Introduction

Jonathan Herring

The Introduction looks at the situation in which family law finds itself today. The foundation of family life — marriage, parenthood, and childhood — has been undergoing rapid transformation and family law has had to adapt to this. Family law is an interesting area of study; it aims to turn the chaos in people's family lives into order. However, the law is often in a situation in this area where there is no answer that leaves all parties happy.

1. Marriage, civil partnership, and cohabitation

Jonathan Herring

‘Marriage, civil partnership, and cohabitation’ examines the changes that have recently taken place in the composition and nature of the family unit and asks: what is a family? Over recent decades, the definition has broadened and the word family has come to have greater significance. What is marriage? There is no single correct definition. The law needs to be clear that it is seeking to define a legal understanding of marriage. Perhaps we need a ‘sexless family law’: one where the central focus of the law is not on sexual relationship, but the care given within that relationship.

7. Civil injuries and the law of torts

G. Edward White

‘Civil injuries and the law of torts’ explains that tort law's identity as a discrete field was initially associated with the rise and expansion of negligence as a standard of civil liability. Then, as dissatisfaction with some of the limiting effects of negligence surfaced, alternatives to tort law as a compensation mechanism were considered. Identifying which injuries qualify for relief under the tort system, developing and applying standards of civil liability,
and evaluating the performance of the tort system against alternative compensation systems, including workers’ compensation, have been recurrent and formidable tasks. History suggests that the problem of redressing civil injury has been, and will remain, a central challenge for America.

7. From monk to family man

Scott H. Hendrix

The Reformation was borne out of the crucial disputes of the era. For reformers, the right of clergy to marry would avert the hypocrisy of sexual practices of clergy living under the vow of celibacy, and nothing in the scripture prevented it. They argued that God intended marriage to be a divine estate open to everyone. ‘From monk to family man’ charts Luther’s contribution to allowing the marriage of clergy and his own marriage and views on the matter. He and his wife, Katharine, took marriage seriously. Luther named marriage as one of the genuine orders that God had established for humankind alongside government and the church.

4. Fernando Seeks a Wife: Sex and Blood

John Monaghan and Peter Just

‘Fernando Seeks a Wife’ examines the ways in which human beings form social ties through ties of blood and marriage. Using examples from the Mixtec and Dou Donggo, the importance of marriage in maintaining a household and in deeper spiritual matters is shown. The complexities and variation found in marriage, family structure, and kinship in many other societies, including polygyny, polyandry, monogamy, patrilineage, and matrilineage, are also considered. Kinship and lines of descent are shown to have different and significant social consequences and complex biological, social, and cultural relationships may be seen when humans are creating and maintaining relationships with one another.

5. The shaping of modern Sikhism

Eleanor Nesbitt

Contemporary Sikhism was formed by the views of a group of influential intellectuals and political activists. The intellectuals were the 18th-century Tat (pure) Khalsa, and they presented the Sikh teachings and practices of their own and previous generations as sharply
differentiated from Hinduism. ‘The shaping of modern Sikhism’ tells the story of the Tat Khalsa in the context of 19th- and 20th-century Punjab, a period remembered for competing Sikh reformist movements and a time when key features of Sikhism took their current form, such as the Golden Temple and a distinctive Sikh marriage rite. The impact of British rule, the Akali movement, and 1947 Partition are also described.

6. Nineteenth-century Utah
Richard Lyman Bushman

After Smith's death the movement split, the largest group being led by Brigham Young. Throughout the 19th century, Utah was the destination of more than 80,000 Mormons who migrated from the eastern United States and Europe, often driven by persecution. Brigham Young became an expert colonizer, setting up all the necessary institutions of civic life in a blend of church and state. Plural marriage reached its peak in the decade after its announcement in 1852, the main reason being religious, but it also integrated single immigrant women without other support into the society. Young's plans foundered after the government required the church to dismantle the theocracy and polygamy.

4. Politics and society
A. C. Grayling

‘Politics and society’ considers Russell's thinking about morality, politics, ethics, and society as outlined in Human Society in Ethics and Politics and the shocking Marriage and Morals, a book on sexual morality for which he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950. Russell's views on human relationships highlight three topics: one is the harmfulness of religion, another is the need for good education, and the third is individual liberty. Each is considered in turn. Finally, Russell's strong opposition to the Boer War, the First World War, and the Vietnam War, but also his support for the Allied effort in the Second World War are described.

7. The Future of Quakerism
Pink Dandelion

‘The future of Quakerism’ summarizes the differences between the three Quaker traditions and explores the future prospects of each as well as Quakerism as a whole. Evangelical,
Conservative, and Liberal Friends have divergent views on scripture, revelation, and experience and on the role of doctrine and theology. Evangelical Friends are Christians who happen to be Quaker; Conservative Friends are Quaker and Christian; Liberal Friends are Quakers who may be Christian or theist. They often disagree over politics and sexual morality, but agree over reducing consumption, simplifying lifestyle, and maintaining integrity. Mission work has resulted in numerical growth among Evangelical Friends, particularly in Africa and Central and South America.

8. Sexual and romantic development, early parenthood, and emerging adulthood
Peter K. Smith

‘Sexual and romantic development, early parenthood, and emerging adulthood’ explains that as adolescents start to become reproductively mature at puberty, interest in sexual behaviour and partnerships increases. From associating primarily with same-sex friends during middle childhood, there is typically an increased interest in relationships with the opposite sex from the early to mid-teens onwards. Some experience of same-sex sexual behaviours is also not uncommon, and a minority of adolescents will describe themselves as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Intimate partnerships start to be formed, with sexual and romantic elements. The issues of dating violence, sexting, teenage pregnancies, and early parenthood are considered along with the extended period of development in emerging adulthood.

Ageing: A Very Short Introduction
Nancy A. Pachana

Ageing: A Very Short Introduction discusses the lifelong dynamic changes in biological, psychological, and social functioning involved in ageing. Increased lifespans have created an urgent need to find ways to enhance our functioning and well-being in the later decades of life. This is reflected in relevant policies and action plans from the WHO and the UN. Looking to the future, this VSI considers advancements in provision for our ageing populations, including revolutionary models of nursing-home care. Understanding the process of ageing is not only important for individuals but also for societies and nations if the full potential of those entering later life is to be realized.

Sociology: A Very Short Introduction
Steve Bruce
Drawing on studies of social class, crime and deviance, education, work in bureaucracies, and changes in religious and political organizations, Sociology: A Very Short Introduction explores the tension between the individual’s place in society and society’s role in shaping the individual, and demonstrates the value of sociology for understanding the modern world. It outlines the unique vision of sociology and shows that much social theory is actually philosophy or literary theory. It discusses the continuing arguments for social egalitarianism, considering issues such as gay marriage, women in combat roles, and the 2010 Equality Act to debunk contemporary arguments against parity, and looks at the likely consequences for society as gender divisions are increasingly questioned.

10. Behaviour

E. P. Sanders

‘Behaviour’ considers Paul's moral perfectionism. By examining how Paul dealt with behaviour, more illustrations of how he both upheld the law and maintained that Christians were not under it are revealed, and the various cultural influences on him and his churches can be assessed. Paul always advised love your neighbour and he urged his hearers to live by the Spirit and to abstain from evil and immorality. Paul sought to impose Jewish behaviour on his Gentile converts, but the two great issues on which they disagreed were idolatry and sexual behaviour. Paul's views on incest, marriage, celibacy, remarriage, prostitution, and homosexuality are discussed.

10. The mysteries

A. Edward Siecienski

The Orthodox church has blessings and ceremonies for every occasion, but among the various rites of the church, seven have taken on a special significance. ‘The mysteries’ describes these seven sacraments of the Orthodox church—baptism, chrismation (confirmation), the eucharist, reconciliation (confession), the Anointing of the Sick, marriage, and Holy Orders. The Orthodox conviction is that Christ himself is encountered in each of the seven mysteries, and it is he who provides believers with the grace needed for their particular ministry or state of life. For the Orthodox, sacraments are not just ceremonies or celebrations that mark important milestones in one’s Christian journey; they are manifestations of Christ’s ongoing presence in the world.
Family Law: A Very Short Introduction
Jonathan Herring

Family Law: A Very Short Introduction provides insight not only into what family law is, but why it is the way it is. How have laws had to respond to social changes in family life? The last few decades have seen rising divorce rates and an increase in the use of surrogate mothers. How do family courts deal with the chaos of modern family life? Family law has recently been challenged to keep up-to-date with the social and scientific changes which affect it. What is a family? What makes someone a parent? What rights should children have? What will families look like in the years ahead? What new dilemmas will the courts face?

1. Before sexuality
Véronique Mottier

The ancients did not define themselves in terms of their sexual identities. The idea of classifying people according to sexual partner would have seemed bizarre to them. Sexual culture wasn't homogeneous across the ancient world. There was substantial variation across regions and time. ‘Before sexuality’ looks closely at sexual culture in Greece and Rome in the social and political context of each region by taking a close look at how ancient Athenians and Romans made sense of sex. Sexual culture was closely intertwined with ideas of sex and gender. Rules governing sex were structured by norms of political citizenship. What influence did the spread of Christianity have on these early ideas of sexuality?

2. Is multiculturalism bad for women?
Ali Rattansi

Suggesting that multiculturalism might be bad for women may seem odd given that multiculturalism originated around the same time as feminism. In fact there is no reason why claims for rights on behalf of diverse groups should not conflict. But if multiculturalism involves support for the survival of ethnic minority cultures and if the traditions of those cultures disadvantage women, then multiculturalism is bad for women. ‘Is multiculturalism bad for women?’ looks at examples of this such as female genital mutilation, force marriages, ‘honour’ killings, and issues relating to dress.
Ritual is part of what it means to be human. It defines and enriches culture, but what is ritual? What are the various kinds of ritual? Is ritual tradition bound and conservative or innovative and transformational? Ritual: A Very Short Introduction describes a number of specific rites and explores ritual from theoretical and historical perspectives. It focuses on the places where ritual touches everyday life; shows how ritual is an important vehicle for group and identity formation; how it generates and transmits beliefs and values; how it can be used to exploit and oppress; and how it has served as a touchstone for thinking about cultural origins and historical change.

6. Making a Jewish home
Norman Solomon

What does a Jewish home look like? ‘Making a Jewish home’ looks at everyday Jewish life including objects in the home, books likely to be found in the home, education, kosher food, sexual and personal relationships, and family. Traditional Jewish communities emphasize the importance of family. Jewish sociologists identify seven life stages marked by rites of passage: birth, growing up, marriage, parenthood, mid-life, old age, and death. Do Jews belief in a life after death? There has been debate as to whether life after death involves some form of bodily resurrection, or only the perdurance of the ‘soul’. Some believe life after death is a metaphor for continuing repute or influence.

1. Puzzles
Ronald de Sousa

What is love? There are numerous synonyms each with their own nuance—philia, storge, agape, eros—but no single approach will suffice to make sense of it. We need to look at love from many sides. Eros is typically associated with intense sexual attraction and it is this that has inspired a greater number of poems, music, works of art—and crimes—than any other human condition. ‘Puzzles’ considers several questions in an attempt to comprehend this ‘condition’ that shapes and governs thoughts, desires, emotions, and behaviours: What can we love? How subjective is love? Do we love for reasons? Is love blind? Is love freedom, or bondage? Does love mar the purity of sex?