

*Abstract for*

**The Jurisprudence of Parenting and the Influence of Religion on Effective Parenting**

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The instability of families in the contemporary (especially western) world puts in jeopardy effective parenting and healthy child development. This paper reviews some statistical evidence of the disintegration of families, especially in the United States, and the impact of fragmented families upon children. Clearly, being raised by both parents in a home with healthy marital stability is the most advantageous environmental factor for successful child development. However, because so many contemporary social trends thwart the formation and maintenance of healthy, marital parenting, there is a great need today for additional institutions that will provide an effective support system and safety net for children and their parents when marriages struggle, fail, or fail to form. Religion and religious communities can provide very valuable back-up support for parenting and child development.

While contemporary instability of marriage formation and maintenance may suggest that parenting and child development are undervalued in many societies, this article reports that parenting is explicitly protected in multiple provisions in the text of national constitutions of nearly all nations in the world today. A survey of contemporary national constitutions shows that formal legal

commitment to parenting and child development is emphatic and nearly ubiquitous globally.

In political theory of the enlightenment (the basis for liberal democracy) parenting and childhood are given special preferential constitutional treatment because effective parenting is considered critical for the wellbeing of society and individuals. Good parenting provides protection for children; is an expression of the interdependent connectedness of human nature; enhances individual rights and welfare; and is essential to sustainable liberal democracy.

Many social science studies indicate that participation in religion generally has a positive impact upon the quality of parenting, and upon the resulting healthy, positive development of children parents. Parenting and religious have mutually-reinforcing interests and concerns. While some unusual religious doctrines and practices are harmful to children, most research confirms that the influence of religion upon parenting and children usually is beneficial. Research also suggests a correlation between lack of protection for religion and violence in society. Protecting religious liberty, thus, increases social goods, sustains social stability, reduces inter-group violence, and that enhances the quality of parenting and childhood.

Because we live in such difficult times with such significant challenges for the children, their parents, and for parenting, there is particular need for institutional support for parenting. Religion can provide such needed support. In conclusion, this article recommends that nations protect religions and religious liberty for the sake of the children.