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NEH: Making Sense of the Reformation

Dirk Willems and the

IV. Teacher Preparation for the Lesson:

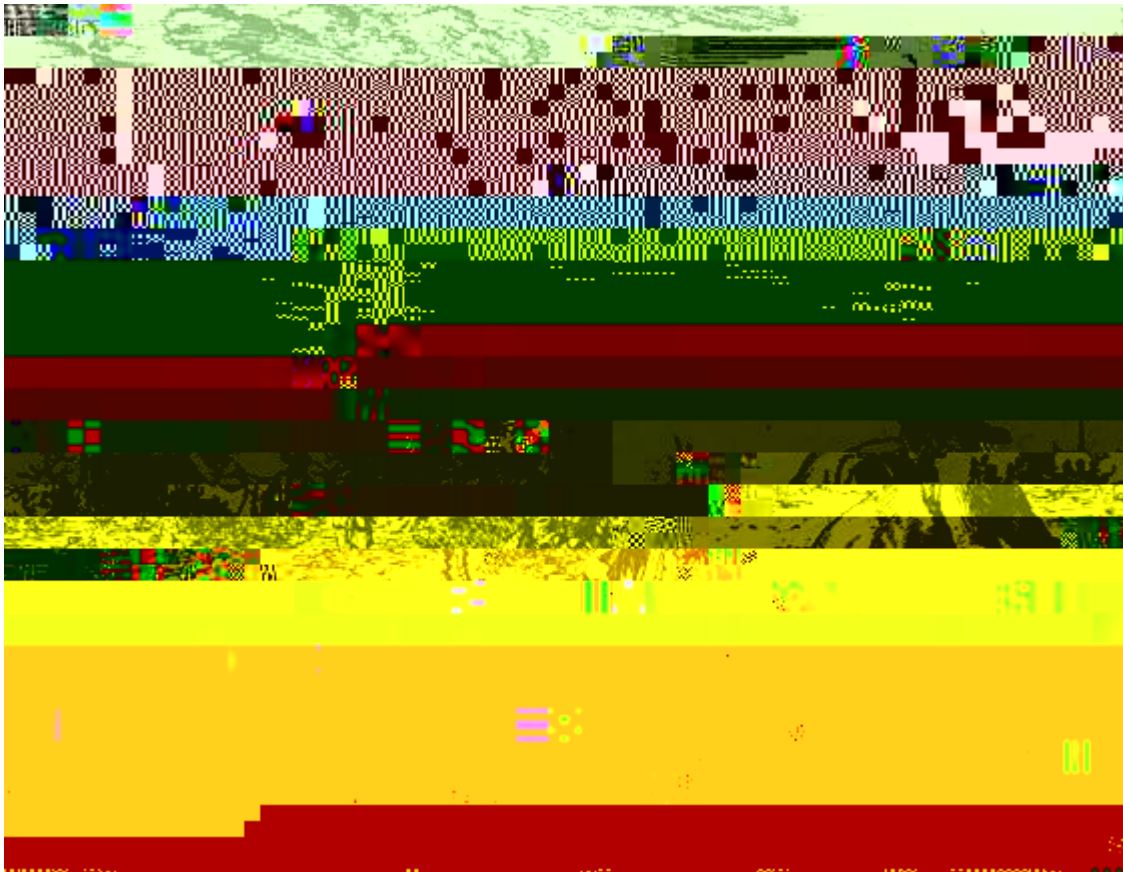
1. Read Sec. 17-3, “The Reformation Continues” (especially section on “Other Protestant Reformers”) from McDougal Little’s *World History: Patterns of*

5. Assessment – Individually, answer the following essay question in 150-200 words:

Explain why Dirk Willems was an important role model for the Anabaptist followers and an example of Anabaptist teachings? In what ways today do either Mennonites or Amish believers show/demonstrate Anabaptist beliefs? In what ways can you tell?

VI. Source materials:

1. Willems Drawing.
2. Texts for “Dirk Willems, A.D. 1569,” “Compassion for the Enemy.”
3. Check for Understanding sheet.



Dirk Willems, A.D. 1569

In the year 1569 a pious, faithful brother and follower of Jesus Christ, named Dirk Willems, was apprehended at Asperen, in Holland, and had to endure severe tyranny from the papists. But as he had founded his faith not upon the drifting sand of human commandments, but upon the firm foundation stone, Christ Jesus, he, notwithstanding all evil winds of human doctrine, and heavy showers of tyrannical and severe persecution, remained immovable and steadfast unto the end; wherefore, when the chief Shepherd shall appear in the clouds of heaven and gather together His elect from all the ends of the earth, he shall also through grace hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." I Pet. 5:4; Matt. 24:31; 25:23.

Concerning his apprehension, it is stated by trustworthy persons, that when he fled he was hotly pursued by a thief-catcher, and as there had been some frost, said Dirk Willems ran before over the ice, getting across with considerable peril. The thief-catcher following him broke through, when Dirk Willems, perceiving that the former was in danger of his life, quickly returned and aided him in getting out, and thus saved his life. The thiefcatcher wanted to let him go, but the burgomaster, very sternly called to him to consider his oath, and thus he was again seized by the thief-catcher, and, at said place, after severe imprisonment and great trials proceeding from the deceitful papists, put to death at a lingering fire by these bloodthirsty, ravening wolves, enduring it with great steadfastness, and confirming the genuine faith of the truth with his death and blood, as an instructive example to all pious Christians of this time, and to the everlasting disgrace of the tyrannous papists.

NOTE.-In this connection, it is related as true from the trustworthy memoirs of those who were present at the death of this pious witness of Jesus Christ, that the place where this offering occurred was without Asperen, on the side of Leerdam, and that, a strong east wind blowing that day, the kindled fire was much driven away from the upper part of his body, as he stood at the stake; in consequence of which this good man suffered a lingering death, insomuch that in the town of Leerdam, towards which the wind was blowing, he was heard to exclaim over seventy times, "O my Lord; my God," etc., for which cause the judge or bailiff, who was present on horseback, filled with sorrow and regret at the man's sufferings, wheeled about his horse, turning his back

that at, the age of fifteen, eighteen or twenty years, he was rebaptized in Rotterdam, at

Some inhabitants of present-day Asperen, none of them Mennonite, regard Dirk as a folk hero. A Christian, so compassionate that he risked recapture in order to save the life of his drowning pursuer, stimulates respect and memory. Recently Asperen named a street in Dirk's honor.

Check for Understanding Questions:

From "Dirk Willems, A.D. 1569"

1. Who arrested Dirk Willems?
2. Describe how Willems was caught?
3. How did Willems die?
4. What was his crime?

From "Compassion for the Enemy"

5. What type of a martyr is Willems (what Reformation group claims him)?
6. How did Willems escape from prison?
7. What was the "Hondegat" and how does it play a role in this story?
8. Explain how Willems' actions qualify him as a martyr.