christian Dogmatics*, St. Louis: CPH, 1950: 1:86. As cited in David P. Scaer, “The Metamorphosis of Confessional Lutheranism,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 71:3/4 (July/August 2007): 211, n. 19. Scaer has been accused of Romanizing tendencies for appealing in this article to the “catholic principle,” by which he means “universal church practice.” (P. 214.) In “The Augsburg Confession for Our Time,” Piepkorn, who was also been accused of Romanizing tendencies, reminds his readers that with *adiaphora* “liberty responsibly exercised is itself a Catholic principle.” *SWACP*, 2:184.

<sup>44</sup> The opening words of “The Lutheran Church A Sacramental Church.” *SWACP*, 1:87.

<sup>45</sup> “The Latin [of AC 5] reads: ‘In order that we might obtain [justifying] faith ... God instituted the Ministry of teaching the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.’ In other words, the ministry is always anterior, always prior, to the faith of the people. The German text varies to the extent of saying: ‘God has instituted the office of preaching and has given Gospel and Sacraments [sic].’ (As one reads the Lutheran Symbols, it becomes very clear that for them ‘word’ always means word and sacraments.’ The two are always coordinated; the one is not thought of without the other....)” “A New Look at the Biblical and Symbolical Data Underlying the Doctrine of the Sacred Ministry,” [1965?], 63 page typescript, III, p. 45. Lest anyone think that Piepkorn is proposing some novelty, on p. 7 of this document, he states: “I am not proposing in any of these individual presentations to say anything that is new. Indeed, I feel that I should be recreant to my trust if I were to propose any novelty.” (I, p. 7) Cf. p. 4. He often made statements to this effect.

### The Symbols in Later Lutheran Orthodoxy and Post-orthodoxy

Piepkorn admitted that he was “almost notorious for the great regard” in which he held the theologians of the era of Lutheran Orthodoxy, especially the earlier theologians among them.<sup>46</sup>

Despite this enthusiasm for Lutheran Orthodoxy, he did not believe that we can revive a normative dogmatics based wholly or predominantly on this period. The reason, he wrote, is that

our world—whether we like it or not—is a post-Orthodox world. We do not have to and we cannot answer the questions that the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment movements have asked in the way that the theologians of the Enlightenment and of the post-Enlightenment movements have tried to answer them, but we have to answer the questions.<sup>47</sup>

In 1954 he presented a paper in a lecture that was sponsored by the Student Association. As a result, the paper was printed in the student journal and was not widely available until its publication in Volume 2 of his writings. Its title is “The Significance of the Lutheran Symbols for Today.” In it he asserted that:

The early Lutheran attitude toward the Symbolical Books underwent a change in the [17<sup>th</sup>] century that is still reflected in our own midst. The historical heritage of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod is a peculiarly ambivalent combination of Lutheran Orthodoxy and Lutheran Pietism. Neither Lutheran Orthodoxy nor Lutheran Pietism can be described as holding the Lutheran symbols in high regard in any practical sense.... As a general rule, the theologians of Lutheran Orthodoxy contented themselves with reflecting about the Symbolical Books, and in the course of its development Orthodoxy rapidly argued itself into a position where it circumvented the Lutheran Symbols, which were after all only *norma normata* [a normed norm], and proposed to rest its case directly on the Sacred Scriptures. Pietism introduced its explicitly *quatenus* [in so far as] subscription as the logical expression of a similar Biblicism.<sup>48</sup>

Piepkorn was always very careful in the way he used terms ending in -ism, -ist or -ic. A heretic, for example, he defined as someone who consciously denies a specific doctrine of Catholicity and insists that his position “must be followed.” His definition of a Biblicist in the Lutheran Church is someone who insists that his or her interpretation of the Bible must be followed even though the interpretation has no warrant in the Lutheran Symbols. The

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<sup>46</sup> “Crisis,” *SWACP*, 2:257.

<sup>47</sup> “Crisis,” *SWACP*, 2:257.

<sup>48</sup> “The Significance of the Lutheran Symbols for Today,” *The Seminarian* 45 (June 1954): 332-43. Reprinted in *SWACP*, 2:76-101. Here 84.

interpretation may be leftist, or rightist. It may also be correct. That is not the issue. The issue is insisting that others “must” follow it.<sup>49</sup>

To make clear that the danger was from the left as well as the right, in “What Does ‘Inerrancy’ Mean?” he wrote:

In all this, of course, we need to find a defensible mean. We cannot capitulate to the uncritical Athenian enthusiasm that greets every novel isagogical theory or exegetical interpretation as an assured result. Nor can we cherish the traditionalist skepticism that refuses to concede any possible merit to a view which calls into question a personally long-held, and on occasion very vocally asserted, position.<sup>50</sup>

A related issue for some both outside and inside our Synod, he stated in the same article, is “a commitment to certain traditional interpretations which they place on certain Bible passages and which they apparently deem essential to their own spiritual security.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> The definition of heretic is from my notes from a 10/15/62 evening presentation to students.

<sup>50</sup> *Concordia Theological Monthly* 36, September 1965: 606-20. Reprinted in *SWACP*, 2:25-55. Here 44. Cf. *SWACP*, 2:17, which is reprinted from “The Inspiration of Scripture: The Position of the Church and her Symbols,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 25 (October 1954): 738-42. Contemporary examples of Biblicisms of the right and of the left in Lutheranism are those that appeal directly to the Bible to support or oppose the ordination of women. The issue in our confessional church is not whether or not a given interpretation is correct. The issue is insisting that others “must” follow it even though the interpretation does not have support in the Lutheran Confessions. For example, in the early 1960’s I heard Piepkorn say that the Confessions do not accept the “cosmological” argument since they consider the wearing of head covering by women in church a humanly instituted custom rather than a divine law grounded in the cosmology. The issue at the time was not the ordination of women, which he apparently opposed in 1959 (“Women Priests in the Church of Sweden,” *American Lutheran* 42:2, February 1959: 13-14, 41-42) and in 1965 (“A New Look,” p. 3), and in 1971 when he appealed in vain to both CPH and Synodical President Jacob A. O. Preus to get a book that opposed the ordination of women translated into English and published.

By July of 1972, however, Piepkorn apparently realized that the appeal to the “orders of creation” could not be used as an argument against such ordinations since the Symbols do not accept the cosmological argument. (See “Correspondence: The Gospel and All Its Articles,” *SWACP*, 2:279.) A Missouri Synod Convention used the phrase “order of creation” for the first time, apparently, at the 1956 Convention in St. Paul (“Women Suffrage in the Church,” *Convention Workbook* for the 1969 Denver convention of Synod, pp. 514-22). The 1969 Denver Convention spoke of “a violation of the order of creation.” This appeal to the order of creation, in which the term “order” means “rank” rather than “placement,” is an example of what Piepkorn meant by the cosmological argument. Since the Symbols do not accept that argument with regard to head covering, it cannot be used to oppose the ordination of women. Consequently, in November of 1973 when the daughter of John Hannah asked him if women could be pastors, he replied that “there is nothing in the Scriptures or the Symbols against it.” It should be noted, however, that as far as I know, he never spoke *in favor* of it. I suspect, though I cannot prove it, that his strong commitment to ecumenism would have influenced him to argue that women should not be ordained until a substantial portion of the church world-wide was willing to take the step. In the meantime, however, to argue against it—or for it!—on a direct appeal to the Scriptures, is an example of the Biblicism associated with the “schism of authority” in Lutheranism that Piepkorn refers to in *SWACP*, 2:84-85. For the meanings of the term “order” and its use in the Missouri Synod, see Edward H. Schroeder, “The Orders of Creation—Some Reflections on the History and Place of the Term in Systematic Theology,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 43:3 (March 1972): 165-78. For a major difference between Piepkorn and Schroeder see note 63.

<sup>51</sup> *SWACP*, 2:40. In this article, Piepkorn states that “Lutheran clergymen and professors affirm everything that the Sacred Scriptures say about themselves and everything that the Lutheran Symbols say about the Sacred Scriptures. It is significant therefore that the term “inerrancy” does not correspond to any vocable of the Sacred Scriptures. It does not correspond to any vocable in the Lutheran symbols. The Catholic Church has

In his article on the significance of the Lutheran Symbols, Piepkorn is both laudatory and critical of the Missouri Synod:

To the great credit of our Synodical Fathers, they rescued the Symbols and gave them a status which anticipated the confessional revival in the rest of the Lutheran Church by from one to three generations. They correctly recognized that if the Symbolical Books are to mean anything we must, as public teachers, interpret the Sacred Scriptures according to the Symbolical Books, not vice versa, and said so in just those words. Yet they did not take the Symbols altogether seriously in their dogmatic work. For at the same time that they took their Symbolical Books from the sixteenth century, they revived the dogmatics of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and thus introduced a kind of schism of authority which still persists.<sup>52</sup>

This “schism of authority” is a schism between Confessionalism and Biblicism. It is unavoidable if the Symbols are not being taken as the norm they claim to be for our exegetical, dogmatic, catechetical, homiletical, and liturgical work.

I can only mention in passing that Piepkorn undoubtedly also agreed with Hermann Sasse, who asserted in his “Luther and the Word of God” that, in contrast to “the older school of Missouri—Walther and his disciples.... a younger generation—Pieper, Engelder, P. E. Kretzmann, Arndt shows clearly the influence of Fundamentalist literature.”

Both of these developments—the decrease in the influence of the Lutheran Symbols, and the increase in the influence of Fundamentalism—have adversely affected our understanding of ministry, sacraments, and the sacramental character and ecumenical commitment of the Lutheran Church.

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never defined it dogmatically. None of the formulations of the ancient “rule of the faith” or “canon of the truth” affirm it. It is not a tenet of the patristic consensus. It is an ecclesiastical term subject to definition by usage” (p. 25). The term was apparently never used in its scientific sense until 1837 and not applied to the Bible until some time after that (p. 29). Piepkorn believed that the doctrine of accommodation “has rarely been applied consistently or extensively enough” (p. 30). Cf. the comment of Robert Preus on this doctrine in Piepkorn’s review of Preus’ *The Inspiration of Scripture: A Study of the Theology of the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmatists*. Mankato: Lutheran Synod Book Company, 1955. *CTM* 28 (November 1957): 868-70. Reprinted as “Book Review: The Doctrine of Inspiration,” *SWACP*, 2: 22-24. Here, pp. 20-22. “In his Foreword to *SWACP*, volume 2, Robert Kolb wrote that although Piepkorn “counseled against using the term ‘inerrancy,’ he warned against any denial of Biblical inerrancy since that would be interpreted—by those whom he and his colleagues were addressing—as ‘a rejection of the main thesis of which inerrancy is a *Schutzlehre*,’ that is, an expression of the Biblical message designed to protect Biblical authority. He put the entire matter into its functional context within the entire body of public teaching, with these words: ‘. . . we must take care not to deny the inerrancy of the Sacred Scriptures, both for pastoral reasons and because the initial affirmation of the freedom of the Sacred Scriptures from error was designed to reinforce and to affirm in other words the doctrine that the Sacred Scriptures have the Holy Spirit as their principal Author and that they are the truthful word of the God of Truth to men. This combination of pastoral concern and affirmation of the Spirit-given authority of the entire Biblical text guided Piepkorn’s formulation and presentation of the Christian faith throughout his professional career.” *SWACP*, 2: xiv.

<sup>52</sup> “Significance,” *SWACP*, 2:84-85.

## The Normative Functions of the Scriptures and the Symbols

At the seminary, Piepkorn had been taught that the Sacred Scriptures are a *norma normans*—that is, a norming norm—while the Lutheran Symbolical Books are only a *norma normata*—that is, a normed norm. At some point he learned that this distinction does not appear in the Lutheran Symbols. In time he became convinced that this distinction, and ones like it such as the distinction between a “primary” and a “secondary” norm, are not only unknown to the Symbols, but are in fact “alien” to them:

The distinction between a *norma normans* and a *norma normata*, or between a *norma primaria* and a *norma secundaria*, is alien to the Lutheran symbolical books and reflects a 17<sup>th</sup> century approach to the relation of the Sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran symbolical books for which the 16<sup>th</sup> century provides no documentation.<sup>53</sup>

Instead, he asserted,

To the authors of the Formula of Concord, the Scriptures are *norma* [a norm], supreme and unchallenged in their divine authority; but to them the Symbolical Books are likewise *norma* [a norm], by which the doctors of the past are to be tested and the doctors of the future are to be guided.<sup>54</sup>

It is common today to hear the Symbolical Books referred to as a “guide” or “roadmap” to the interpretation of the Scriptures. But in the tens of thousands of words that Piepkorn wrote about the Symbols, I have found the word “guide” used by him only in this passage. And the operative word in this passage is “norm.” A guide can be ignored. A norm cannot, or at least *should* not be ignored.

The Symbols, Piepkorn realized, understand themselves not as a norm of a different kind, but as a norm with a different *function*:

The value of the Symbols lies in their correct interpretation of the sense of the Sacred Scriptures. For the Apostolic proclamation, once it had been reduced to writing, was at the mercy of its interpreters, and it became one of the almost invariable hallmarks of heresy that the heretics and schismatics appealed to the Sacred Scriptures against the traditional teaching of the Church. It is here that the symbols achieved their function, just as other aspects of tradition achieved their function, in determining which of the competing interpretations of the Sacred Scriptures was the right one.<sup>55</sup>

He added:

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<sup>53</sup> “Reflections on the Teaching of Courses in Symbolics,” 1996, PP 75-209. Printed for the first time in *SWACP*, 2:109-202. Here 199, #6. Piepkorn was unable to find the terms earlier than the 1686 *Compendium Theologiae Positivae* of John William Baier. “Significance,” *SWACP*, 2:83.

<sup>54</sup> “Significance,” *SWACP*, 2:83. Cf. “Suggested Principles for a Hermeneutics of the Lutheran Symbols,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 29 (January 1958): 1-24. *SWACP*, 2:106-39. Here 107, A.4.

<sup>55</sup> “Significance,” *SWACP*, 2:87.

All this does not deny *sola Scriptura* [Scripture alone]. The Sacred Scriptures are still the only source and the ultimate norm of the Church's teaching, and they remain the yardstick by which every dogma and every doctrine must be measured. The rule still holds which the Smalcald Articles voice: "The Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel."<sup>56</sup>

Both the Sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Symbols, therefore, are norms.

In both cases," Piepkorn added, "the term 'norm' implies more than criterion or standard. It should be understood as a synonym of 'form' in its philosophical sense; that is, as a norm the Symbols are to give form to, to inform, our theology."<sup>57</sup>

### Neither Repristination Nor New Symbols

Piepkorn was not recommending that we repristinate the Symbols. He knew that was not possible:

There are some who expect the Book of Concord to be a prophetic oracle that can be quoted to end every controverted issue in the Church. The Book of Concord is not, nor was it ever intended to be, a compendium of that sort. Its presentations are very often highly unsystematic—a fact which during the past four centuries, our own not excepted, has resulted in a vast number of "theologies of the Book of Concord." This limitation, however, is one that the Book of Concord shares with the Sacred Scriptures, which likewise lack the systematic character that many theologians would find extremely useful.<sup>58</sup>

Nor did Piepkorn believe that the answer is the creation of new symbols:

Symbols come into being as a response to error. There must be some characteristically new misconception to warrant a symbol, and such new misconceptions do not reoccur in the history of the Church with astronomical regularity. While his craft and power are great, it may be that the originality of Satan is not quite of such an order that he is capable of constantly spawning fundamentally new heresies to challenge the Church. On the other hand, it may be that the credulity and gullibility of fallen man is such that he is adequately taken in for Satan's malefic purpose by means of fairly simple modifications of the standard perversions of the past. In either case, no new symbols become necessary.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> "Significance," *SWACP*, 2:87.

<sup>57</sup> "Suggested," Volume 2:108.

<sup>58</sup> "Significance," *SWACP*, 2:78. It is noteworthy that in his presentation at the 2008 Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions, Michael J. Root included Piepkorn among the 20<sup>th</sup> century confessional theologians who did not seek to repristinate the Symbols.

<sup>59</sup> "Significance," *SWACP*, 2:82. I am indebted to Ronald Bagnall for the insight that the recommendation that the Western Church remove the phrase "and the Son" from the Nicene creed is "a revision of a revision," rather than a *de novo* change. That recommendation appeared in the editorial, "Let's Change the Creed!" in the Editor's Ambo section of the November 1967 *Lutheran Forum* (pages 12-13), and was reprinted in *SWACP*, 2:244-48. Although it is likely that Piepkorn wrote that editorial, it is not absolutely certain. For details, see the headnote of the reprint.

In 1957 Piepkorn wrote that “the Book of Concord itself indicates that no further creedal statements are necessary. Three and three quarters centuries of Lutheran experience testify to the rightness of this position.”<sup>60</sup> His reasoning is that if the Symbols are the norm of all other symbols, then no new symbol is possible, since anything new in it would go beyond the Lutheran Symbols and create a new church with a new confessional standard.

### **The Limitations of Doctrinal Statements**

Piepkorn then raised the obvious question:

What shall we say then of other statements of doctrine, of the Visitation Articles of 1592/1593, of the Consensus of Sendomir, of the Barmen Theological Declaration, of the Brief Statement, of the Common Confession, of the Galesburg Rule, of the Minneapolis Theses, of the Washington Declaration, and of the United Testimony on Faith and Life? These have significance as statements of theological doctrine and opinion designed for limited uses, such as the reconciliation of past controversies or as pronouncements upon specific issues of provincial or national significance. In any case, however, they affect only a part of the Church. Other parts of the Church may pass judgment upon them under certain conditions and affirm their consonance and congruence with orthodox doctrine, because these other parts of the Church may have a direct or indirect interest in them, but the documents themselves remain only partial and they often turn out to be rather ephemeral formulations once their immediate usefulness is past.

For us the issue is decided by the promise which we are required to make in connection with our Ordination.<sup>61</sup>

That promise is only to the Sacred Scriptures as interpreted by the Lutheran Symbols.

Piepkorn did not object to the adoption of doctrinal statements such as the Brief Statement. He did not object to Synodical resolutions asking the pastors and teachers of Synod to “honor and uphold” such statements, something he conscientiously tried to do in his teaching. He objected to making such statement binding on consciences.

### **Exegetical and Hermeneutical Considerations**

In “Suggested Principles for a Hermeneutics of the Lutheran Symbols,” Piepkorn stated:

As the central exegetical criterion in the Sacred Scriptures is *was Christum treib[e]t* [what promotes Christ] (John 5:39b; 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2; 2 Tim. 3:15; 2 Peter 1: 16-21),

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<sup>60</sup> “No New Symbols!” *American Lutheran* 40:7 (July 1957): Editorial, 3-4. The printed copy of this in PP 74-192 has “ACP” in his hand on the bottom. There is also a copy in PP 7-57. Reprinted in *SSLC*, 2:102-105. Here 104.

<sup>61</sup> “Significance,” *SWACP*, 2:88-89.

so the central exegetical criterion of the Symbols is the article “that we can obtain forgiveness of sins and righteousness before God not through our merit, works or satisfaction, but that we obtain forgiveness of sins and become righteous before God by grace for the sake of Christ through faith if we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for His sake our sins are forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us, inasmuch as God wills in His sight to regard and reckon this faith as righteousness” (AC IV [German]).<sup>62</sup>

Six months before his death he wrote that

the law-gospel distinction is a particularly useful hermeneutical criterion in dealing with the sacred scriptures; but it must not, in my view, be exalted to the place where it is the primary or the exclusive hermeneutical criterion. When it does become the primary or exclusive hermeneutical criterion, the tremendous ‘bite’ of the law-gospel distinction is lost.<sup>63</sup>

### The Positive Significance of the Lutheran Symbols

What I have said so far has been largely negative. On the positive side, Piepkorn reminded his readers that:

The basic significance of the Symbols ... lies in their witness to the Catholicity of the Lutheran Church. The Augsburg Confession is not intended to be a new Confession, but is intended to demonstrate the essential Catholicity of the Lutheran movement in

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<sup>62</sup> *SWACP*, 2:108.

<sup>63</sup> “[I Believe],” *SWACP*, 2:286. Cf. “Suggested,” 2:108, #5, on ‘the central exegetical criterion’ of the Scriptures and of the Symbols. See also Jaroslav Pelikan’s *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions in the Christian Tradition* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2003), pp. 275-77, in which Pelikan distinguishes three hermeneutics. He illustrates the first by quoting Piepkorn’s statement in “What the Symbols Have to Say About the Church” that “We are to understand and confess their original historical sense.” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 26 (October 1955). Reprinted in *SWACP*, 1 (1993): 19. 1 (2006): 19. The second and third hermeneutics are analogous to each other, Pelikan states, in that both “call attention to the equivocal status of confessional subscription. The “norm” of the second hermeneutics, which moves “away from the vestigial catholic substance of the Reformation confessions,” is “the young Luther.” The third hermeneutics moves in the opposite direction, “toward a supposed catholic consensus.” The example Pelikan cites is John Henry Newman’s *Tract 90*, in which Newman appealed to the elasticity of the Thirty-Nine Articles in an effort to “ascertain what was the limit of that elasticity in the direction of Roman dogma.”

Edward H. Schroeder was Piepkorn’s colleague during a year as a visiting professor in the late 1960’s, and from September of 1972 until December of 1973. In the reviews that Schroeder posted on [www.Crossings.org](http://www.Crossings.org) of volume 2 of *SWACP* and Paul Zimmerman’s *A Seminary in Crisis* (St. Louis: CPH, 2006), Schroeder attributes positions to Piepkorn that Piepkorn never held, and misunderstands Piepkorn’s theology on critical points. Twice Schroeder refers to Piepkorn’s hermeneutics as “not” Lutheran. Schroeder reports that in faculty or department meetings, whenever Robert W. Bertram would refer to the law-gospel hermeneutics as “the Lutheran hermeneutics,” Piepkorn would whisper “a Lutheran hermeneutics.” Bertram and Schroeder referred to Piepkorn’s hermeneutics as a “canonist” hermeneutics. Their own hermeneutics falls into the third of the three positions described by Pelikan because it seeks to define what is authentically Lutheran by employing an equivocal (to use Pelikan’s term) standard, namely, the peculiarly Lutheran distinction between law and gospel as found in Luther and, especially, Article 4 of the Apology.

Thus, in the 1960’s and early 1970’s, Piepkorn differed not only with the Biblicists of the right and left who insisted that others must follow their interpretations of the Bible, but also with Bertram and Schroeder who insisted that others must adopt their law-gospel hermeneutics as the only legitimate Lutheran hermeneutic.

The word “hermeneutics” is used in *Credo* and in this paper in the traditional sense of “How to read” a text, not in the modern sense of “How do we communicate at all?”

doctrine, practice and ceremonial, in contrast to the modernism and the misleading neologism of Scholastic theology. The Apology is in its turn quite literally a defense of the Catholicity of the Augsburg Confession. Ultimately this is true of the Smalcald Articles as well, although the violent tone in which the desperation of a sick and aging Luther at times formulates them conceals this aspect. The Formula explicitly proposes to be no new Confession, but an explication of the real meaning of the Augustana. The Catechisms are written in the same vein and stand as remarkable demonstrations of the will of the Lutheran Reformers to continuity with their Western Catholic past.<sup>64</sup>

He continued:

The Book of Concord is still pre-denominational. It does not operate with the conception of the one true visible Church. It does not operate with the concept of a visible (or invisible) Church at all, and the adjectives “one” and “true” in the Symbols do not identify any entity different from that identified by the term “Church” without qualification.<sup>65</sup>

Because the basic significance of the Symbols lies in their witness to the Catholicity of the Lutheran Church, the Symbols

demand an ecumenical witness on the part of the Lutheran Church because of the Lutheran Church’s Catholicity. But even at the strictly denominational level, the Symbolical Books have a vital importance as the only genuinely constitutive factor of the Lutheran Church. As such they are of inestimable importance in achieving a greater measure of Lutheran union and Lutheran unification. The one thing that makes a Church Lutheran is ... its honest commitment to a significant portion of the Lutheran Symbols, that is, at the least, the Catholic Creeds, the Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism. It would seem that the unifying power of these commonly accepted Symbols has by no means been adequately explored or employed in connection with current efforts at Lutheran integration and the deepening of a common Lutheran consciousness.<sup>66</sup>

At the same time Piepkorn added a warning:

Since the Symbols always speak to the specific situations that precipitated them, we need to remember that we cannot absolutize what are inescapably contingent formulations. The Symbols are always interpreting the divine revelation of the Sacred Scriptures; they are never new revelations.<sup>67</sup>

He followed this warning with a hopeful note:

The fundamentally liturgical character of the Symbols has not been wholly lost in the Lutheran Church. A Symbol is in its primary thrust liturgical.... It is worth remembering that the Lutheran Church, with St. Paul in Romans 16, has regarded the sermon as a liturgical—that is, a sacrificial—act. Thus we have explicitly liturgical

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<sup>64</sup> “Significance,” *SWACP*, 2:90-91.

<sup>65</sup> “Significance,” *SWACP*, 2:90-91.

<sup>66</sup> “Significance,” *SWACP*, 2:91.

<sup>67</sup> “Significance,” *SWACP*, 2:93.

creeds in the Ecumenical Symbols. The Augsburg Confession was often read on the anniversary of its presentation, a custom we could profitably revive. The Small Catechism always enjoyed extensive use in the minor offices, and both the Large Catechism and the Formula of Concord originated as sermons. Thus only the Apology and the Smalcald Articles are exclusively nonliturgical creedal documents.<sup>68</sup>

Finally, he added that the Symbols have another important, albeit secondary, function:

The Book of Concord also has importance in that it has acquired in the course of the burgeoning denominationalism of modern Christendom a kind of juridical function. It has become a kind of device to insure conformity. Like all laws, this one is likely to be somewhat inconsistently enforced.<sup>69</sup>

There are other limits on this use of the Symbols, he said. Yet here, too, there is a hopeful note:

The Symbols are only relatively effective as legalistic weapons to enforce orthodox conformity. It would be a grave mistake to allow this to become their major function. In this as in other areas of human life, the maxim applies that “consent makes law.” The Symbols must be used and they must be taught so that they bring about a uniformity of conviction, that they create a climate of opinion which neither acts as a restraint upon conscientious and reverent inquiry nor encourages an irresponsible nose-thumbing iconoclasm which holds confessional loyalty up to ridicule or which regards it as a reflection upon the adequacy of the Sacred Scriptures. The significance of the Formula of Concord thus does not rest upon the fact that it was more or less forcibly imposed upon certain parts of the Lutheran Church by secular [authorities] and as violently proscribed in other parts of the Church, but its significance lies in this, that it won its way on the basis of its merits so extensively.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> “Significance,” *SWACP*, 2:94-95. For the reference of the Symbols to the proclamation of the Gospel being a sacrificial element of worship rather than a sacramental element, see the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, 24.30, 38-40. Piepkorn’s reference to Romans 16 appears to be a typo for Romans 12 (verse 8). Piepkorn has been faulted for being too rigid with regard to rubrics in *The Conduct of the Service*, Concordia Seminary Print Shop, Revised edition, 1965. This document was reprinted in 2006 by Redeemer Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne. This criticism overlooks a number of important facts. The first is that in the document Piepkorn asserts that “There is really only one rule of good form: ‘Be courteous!’” and “only one basic rule of altar decorum: ‘Be reverent!’” (P. 2.) Second, Piepkorn shared the belief of the Lutheran Symbols that liturgical practices are an important witness to the Catholicity of the Lutheran Church. Third, the rubrics in *TLH* themselves permit various possibilities, and at times are inconsistent and even contradictory, indicating an inherent flexibility. (P. 1.) Fourth, Piepkorn knew that the “law of praying is the law of believing,” and vice versa. Fifth, Piepkorn’s goal was never rigid compliance with the rubrics of *TLH* as an end in themselves. Rather, he knew that the closer that congregations followed the rubrics of *TLH*, the closer they would be to the even more richly liturgical practices of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Lutheran Reformers. Thus rubrics were, from start to finish, a means to an end, albeit a very important means. Finally, as stated in an earlier footnote, he agreed with the Symbols that “liberty responsibly exercised is itself a Catholic principle.” *SWACP*, 2:184. “Responsibly,” of course, meant being loyal to the ideal for which the Missouri Synod stands, and doing one’s homework.

<sup>69</sup> “Significance,” *SWACP*, 2:95.

<sup>70</sup> “Significance,” *SWACP*, 2:95-96.

“Creed-making has been a more or less continuous process in the Reformed bodies,” Piepkorn noted, but not in the Lutheran Church.<sup>71</sup> The slogan *Ecclesia semper reformanda*—“The church always being reformed”—he asserted, “is a Reformed slogan, not a Lutheran one.”<sup>72</sup>

In summary, Piepkorn’s first discovery in the fall of 1928 made him aware of schism of authority that began to take place in later Lutheran Orthodoxy when the Symbols were increasingly ignored in favor of a growing Biblicism in Lutheranism. One can now understand why Piepkorn stipulated that he wanted to remain in symbolics at the seminary rather than move to what was then considered the more “prestigious” field of dogmatics. He had done his homework and was sure of his ground: What Lutheranism needed was a return to the Symbols, so that they could inform our doctrine and practice, as they had done for him.<sup>73</sup>

## Conclusion

In the fall of 1928, Piepkorn had a choice of three pilgrimages. One was a Biblicism of the right that largely ignored the Lutheran Symbols. Another was a Biblicism of the left, that also ignored them, sometimes totally. Instead, he chose what he came to refer to in a little known 1937 article as the *via media*, the “middle way” of the Lutheran Symbols, which is the middle way of evangelical Catholicism.<sup>74</sup>

Piepkorn believed that certain resolutions of the 1973 Convention of the Missouri Synod are examples of a Biblicism of the right that was used to bind consciences.<sup>75</sup> After the Convention, he said that the Synod he had known was “dead” and “gone forever.”

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<sup>71</sup> “Significance,” *SWACP*, 2:97.

<sup>72</sup> Personal recollection.

<sup>73</sup> Ever since 1928, Piepkorn resolutely strove to conform all of his teaching and practice to the Lutheran Symbols. If someone had convinced him that his understanding of the Symbols was wrong, he would have changed his position immediately. Any one who claims that Piepkorn is guilty of false doctrine must prove his accusation not by appealing to Lutheran Orthodoxy, or C.F.W. Walther, or Francis Pieper, or doctrinal statements adopted by Synodical convention majorities, or even by appealing directly to the Bible—for Lutherans are sworn to teach and preach the doctrinal content of the Lutheran Symbols and not any dogmatics or doctrinal statement or any interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures not contained in the Symbols.

<sup>74</sup> See “The Contribution of the Lutheran Church to American Protestantism,” *The Augustana Quarterly* (October 1937): 291-307. PP 65-63. God willing, this seminal, but little known article will be in Volume 3 of the *Selected Writings of Arthur Carl Piepkorn*.

<sup>75</sup> In a May 1971 letter to Dr. Cornelius Freiherr von Heyl, Piepkorn referred to “the sin of pride to which we in the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod are prone,” and added that he wept for Missouri “in the same way in which a passenger in a peaceful ship might lament the fact that it has been boarded by pirates!” The three 1973 convention resolutions formed a syllogism: Resolution 2-10 made Convention resolutions binding on all members of the Synod. Resolution 3-01 declared that *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional*

In the remaining five months of his life, there is evidence that he had given up hope for Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. To cite just one example, he was making plans to sell his collection of fifteenth century Latin incunabula, after being removed administratively from his position, which is what he expected would happen to him and his colleagues. After his death, his widow Miriam said: “They tried to retire him. The Lord took care of that.”

Surprisingly, he never fully gave up hope for the Synod. Three days before his death, for example, he replied to a correspondent:

“I seriously doubt that the Seminary can be saved. I am more optimistic about the Synod—that’s where you and your generation come in. I am positive about the one holy catholic and apostolic church—*ecclesia perpetuo mansura est!*”<sup>76</sup> “The Church will remain forever!”

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*Principles* was in all its parts Scriptural and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions. Resolution 3-09 condemned the Concordia Seminary faculty majority for holding positions that *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles* described as contrary to the doctrinal position of Synod. No one was condemned by name.

<sup>76</sup> The letter is in PP 111-803. See “Arthur Carl Piepkorn, Confessor,” pp. 33-34.

# ADDENDUM

## ARTHUR CARL PIEPKORN

**BIRTH:** June 21, 1907 at Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Son of John Albert Piepkorn and Bertha, nee Taenzer (1875-1954).

**EDUCATION:**

Milwaukee (Wis.) Public Schools	1913-1917
First Central Lutheran School, Milwaukee, Wis.	1917-1919
Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wis.	1919-1925
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo. (B.A., B.D.)	1925-1928
University of Chicago (Ph. D.)	1928-1932
Annual Fellow, American School of Oriental Research in Baghdad, Iraq	1932-1933
Graduate School, Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio	1939-1940
The Chaplain School of the U. S. Army, Cambridge, Mass.	1942
The Command and General Staff School of the U. S. Army Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas	1943
Graduate School, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo.	1953-1958
Graduate School, St. Louis University, St. Louis, Mo.	1955-1956
Fellow, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation	1958-1959
Ecumenical Institute, University of Geneva, Switzerland	1958-1959

**MARRIAGE:**

Miriam Agatha Sodergren, daughter of the Reverend and Mrs. Carl Johannes Sodergren, St. Stephen's Day, 1936.

**CHILDREN:**

Mary Catharine, Mrs. Edward E. Eckart  
 Faith Elisabeth, Mrs. Richard E. Hoffmann  
 Felicity Ann, Mrs. James C. Steere  
 Angela Dorothea (+), Mrs. Guy van Goidsenhoven

**SERVICE RECORD:**

Ordained at Bethany Church, Milwaukee, First Sunday in Advent (November 30)1930	
Curate, Hope Church, St. Louis	1930-1931
Missionary-in-charge, Grace Church, Chisholm, Minn.	1933-1936
Missionary-in-charge, Church of the Ascension, St. Louis	1937
Resident Pastor, Church of St. Faith, Cleveland, Ohio	1937-1942
Archivist, English District	1940-1941
Army Chaplain on active duty	1940-1951
(On leave of absence from the Church of St. Faith	1940-1942
Concordia Seminary (Professor of Systematic Theology)	1951-1973
(Chairman, Department of Systematic Theology, 1962-1966	
(Graduate Professor of Systematic Theology since July 1, 1963)	
Consultant, Department of Worship and the Arts, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.	1947-1966
Member, Commission on Church and State Relations in a Pluralistic Society, Lutheran Church in America	1961-1965
Member, Operating Committee, Radio Station KFUA (Treasurer, 1964-1965)	1962-1965
Member, Committee on the Liturgy, Commission on Worship, Liturgics and hymnology, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod	1962-1965
Representative, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, in the Theological Conversations Sponsored by the U. S. A. National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation and the U. S. A. Bishops' Commission for Ecumenical Affairs of the Roman Catholic Church	1965-1973
Lecturer in Religious Studies, University College, Washington University, St. Louis	1968-

**MILITARY RECORD, United States Army**

Commissioned in the Chaplain Reserve	1936
Active duty	1940-1951
Retired Reserves	1967-1973

### Articles about Piepkorn

- Neuhaus, Richard John, "Afterword," *SWACP*, 1 (1993): 293-98; 1 (2006): 333-40.
- Plekon, Michael P., and William S. Wiecher, "Arthur Carl Piepkorn: Teacher and Father of the Church," *SWACP*, 1 (1993): 5-15; 1 (2006): 5-16.
- Secker, Philip J., "About Arthur Carl Piepkorn," *SWACP*, 2: 297-307.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Arthur Carl Piepkorn, Confessor" *Lutheran Forum* 38:3 (Una Sancta/Fall 2004):28-68.
- Wiecher, William S., "About Arthur Carl Piepkorn," *SWACP*, 1: (1993): 299-301; 1, (2006): 341-43.
- Wilken, Robert Louis, "Arthur Carl Piepkorn: On the Anniversary of His Death," *Lutheran Forum* 33:2 (Pentecost/Summer 1999):46-52.

### Piepkorn's Fields of Publication

Oriental languages and literature, Old and New Testament interpretation, Church history, dogmatics, Lutheran symbolics, comparative symbolics, practical theology, philosophy, patristics, Counciliar theology, mysticism, liturgy, Church music, liturgical vestments, Latin pedagogy, medieval paleography, medieval Scholasticism, Luther studies, 16<sup>th</sup> century handwriting, hermeneutics, Lutheran Orthodoxy, Lutheran Pietism, Christian education, church and culture, race relations, Jewish-Christian relations, ecumenical theology, church architecture, ecclesiastical arts, fine arts, church-state relations, and a wide variety of military chaplaincy topics ranging from counseling to conscientious objection.

### The Piepkorn Papers

- Personal and Professional Writings: 148 boxes  
Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Elk Grove Village, IL
- Files relating to *Profiles in Belief*: 28 boxes  
Archives of the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA

### Journals Piepkorn Contributed To (partial list). 225-250 articles.

*Alma Mater*; *The American Lutheran* (Editorial Associate); *The Bride of Christ: The Journal of Lutheran Liturgical Renewal*; *Bulletin of the Library: Information About Collections and Resources of the Foundation for Reformation Research*; *The Chaplain*; *Church History*; *Concordia Journal* (posthumously); *Church Music*; *The Concordia Theological Monthly*; *CTM* (Editorial Staff); *The Cresset* (Editorial Associate); *Dialog* (Contributing Editor); *The Journal of the Library of the Foundation for Reformation Research*; *The Jurist*; *The Lamp*; *Leaders Guide (LLL)*; *The Lutheran Forum* (Editorial Associate); *The Lutheran Outlook*; *Lutheran World*; *Marian Studies*; *National Liturgical Review*; *Pro Ecclesia Lutherana*; *Response in Worship, Music and the Arts*; *The Seminarian*; *The Student Leaguer: pro aris focis et literis*; *Sursum Corda, Theological Studies*; *Una Sancta (Meitingen, Germany)*; *Una Sancta*, (Brooklyn; Contributing Editor); *Walther League Messenger*. Plus at least seven encyclopedias. Jaroslav Pelikan said that many of Piepkorn's studies could have become full-length books.

**Bibliography:** An incomplete, partially annotated bibliography that runs to more than fifty pages is available free by email attachment from [psecker@snet.net](mailto:psecker@snet.net).

### Documents by Piepkorn in recent issues of the *Lutheran Forum*

- "Missionary Miseries By One Who Had Them," 43:3 (Una Sancta/Fall 2008):22-24.
- "The Catholicity of the Lutheran Church," Una Sancta/Fall 2006.
- "Personal Confession of Faith," Una Santa/Fall 2004.
- "The Third Temptation." Sermon. Easter/Spring 2005.

**Recent articles about Piepkorn by Philip James Secker**

"The Lutheran Symbols on Stewardship," *FL*, March 2007.

"Piepkorn on 'Remaining Where God Has Placed You,'" *LF*, *Una Sancta*/Fall 2006.

"The Gospel and All Its Articles," *LF*, *Una Sancta*/Fall 2005.

"Arthur Carl Piepkorn on Surd Evil," *FL*, March 2005.

"Arthur Carl Piepkorn, Confessor," *LF*, *Una Sancta*/Fall 2004.

"A Closer Look at Sasse's Critique of Piepkorn," *LF*, Easter/Spring 2004.

"The Tragedy of Sasse's View of Piepkorn," *LF*, *Una Sancta*/Fall 2002.

**Letters to the Editor by Philip James Secker re Piepkorn:**

*Lutheran Witness*, Jun-Jul 05, Oct 06, Feb 07.

*LF*, Summer 05; Oct 06.

*First Things*, Feb & Oct 02, May 03, Feb 04, Feb 07.

*FL*, Oct 06 (Headnote).

*LF*, Spring, 2008.

*LF* = *Lutheran Forum*    *FL* = *Forum Letter*

**Articles by Philip James Secker that were influenced by Piepkorn:**

"Ephesians 4:11-12 Reconsidered," *Logia* 5:2 (Eastertide 1996): 59-62. See the errata in the Holy Trinity 1996 issue, p. 3.

"Introducing the Apology of the Augsburg Confession," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 3:5 (October 1975): 260-65.

"Jacobus Schöpfer, 'Catholic and Evangelical,'" *Sixteenth Century Journal* 4:2 (October 1973): 99-107.

"Martin Luther's Views on the State of the Dead," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 38:7 (July-August 1967): 422-35.

**Dissertations by Philip James Secker done for Piepkorn:**

The Postilla of William of Paris, O.P. (fl. 1437). Th.D. dissertation. 1973.

The Natural Knowledge of the Goodness of God in Selnecker, Chrytraeus and Chemnitz. S.T.M. dissertation. 1967.

**Arthur Carl Piepkorn was never condemned of false doctrine**

Since the theme of this Symposium is A Last Look at Missouri's Critical Times: The 1950s to 1970s, it is important to note that Piepkorn was never condemned of false doctrine.

Article VIII, C of Synod's Constitution states: "All matters of doctrine and of conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God. All other matters shall be decided by a majority vote." This rule has always been observed by Synod and its Districts and congregations until 1973. The reason is obvious: without it, a majority vote could change the doctrine of a congregation, District or Synod. Despite this rule, the 1973 Convention of Synod adopted by majority vote three resolutions that form a syllogism:

1) Resolution 2-12 declared that doctrinal "statements, *insofar* as they are in accord with the Scriptures and the pattern of doctrine set forth in the Lutheran Symbols, are, pursuant to Article II of the Synod's Constitution be understood as requiring the formulation and adoption of doctrinal statements, are binding upon all of its members" (emphasis added).

2) Resolution 3-01 declared "A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles" ("ASSCP"), which was written for Synodical President Jacob A. O. Preus by seminary professor Ralph Bohlmann,

to be a “more formal and comprehensive statement of belief,” and “*in all its parts*, to be Scriptural and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions, and therefore a formulation which derives its authority from the Word of God and which expresses the Synod’s position on current doctrinal issues” (emphasis added). The Resolution was adopted by a 562-455 vote (55%).

3) Resolution 3-09, on the basis of the two preceding resolutions, then resolved “that the Synod recognize that the theological position defended by the faculty majority of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., is in fact false doctrine running counter to the Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the synodical stance and for that reason ‘cannot be tolerated in the church of God, much less excused and defended’ (FD, SD, Preface 9).”

Note that no professor was condemned by name. None was ever individually charged, tried or convicted of false doctrine. Six of the faculty majority who were 65 or older, including Arthur Carl Piepkorn, and one (L. Wunderlich) who was not, were offered the choice of either “honorable retirement” or “modified service.” Prior to then and since, seminary professors have been allowed to continue teaching long beyond the age of 65.

Piepkorn refused to accept “honorable retirement” unless his good name was cleared, and died before the Seminary Board of Control could involuntarily retire him or place him on modified service. The Board ultimately offered full-time service to three of the seven (R. R. Caemmerer, H. Bouman and L. Wunderlich) and involuntarily retired the other two. How the Board could keep on full service two professors whose teaching had been condemned was never explained. Presumably those two were not guilty of any false doctrine. The same could be said of Piepkorn, since he was offered the same terms earlier.

The student majority responded by saying they would not attend classes until the Board told them who was guilty of what false doctrines. The faculty majority then decided not to meet its classes, and was fired for breach of contract. The vast majority of the students and faculty processed off campus and disbanded. Concordia Seminary in Exile was set up. For legal reasons it changed its name to Seminex.

Piepkorn believed that the Preus/Bohlmann “A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles” was an unconstitutional addition to the binding doctrine of Synod. He did not agree with everything in the Statement because he believed that parts of it contradicted the Sacred Scriptures as interpreted by the Lutheran Confessions, to which he remained faithful until the date of his death.

### **The Arthur Carl Piepkorn Center for Evangelical Catholicity**

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Founder and director: Philip James Secker, Th.D.

The purpose of the Center is to make Piepkorn’s writings accessible. The Center sends out a newsletter 2-5 times a year. If you wish to be on the email list, send an email to [psecker@snet.net](mailto:psecker@snet.net).

The Director makes presentations on Piepkorn and his theology frequently in Bible Classes and study groups and at pastoral conferences and retreats.

The Arthur Carl Piepkorn Center has no paid employees, but is assisted by dozens of volunteers all over the world.

*Deo, parentibus, et magistris non potest satis gratiae rependi.*

(It is impossible to sufficiently thank God, parents and teachers.)

Martin Luther, Large Catechism, 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment, 130.