This chapter is devoted to the Roman law of persons and family. As in modern legal studies, so in Roman law, it is the first branch of private law that students are taught, primarily in order to understand the concept of ‘legal personhood’. This chapter covers the *paterfamilias* (head of the household); marriage and divorce; adoption; and guardianship. The head of the household was the eldest living male ancestor of a specific family. He had in his power (*potestas*) all *descendants* traced through the male line (and also exercised forms of control over other members of the household). Roman law accorded the head of the household extensive legal entitlements, not only vis-à-vis the members of the household, but also its property. The motivation of this state of affairs lies in the recognition in Roman law of the family unit as legally significant entity.
5. The Roman Family

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