

How Can I will and Do?
by Rev. Philip Schnarr

When knowing and thinking are also willing and doing the spiritual is in the moral and in the civil (Divine Wisdom p. 461)

The object or desired goal of New Church education is the salvation of human souls. This must be true, for we are taught repeatedly in the Writings that the Lord's end in creation is a heaven from the human race. With an eternal, happy life hanging in the balance, would we not be foolish to ignore the spiritual dimension of a child's learning?

Given a goal of this magnitude our curriculums need to be full of spiritual as well as moral and civil truths. If the salvation of our students is indeed to be a priority of our educational endeavors, they must first know the three main categories of truths—those that look above self to the Lord and heaven, those near to self pertaining to the world and the neighbor, and those that look beneath to the devil and hell. Truths teach us how to separate ourselves from the devil and hell and be conjoined with the Lord and His heaven (see *Divine Wisdom* p.4.57).

Unless a person knows goods and truths and evils and falsities he sees no way of egress from hell, and no way of entrance into heaven; these are what truths must teach (457).

And where will we find these awesome truths that teach these essentials?

The truths that teach [these things] have been given to mankind in the Word and from the Word.... For this reason if a person's life is according to the truth of the Word, the way to hell and from hell is closed, as the way to the Lord and from the Lord is opened, and the person's life becomes the life of the Lord with him (458)

Yet every good teacher knows that truths are not enough. Truths do marvelous things to enlighten our understanding of both the spiritual and natural worlds. But the truth is that no one is saved by truth. The real life of a person is in his or her will. Knowing and thinking truths must become willing and doing them if the goal of salvation is to be achieved. And so the question found in the work *Divine Wisdom* cannot be ignored: *How Can I Will and Do?*

A very specific answer is then provided. Here it is:

The answer is, Fight against evils, which are from hell and you will both will and do, not from yourself but from the Lord, for when evils are put away the Lord does all things (461).

The real test of whether we believe something to be true is if we love it enough to give it life through the use of it.

How does all of this relate to the goal of the salvation of our students? You may legitimately note that willing and doing the truth are mostly a function of adult life. However, the Lord has given even young children an ability to think affirmatively and with conviction about doing things that run contrary to their evil desires. They have the power to resist evil if not to actually repent. And if they look to the Lord and resist the addictive power of evil pleasures and habits, their adult lives will be helped immeasurably as they embark on the path of regeneration. When New

Church educators encourage students toward willing and doing the truth, it can have a wonderful, everlasting effect. What a privilege the Lord has given us.