Preface

The collection of essays in this book is oriented around a theme that seems to have had little play in the field of education, particularly in public education where many Christian teachers feel they are called to serve. In their book *Christian Teachers in Public Schools*, Stronks and Stronks (1999) acknowledged the nostalgia and hope of Christian teachers who long "for God's shalom in a place in which teachers fear it will never happen" (p. 20). This fleeting mention begs for further explanation as well as for recommendations for practice. Can *shalom* happen? The authors of this book are both hopeful and honest about the Christian's call to embody *shalom* in our nation's schools.[1]

To orient the authors, Palmer's (2007) "seldom taken trail" (p. 6) has become a guide. While appreciating that (1) what we teach, (2) how we teach, and (3) why we teach are legitimate questions, his focus has been (4) "who is the self that teaches?" (p. 5). In this book, our focus is his: *Who is the teacher who understands and practices the way of shalom in their classroom?* Our "who" is more willing to integrate the what, how, and the why than Palmer is in his book, but our anchor acknowledges what he emphasizes: the who of the teacher along with the guidance offered by the greatest Who as he guides our minds, our motivations, and our professional practice.

In the chapters that follow, the manifestations of this Way are most evident in two broad applications: teachers in the public school classroom and the important, current concern about diversity. While teachers in Christian schools will find much

[1]The reader should be aware that this book is not about shalom, per se. It is about teaching. But because it is about teaching from the perspective of the Christian faith, the Biblical image of shalom has been adopted as unique frame for viewing the teacher's task. Most of the authors are not theologians or Biblical scholars. They are former public school teachers and presently work as educators in a faith-based teacher education program. They are credible as practitioners and scholars in their own fields, but view their areas of interest and expertise differently because of their faith. Shalom is not the only useful faith-based metaphor for interpreting how to work in a public space, like school, but it has been helpful for those who have taken up their pen for this project. Our hope it that our readers will find it helpful too.

(and perhaps *all*) of what is here to be helpful, the authors had in mind teachers in the public school, notably through the framework of day-to-day work in their classrooms. Teachers don't often have a say in the bigger workings of school and district life. But in their classrooms, they are creating a culture and shaping a "home-away-from-home"; they are crafters of wisdom and cheerleaders for the good. To them, we hope to offer guidance.

The particular theme of diversity, it turns out, is the major concern in many chapters. In today's pluralistic context, our classrooms are far from the homogenous classrooms of *Leave It To Beaver* and *The Andy Griffith Show*. Race, culture, religion, sexuality, age, ability, and more present new realities for students and teachers in today's classrooms. This, we believe, invites perspectives from the Christian tradition. These are issues that Christians often stay away from or provide limited views on that feel more black-and-white than nuanced, wise, and applicable in the real world. Options for engagement such as the three offered by Schwartz (1997) in the useful article "Christian Teaching in Public Schools: What are Some Options?" are valuable. But perhaps it is less about choosing *an option* and more about finding *a Way* that can be adapted in numerous ways through prudence, prayer, and professional sensitivity.

The integration of the Christian faith with classroom practice and particularly in the issues of diversity provides a conceptual challenge that has implications for Christian teachers who are committed to their profession and want to make a difference. This book is for such people whether they are currently teacher candidates preparing for a career in the classroom, new teachers who need a way to get perspective in the midst of the struggles of being "new," or veterans who need some ideas to argue with or some humble reminders to encourage them in their service.

Chapter 1 sets the stage for understanding shalom in the rest of the book, particularly through looking at the Old Testament roots of this concept. In this chapter, Kaak invites the public school teacher to think of their work in a missional way, living and working as intentional exiles. Suggestions for teaching in hopeful ways are also linked to the theme of shalom.

In Chap. 2, Lee suggests a model of a Christian teaching, calling upon the pedagogy of shalom drawn from Palmer's four essential questions to teaching: Why to teach, what to teach, how to teach, and who we teachers are? To answer those questions, he creates a set of propositions that can be applied to school contexts.

Shalom is an authentic, inclusive learning community. In order to reflect teachers' own values, beliefs, and assumptions that impact the inclusiveness of a learning environment, Martinez in Chap. 3 presents a four quadrant analysis of teaching and learning: (1) what our students as active participants bring to the classroom; (2) what we as instructors bring to the classroom; (3) the curriculum, materials, and resources that convey the course to students; and (4) the pedagogical processes through which the course content is delivered.

Chapter 4 deals with the concept of hospitality, which is a critical concept when leading diversity in education. Mayo outlines three propositions from a theological perspective and offers practical guidance for cultivating teachers' hospitality as a moral attribute and professional posture.

In order to create a community of shalom in a school, teachers need to deal with racism. Cox researches how institutional racism impacts student achievement, especially in regard to the black male students she refers to in Chap. 5. She calls out certain Biblical dispositions in Christian teachers and suggests several possible interventions for teachers who wish to avoid racism in a school. These include multicultural awareness, recognizing communication styles, developing positive attitude, and organizing peer tutors.

Social justice is another critical issue in education. Two chapters give insights to implementing social justice in the classrooms. Richardson in Chap. 6 distinguishes equality from equity and explains how equity, linked to justice and shalom, is foundational to help students succeed academically. Lee, Givens, and Mendoza, in the following Chap. 7, suggest a practical example of how to apply social justice concepts into a classroom setting. Based on an example of a real social justice lesson, they suggest a social justice-embedded lesson plan that teachers can easily adopt to their teaching.

Hong addresses the term shalom from a multicultural community perspective in Chap. 8. She explains Hofstede's five cultural dimensions of cultural awareness and then focuses on an intercultural communication process that teachers may adopt in their classrooms.

Cannaday writes to advocate for gifted and talented children and youth in Chap. 9. She is concerned that in the correct attempt to advocate for the marginalized, teachers not forget to offer individualized guidance to those God has gifted intellectually. The chapter suggests strategies that support the "inner shalom" of the students with perspectives and practices that allow them to feel included as learners.

Chapter 10 deals with students' sexual identity/orientation, a hot topic in current mainstream culture. Nworie and Thorsos offer a brief discussion of the plight of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered students' proposed interventions by which leaders and teachers can create a safe and successful school environment that promote safe and secure school experiences.

Bartholio (Chap. 11) introduces a set of special education "metaparadigms" and then focuses his discussion on the issue of collaboration. His concern is for effective IEP meetings which at times result in conflicts among stakeholders and participating parties. The author emphasizes that facilitating an IEP meeting in a posture of shalom, with the Trinity as a model, helps promote a positive relationship between home, school, and district.

In this book, we recognize Jesus as a master teacher. Roso looks close at Jesus the teacher in Chap. 12. Roso analyzes the teaching of Jesus from the lens of differentiated instruction, cognitive challenge, student engagement, effective questioning, and relevance or relatedness and confirms that Jesus practices what the literature of good teaching preaches.

As Palmer points out, knowing ourselves is more important than other factors, such as understanding subjects, in order to be an effective teacher. Chapters 13 and 14 address the issue of who we are as teachers. Although mentoring in teacher education circles is typically linked to the preparation of candidates and novices,

Bradley in Chap. 13 applies the principles of mentoring to pedagogy, suggesting that such an approach is mutually enriching to both the teacher and the student. Her survey of mentoring in the Bible and her outline of key elements in successful mentoring provide clear guidelines for consideration and practice.

In Chap. 14, Barsh researches the relationship between a teacher's spirituality and self-efficacy. Based upon research with more than 300 public school teachers, he confirms that the impact of spirituality on teacher self-efficacy is consistent with much of the literature regarding spiritual development in the life of the teacher.

The last chapter is the summary of all 14 chapters in which the author emphasizes shalom to be undertaken as a priority in schools until Jesus comes back. Lee identifies two sets of interventions that need to be implemented in two ways: individual and communal dimensions.

We do not think that we can cover all of the issues regarding shalom in educational contexts in 15 chapters. However, we hope that readers (mainly teachers and educators) may find insightful ideas on how to apply the concept of shalom to their classrooms so that they may lead a transforming work in their classrooms, schools, and communities as difference makers.

Azusa, USA HeeKap Lee
August 2016 Paul Kaak

References

Palmer, P. (2007). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of the teacher's life.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Stronks, J. K., & Stronks, G. G. (1999). *Christian teachers in public schools: A guide for teachers, administrators, and parents.* Grand Rapids: Baker.

Schwartz, J. E. (1997). Christian Teaching in Public Schools: What are Some Options? *Christian Scholars Review*, *21*(3), 293–305.

http://www.springer.com/978-981-10-2986-8

The Pedagogy of Shalom
Theory and Contemporary Issues of a Faith-based Education
Lee, H.; Kaak, P. (Eds.)
2017, XXIII, 227 p. 5 illus., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-981-10-2986-8