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## Rosource Guide: Conflict Management and Resolution in the Church

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# Resource Guide Conflict Management and Resolution in the Church

THOMAS E. STOKES

This is a bibliography of books on conflict management and resolution in the church. For the most part I have not listed non-book resources, such as, audio and visual resources. Last winter, I compiled a bibliography for an Emmanuel School of Religion Doctor of Ministry class on conflict management. I started my research envisioning a bibliography about two to three pages in length and listing not more than ten or fifteen titles. However, the final bibliography, entitled "Thirty-Something Years of Conflict Management and Resolution in the Church: A Bibliography," was 24 pages in length and included works printed between 1969 and 2001. This abridged bibliography includes works printed between 1996 and 2001.

I chose not to list Ph. D. dissertations or Ed. D. and D. Min. projects. However, two excellent sources for such works are the Theological Research Exchange Network (TREN) and the American Theological Library Association's *Research in Ministry (RIM)*. TREN is a library of over 7,800 theological thesis/dissertation and D. Min. project titles representing research from as many as 70 different institutions. Titles may be ordered online through its search and order system. TREN may be accessed at <http://www.tren.com>. *RIM* may be accessed as part of the older version of ATLA's *ATLA Religion Database on CD-ROM*, though it is not included in its recently released version. However, *RIM* is moving to an all-electronic format for 2001 and will be available at no charge through ATLA's web site: <http://www.atla.com>. Multiple search fields will access nearly 500 submissions a year, representing the most current project reports and theses from approximately 50 Doctor of Ministry programs accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada. Bibliographic

access will be available by author, title, institution, and subject headings. The database will also include abstracts. Updates will appear quarterly. Researchers should search *Dissertation Abstracts International* and ERIC for the Ph. D. dissertations and Ed. D. projects respectively.

Focusing my bibliography on conflict management in the church, I quickly realized that by searching the various resources with the subject headings, "conflict" and "conflict management," the results were often too broad and outside the parameters of this bibliography. The concept of conflict management in the church is a relatively new field, viz., the late 1960s. Still, the use of "conflict" and "conflict management" in my searches was necessary. The primary subject headings used in searching for resources included the following: "conflict management," "conflict management—biblical teaching," "conflict management—religious aspects—Christianity," and "conflict management in the Bible." Other subject headings that were useful in finding resources for this bibliography include the following: "church controversies," "church controversies—case studies," "church discipline," "church discipline—case studies," "church discipline—biblical teaching," "reconciliation—religious aspects—Christianity." A term frequently used interchangeably with "conflict management" in the literature is "conflict resolution." However, in most resources following the Library of Congress subject headings, one is referred from "conflict resolution" to either "conflict management" or "dispute resolution (law)."

I also searched the major databases for religious research. First and foremost is the American Theological Library Association's *ATLA Religion Database on CD-ROM*. The *ATLA Religion Database on CD-ROM* includes index citations to

journal articles, essays in multi-author works, book reviews, and Doctor of Ministry projects within the field of religion. Indexing for the *ATLA Religion Database* begins in 1949 and continues to the present. The *ATLA Religion Database on CD-ROM* is a comprehensive reference tool designed to support religious and theological scholarship in graduate education and faculty research. The *ATLA Religion Database on CD-ROM* contains more than 950,000 citations and abstracts from 1,400 international journals and 14,000 multi-author works related to the field of religion. While I have not included journal articles in this abridged bibliography, I recommend the following three additional indexing and abstracting resources for finding relevant journal articles.

*Religious and Theological Abstracts (R&TA)* on CD-ROM provides abstracts of articles appearing in more than 400 journals in the fields of religion and theology. The current edition of *R&TA* contains all the abstracts published in print volumes 1–43 (1958–2000) of *Religious and Theological Abstracts*. The benefit of the CD-ROM edition *R&TA* is that one can do Boolean searches by title, author, year published, biblical reference or any word or phrase. Please note that subject headings are not utilized in this abstracting resource.

Another resource that may be used in pursuing periodical articles is the Association of Christian Librarians' *Christian Periodical Index (CPI)*. As stated in the front matter of its most recent cumulative issue, "Its purpose is to provide access to English language articles and reviews written from an evangelical Christian perspective or of interest to the evangelical community." *CPI* is "an index to subjects and authors and to book and media reviews." Three Stone-Campbell Movement publications indexed by *CPI* are the *Christian Standard*, the *Gospel Advocate*, and the *Stone-Campbell Journal*. *CPI* has indexed the *Christian Standard* since 1994. *Christian Standard* articles published between 1967 and 1993 may be located through the electronic version of the *Christian Standard Index*, which was compiled by the Lincoln Christian College and Seminary Library staff and edited by Nancy J. Olson. This is available through the Lincoln Christian College and Seminary Library's website at

<http://www.lccs.edu/library/csi.html>. The online version serves as a supplement to the six-volume print edition of the *Christian Standard Index, 1866–1966*.

Another index that gives access to resources written by members of the Stone-Campbell Movement is the *Restoration Serials Index (RSI)*. Compiled primarily by librarians of the a cappella Churches of Christ, the *RSI* "is an index of articles from 72 journals, magazines and other periodicals related to the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement. The index lists author, title, publication, volume, issue, date and up to four related subjects." It may be accessed at Abilene Christian University at the URL <http://bible.acu.edu/rsi/>

Numerous organizations offer assistance and resources in conflict management in the church. One that I found especially helpful, and that I highly recommend, is the Alban Institute. The following statement may be found in the Alban Institute's advertisement for its recently released book, *Conflict Management in Congregations*: "Since its inception, the Alban Institute has earned a reputation in addressing congregational conflict management issues through its research, consulting services, educational events, and particularly its publications." Two of their noteworthy journal publications are *Action Information* and its successor, *Congregations*. The Alban Institute's many services and resources may be accessed at <http://www.alban.org>.

A number of educational institutions offer academic studies in conflict management and resolution, including the Pepperdine University School of Law's Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution. Formed in 1986, the Straus Institute established a program to assist churches, as well as individual Christians, as they face potentially destructive disputes. They provide academic programs, a clinical education program, conferences and training programs, and reconciliation programs. Its many services and resources may be accessed at <http://law.pepperdine.edu/straus>.

An example of organizations offering mediation assistance is the Tennessee Mediators Network, which is located in Morristown, Tennessee. The Tennessee Mediators Network seeks to assist Mediators and Mediation Organizations in their mar-

keting and public relations efforts to increase the utilization of mediation in Tennessee. Their web site (<http://www.tnmediators.com>) "was created to further the practice of civil and family mediation in Tennessee and to assist in bringing Tennessee mediators and mediation clients together." They also offer services in church conflict and mediation.

I welcome any recommendations for corrections or additions to this bibliography.

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