which were well-loved by Luther: “God is the circle whose center is everywhere but whose circumference is nowhere.” In addition, now I will be recommending and returning to this book also. Part of IVP’s Formatio series, which seeks to foster the church’s rich tradition of spiritual formation through transformation by Christ and conformity to his image, _Walking the Labyrinth_ makes a worthy and welcome contribution.

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“Seminarium: The Elements of Great Teaching” is a series published by Fortress Press. The series is described in the following way: “Written by religious studies and seminary professors for religious studies and seminary professors, the Seminarium Elements series bridges the pedagogical aspirations of seminary-umblog.org with practical solutions for today’s seminary and religious studies educators” (taken from the advertisement for Seminarium Elements).


President George Bush proclaimed the 1990s to be the “Decade of the Brain” with this:

>The human brain, a 3-pound mass of interwoven nerve cells that controls our activity, is one of the most magnificent—and mysterious—wonders of creation. The seat of human intelligence, interpreter of senses, and controller of movement, this incredible organ continues to intrigue scientists and layman alike. (Proclamation 6158, July 17, 1990)

In April 2013, President Obama announced an ambitious $100 million program—The Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative—to accelerate our understanding of the brain at the level of its neural circuitry. Then, in early March 2015, President Obama announced his proposal to double the federal investment in the BRAIN Initiative to approximately $200 million in fiscal year 2015 (accessed electronically at i3 Mindware, June 4, 2015).

The Year of the Brain—Europe was announced in 2015 with the following: “Understanding the human brain and the diseases that can affect it is one of the greatest scientific and philosophical challenges we face today” (accessed electronically June 4, 2015).

Brain research is front and center, much research is being done and much writing is coming forth. Using this brain research for the good of the church would seem to be a self-evident task. Some work in this field is now being published, with Inglis’s book being a wonderful example. Inglis takes on the task of how brain theory can help us...
teach better. She does an extraordinary and clear job of doing so.

Exploring the physiological structure of the brain, Inglis and her colleagues take the reader into the development of memory making clear that, among other things, emotional memory pre-empts any other form of memory so that “the stronger the feeling, the more readily the memory is recalled and the more durable the memory” (43). She encourages a teacher to “find your core message and repeat it with increasing depth” (70), likely a remarkable prescription for a preacher as well as a teacher.

She contrasts the older style of teaching (imparting factual data) with the newer and neurologically informed style of “sticky learning” which is really facilitating constructive integration of content and meaning. Her chart on page 94 contrasting these two approaches is pure gold.

Inglis is correct that “when teachers teach and students learn in accordance with how our brain is designed, the learning is more effective and stands a greater chance of being long lasting, memorable, and sticky. . . . Education at all levels is in need of reform, not merely from a political or financial viewpoint, but from a pedagogical and structural perspective” (91).

Too bad Inglis apparently was not aware of the work of the LCMS’s own Allen Nauss (Brain Research and Its Implications for the Church) or his editing of the forthcoming The Brain Manual.

Nonetheless, this is a book to be read and its teachings implemented by all of us who teach. Perhaps, even, we can all get together with other readers of all these books on seminariumblog.org.

Bruce M. Hartung

Concordia Journal/Fall 2015