“Monkey Business”
On the History of Confirmation
Presenter: Hans Wiersma
Rethinking Confirmation
Luther Seminary
July 29-31, 2015
The Lutherans Song by Lost and Found

Steve Jobs of the Apple computer

Song celebrating famous and obscure Lutherans. Check http://www.speedwood.com/ for Lost and Found's great music. Submitted with permission of both the performers and the collectors of the photos.
Epilogue

Alright, here's the skinny on Steve Jobs, the Confirmed Lutheran. The first Apple computer was invented in the garage at the home of Paul and Clara Jobs, 2066 Crist Drive, Los Altos, California. Not far from this address stands St. Luke Lutheran Church of Sunnyvale--presently an ELCA church, but an LCMS church during the 1960's. After some investigation, I found someone who not only attended St. Luke with Jobs, but also appears with Jobs in the same confirmation photo!

My informant informs me that the pastor at the time was Harold Mitchell, who served St. Luke's parishioners from 1965-1985. Alas, Rev. Mitchell passed away in 2010, so he is no longer able to personally set the record straight regarding what he told the teenage Steve Jobs about God and starving children. But there is a portrait of St. Luke’s 1969 confirmation class that shows the 14-year old Steve Jobs arrayed in white robe and bow tie. Yup, that’s the young Mr. Jobs in the photo. Proving, once and for all, that Steve Jobs was Confirmed! Scoop!

(Btw, if you search around a bit on-line, there are a number of reports--for instance, here and here--claiming that Jobs was catechized at Trinity Lutheran Church in Palo Alto. My informant, however, assures me that Jobs was catechized at St. Luke. So there.)
“Avoid that Monkey Business* Confirmation, which is actually an outright lie.”

*“Affen Spiel”
A VERY BRIEF HISTORY OF CONFIRMATION
4th Century Baptistry
Church of 100 Doors, Paros, Greece
The Apostolic Tradition
c. 220 AD

Washing/Water + Chrismation + Lord’s Supper

= Rite of Baptism
c. 460 AD

Chrismation = Confirmation
1439 AD
Council of Florence clarifies:
Confirmation bestows Holy Spirit for Strengthening of Faith

15th Century “Chrismatory”
Council of Trent: Anyone who says that Confirmation is NOT a Sacrament and/or does NOT need to be performed by a Bishop is anathema.
Middle Ages: Confirmation Happens when the Bishop Happens to Be in the Neighborhood
“Avoid that Monkey Business* Confirmation, which is actually an outright lie.”

*“Affen Spiel”
“I would allow people to observe confirmation in this way: that they are aware that God has said nothing about it, and therefore knows nothing of it, and that what the bishops attribute to Confirmation is just a pack of lies.”

—from *The Treatise on Marriage* (1522)
I AM SO SORRY!
Nine Understandings of Protestant Confirmation since the Reformation

in no particular order

1. Confirmation as Preparation to receive The Lord’s Supper
2.
Confirmation as Catechism (Only)
3. Confirmation as A Vow of Obedience to Christ
4. Confirmation as A Sacramental Renewing of the Holy Spirit
5.
Confirmation as
A Step of
Personal Conversion
6. Confirmation as A Period of Discovery
7. Confirmation as A Completion of Baptism
8.
Confirmation as
A Ratification
of Baptism
9. Confirmation as A Cultural Rite of Passage
Where to now?
"Monkey Business?: On the History of Confirmation"
Presented by Hans Wiersma (Augsburg College)
At Rethinking Confirmation, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN
July 29, 2015

Slide 1: Title
Slide 2: The Lutheran Song
Slide 3: Steve Jobs’s Confirmation photo
Slide 4: Hans’s Confirmation Class (1976)

Okay, enough set up.

Slide 5: Luther Quotation

I begin by quoting Luther: "In particular, avoid that monkey business, confirmation, which is in actuality an outright lie" (Treatise on Marriage, 1522).

Now why would Luther warn against Confirmation as "Monkey Business"?

In order to answer this question, let me briefly review the history of Confirmation: a twisted, sketchy, complex, sordid, and, yes, fascinating history—judging by the comments of just about everybody who’s dug into the subject and lived, and wrote, to tell about it.

Slide 6: The History of Confirmation: Title

I’ll get to some of the sordidness in a moment. But first a word about what makes the history of confirmation so complex. The reason it is complex is that the history actually involves two separate but connected developments: (1) the development of Christian catechesis—that is, instructing disciples in the basics of the faith—and (2) the development of the rite (or rites) surrounding Christian initiation.

That is, if you think negotiating the present-day changes in the Confirmation landscape is tough, coming to terms with the past 2000 years of Confirmation can be daunting and perhaps even depressing. But certainly fascinating.

So here we go with a brief rundown of confirmation’s ancient origins, medieval development, and reformation deconstruction and rebuilding is in order.
Some Sources

The Groovy Sixties (i.e., not very recent, not very relevant)

- Arthur Repp, *Confirmation in the Lutheran Church* (1964)
- Frank Klos, *Confirmation and First Communion: A Study Book* (1968)
- W. Kent Gilbert, *Confirmation and Education* (1969)

More Recent/More Relevant


Most Recent/Most Relevant

- http://theconfirmationproject.com/

On the History of Confirmation

Amazon Best Sellers Rank: #2,536,081 in Books

Confirmation: Origins and Reform [Paperback]
Aidan Kavanagh (Author)

Available from these sellers.

4 new from $7.59  3 used from $26.76