



Volume 59 | Issue 2

Article 30

2016

Anglim's "Encyclopedia of religion and the law in America, 2nd ed." (Book Review)

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Recommended Citation

Laing, John D. (2016) "Anglim's "Encyclopedia of religion and the law in America, 2nd ed." (Book Review)," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 59: Iss. 2, Article 30.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2572-7478.1115>

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Anglim, C.T. (2009). *Encyclopedia of religion and the law in America*, 2nd ed. Amenia, NY: Grey House Publishing. 847 pp. \$165.00. ISBN 9781592372980

Christopher Anglim has accomplished a monumental feat in his *Encyclopedia of Religion and Law in America*: producing a one-volume specialized encyclopedia for a general readership covering an immense amount of material. In this second edition of his formerly titled, *Religion and the Law: A Dictionary*, Anglim has provided a much-needed update with references to the legal and religious ramifications of recent clergy abuse scandals, the Global War on Terror and Patriot Acts, and changing social/cultural norms.

At first glance, the work seems to suffer from the same malady of most one-volume reference works with a single author: on the one hand, its topic is too specialized to garner interest from a general readership, and on the other hand, its focus is too broad and its articles too general to be of much use to the interested reader, but first impressions can be misleading. Beyond its extensive (though sometimes brief) articles, the encyclopedia has a wealth of information in the appendices that will prove beneficial to both specialist and novice. Those appendices include a collection of primary source legal documents (charters, constitutions, statutes, and legal commentaries), a chronology of religion and law in the U.S. (landmark cases, significant legislation, and scholarly studies of relevance), a list of cases cited in the articles, and an extensive bibliography. They alone are almost worth the cost of the book, but the articles – the heart of the volume – cover virtually every topic of concern to its focus and thus make it an indispensable resource to anyone interested in the topic.

Clear and concise are the first two words that come to mind in describing the articles, and this style makes identifying the intended audience so difficult. While it should certainly be in any law school library, it could justifiably sit on the shelf in any undergraduate university collection, and could even serve a high school or public library well. Anyone interested in religio-political issues would benefit from the work, as it introduces many basic legal concepts and issues regarding First Amendment jurisprudence and legislative concerns. Most private religious institutions, whether universities, churches, denominational or ecclesiastical agencies, or parachurch organizations, should have a copy on hand, as it is invaluable for understanding the complex relationships between Establishment and Free Exercise and between religion and society. In this litigious and increasingly secular age, it is imperative for Christians to be informed of the historical, conceptual, political, and sociological issues at stake with regard to religion in the public square, and this volume offers a comprehensive, unbiased, and scholarly entrée into that topic in an accessible format.

Reviewer

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