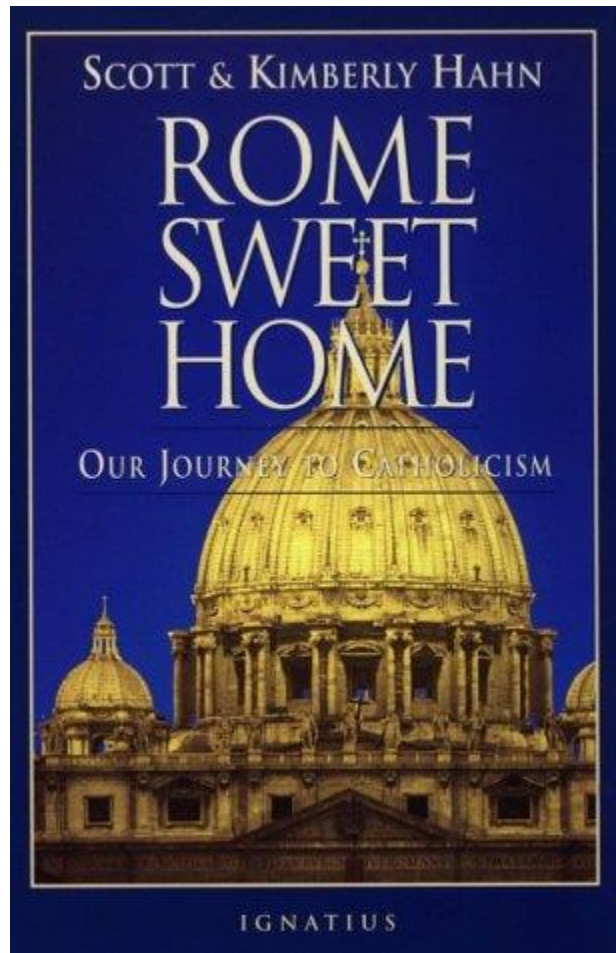


A Summary of *Rome Sweet Home* by Scott Hahn



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About the Authors

Dr. Scott and Kimberly Hahn were married in the Presbyterian Church in 1979 and are the parents of six children. Scott was received into the Catholic Church in 1986 and Kimberly in 1990. Dr. Hahn is Professor of Theology and Scripture at Franciscan University of Steubenville, where he has taught since 1990. He has authored ten books besides *Rome Sweet Home*, in addition to numerous articles and audio tapes, which have proven instrumental in bringing many people home to the Catholic faith. He has also founded the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology, a research and educational institute that promotes Scripture study in the Catholic tradition. Kimberly homeschools their children and has authored a number of books as well, most recently *Life-Giving Love: Embracing God's Beautiful Design for Marriage*. The Hahns continue to speak together across the country.

General Overview

Dr. Scott Hahn, a former Presbyterian minister, and his wife Kimberly recount the process of their conversion to the Catholic faith. From their Protestant and anti-Catholic backgrounds, the Hahns recall their early marriage and ministry as Presbyterians. Through Scott's deepening study of Scripture, he becomes increasingly convinced not only that many Protestant doctrines are without Scriptural basis, but that the Catholic Church holds the fullness of the truth. This conviction causes a painful rift in the Hahn's marriage for several years, but eventually Kimberly converts to Catholicism as well and the family is once again united in faith. This book traces the particular questions and revelations that figured into the Hahns' personal conversion stories.

Chapter 1: From Cradle to Christ

Scott

Scott relates that he was raised as a nominal Presbyterian but lost interest in the church as a teenager. After being charged as a delinquent and placed on six months' probation, Scott reluctantly found his way into a Christian Young Life group, which sparked his interest in the person of Jesus Christ. He dedicated his life to Christ and started voraciously studying Scripture and the Protestant reformers. Convinced of the errors of the Catholic Church, Scott made a special mission of demonstrating those perceived vices to Catholics, with frequent results.

Kimberly

Kimberly recalls her happy childhood spent in a sincerely Presbyterian home. After responding to an altar call in the seventh grade, she immersed herself in Scripture study and prayer. Kimberly became increasingly involved in activities and ministries at her church, but also witnessed to members of her public high school as well.

Chapter 2: From Ministry to Marriage

Scott

After touring in the United States and Europe with a Christian music group, Scott began his studies in Theology, Philosophy, and Economics at Grove City College. He became involved in Young Life again, tailoring his Bible studies and programs to specifically address what he saw as the errors of Catholicism. As a result of several of his friends (who had been baptized as infants) being baptized "for real" as adults, Scott

embarked on a Scripture study of infant baptism. He discovered that in every covenant God made with His people, infants were included. Why, then, should they be excluded from the sign of the new covenant, baptism? Although Scott was convinced, his friends were reluctant to discuss the issue. In this way, Scott became aware of a danger in “biblical Christianity,” namely, the tendency to attribute to conviction based on Scripture what is actually mere unexamined emotion. This study was also the starting point for his study of the covenant in Scripture, which would become the underlying theme for his future work. Scott also notes that by his senior year, he was determined to marry Kimberly Kirk, with whom he had ministered in Young Life.

Kimberly

After her first two years at Grove City College studying Communication Arts, Kimberly became convinced that she was becoming spiritually lukewarm. At this juncture, she met Scott and began serving in Young Life with him. They dated for a short time but broke the relationship off because Scott was too busy that year to fall in love. However, they remained friends and continued to minister together. Scott also proved instrumental in Kimberly’s decision to not pursue her dream of becoming a minister, because she too concluded that the Scriptures did not support the female ministry. They began dating again during Scott’s senior year and married August 18, 1979.

Chapter 3: New Conceptions of the Covenant

Scott

Immediately following their wedding, Scott and Kimberly arrived at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary to study evangelical, reformed theology. Scott was sincere in his desire to pursue Christianity wherever the Scripture directed him, but he was still staunchly anti-Catholic, as was his close friend Gerry Matatics. Scott’s first encounter of what he came to see as a true Catholic teaching arose because of Kimberly’s scriptural study of contraception. At her request, Scott read *Birth Control and the Marriage Covenant* (now *Sex and the Marriage Covenant*) by John Kippley. To his surprise, Scott agreed with Kippley that, since marriage is a covenant that involves the exchange of persons, the distortion of the marriage act by contraception desecrates the life-giving covenant as God created it. As God’s love is creative and life-giving, so too should married love be. Scott also discovered that the Protestant reformers, including Luther, Calvin, Knox, and Zwingli, agreed that contraception was evil, as did all Christian denominations until 1930. Therefore, the Hahns threw out their contraceptives and learned Natural Family Planning.

Scott’s deepening study of the covenant began to challenge some of the assumptions of Protestant theology. Unlike Protestant tradition, which views covenants and contracts interchangeably, Scott came to realize that, in the Old Testament, contracts involved the exchange of property, while covenants entailed the exchange of persons. Rather than a legal exchange where Christ replaced our sin with His righteousness, the New Covenant transformed sinful human beings into the sons and daughters of God. Scott discovered that, not only did St. Paul support this interpretation of the New Covenant, but Paul also never taught that man was justified by faith alone (*sola fide*). The discovery that *sola fide* was unscriptural was staggering for Scott, since that doctrine is central to Protestantism. Since Kimberly was now expecting their first child, Scott put his doctoral studies on hold and took a position as pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Virginia.

Kimberly

One of the first issues Kimberly was confronted with in her Master’s studies was that of contraception. While she had never given the topic much thought, the frequency of its introduction into pro-life debates led her to study it in depth. She first noted that God’s command to be fruitful and multiply is recurrent through the Scriptures, as are the tributes to the blessing of children. Further, if marriage images Christ’s love for the Church, as St. Paul says, contraception cripples the marital image of God’s life-giving, self-donating love.

Kimberly also reflected that contraception is a way of denying God lordship over one's body and the size of one's family. She became convinced that, for God to be sovereign in her life, she needed to let go of the control over her body that contraception offered her. As Scott noted, Kimberly's arguments and Kippley's book convinced him as well and, with some trepidation, they brought their lives into conformity with this belief. Scott also showed Kimberly his evidence against *sola fide* and recognition that faith (which comes through grace alone) is necessarily expressed in good works.

Chapter 4: Teaching and Living the Covenant as Family

Scott

Scott began to share his love of covenant theology with Trinity Church through a study of Paul's Letter to the Hebrews. In doing so, he came to appreciate the importance of liturgy and communion as well as the writings of the Church Fathers, who had anticipated Scott's discoveries by well over a millennia. His subsequent study of the Gospel of John led him to believe that not only liturgy, but also Sacraments were part of God's covenantal relationship with His family. Scott also noted John 6:52-68, wherein Christ commands His followers to eat His flesh and drink His blood, and concluded that Jesus was not speaking of mere symbolism. Much to his dismay, the Catholic Church appeared to be making some sense; Kimberly remarked that he may be Luther in reverse. Convinced that Presbyterianism shortchanged liturgy and the Sacraments, Scott suggested to his wife that they consider becoming Episcopalian (a painful suggestion to Kimberly, who had been raised in so devout a Presbyterian family). When a student asked him where the Bible taught *sola scriptura* (another pillar of Protestant theology), Scott and all his mentors were unable to give a citation. When he was offered a position as dean of the seminary, Scott was sufficiently uncertain of his theological ground causing him to reject this impressive offer.

Kimberly

While their time in Virginia began blissfully, Kimberly was soon feeling unsettled about the direction Scott's inquiries were taking him. She respected his integrity, but was pained that their family might reject their Presbyterianism. After Scott's rejection of the position of seminary dean, the Hahns – Scott and Kimberly plus their new son, Michael – returned to Grove City College, where Scott was offered a position.

Chapter 5: Scott's Search for the Church

Scott

Scott's new position at Grove City College left him ample time to study Catholicism, as presented by Catholic authors. He examined Orthodoxy, but became convinced that the Orthodox rejection of Rome was more superficial, ethnic, and political than seriously theological. In conversation with his old seminary friend, Gerry Matatics, Scott finally confessed that he had been reading Catholic authors. Gerry was dismayed and promised to read some of the books himself if Scott would read some anti-Catholic works. Kimberly was delighted, hoping that Scott's intellectually formidable friend would reason her husband back into the Protestant fold. Several months later, Gerry admitted that there was not a single Catholic doctrine that he could not find scriptural support for. Scott continued to seek spiritual guidance – although many Catholics he approached were not as fervent as he was – and began to pray the rosary, recognizing that honoring God's mother does not constitute worship.

In desperation, Scott and Gerry met with Dr. John Gerstner, an anti-Catholic Calvinist theologian. Scott shared with him the biblical support for the papacy: the "keys to the kingdom" given to Peter paralleled the keys given to Hezekiah's prime minister Eliakim in Isaiah, the symbol of authority over God's kingdom on earth. He also

raised his doubts about *sola scriptura*, which had given rise to over 25,000 Protestant denominations. Why, if a document like the United States Constitution needed the Supreme Court to interpret it, did the Bible not need the Magisterium to guide its interpretation? Furthermore, Scripture itself never limited the Word of God to Scripture alone, and the canon of that very Scripture had been assembled by the Catholic Church. Scott was dissatisfied with Dr. Gerstner's conclusion that the best Christians have is a fallible collection of infallible documents. Kimberly was disheartened by the outcome of this conversation, and so Scott promised that, if he became Catholic, he would not do so for five years (i.e. 1990). The Hahns moved to Wisconsin, where Scott was accepted into Marquette University's doctoral program.

Kimberly

Scott's study of Catholicism during their time at Grove City College became an increasingly difficult cross for Kimberly. She was particularly concerned with the honor that Catholics give to Mary, although she saw the validity of Scott's point that Protestants seem to undervalue her. When Scott told her that he thought the Lord might be calling him to the Catholic Church, Kimberly was frightened, seeing little resemblance in this almost-Catholic scholar to the man that she married. The birth of their second child, Gabriel, and her other work occupied time that might have been spent in study, possibly resolving the differences they had. As it was, Kimberly was devastated when their brilliant friend, Gerry Matatics, was intrigued by Scott's unfolding theological study of Catholicism. Kimberly entered what she calls the "winter" of her soul, where sorrow and fear obliterated the joy from her life and marriage.

Chapter 6: One Comes Home to Rome

Scott

The Hahns moved to Milwaukee where Scott began his doctoral work at Marquette University, where he was often the sole defender of the Catholic faith in his classes! Through his study and prayer life, the Holy Spirit was leading Scott more deeply into the Catholic Church. When Scott stumbled into a Mass one day, what he had once thought to be sacrilege was not sacrilege at all; rather it was biblically-based. He burned to receive Christ in the Eucharist, and thought with dismay of his promise to Kimberly to not enter the Church before 1990. This desire increased when he learned that his friend Gerry Matatics and his wife were to enter the Church that Easter, 1986. Scott asked his wife to release him from his promise to postpone becoming Catholic until 1990. After prayer, Kimberly did so, although reluctantly. Scott was received into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil in 1986, although his decision to do so caused deep pain in his marriage.

Kimberly

Kimberly chose to release Scott from his promise to not enter the Church before 1990 because she did not want to stand in the way of his obedience to the Lord and the promptings of the Holy Spirit. But that did not take away her loneliness or sense of betrayal. She felt like she had no one to turn to, since she did not want to worsen the rift in their marriage by confiding in family or friends. Although she found the Easter Vigil Mass interesting, she agonized over the realization that his communion in the Catholic Church would be the sign of disunity in their marriage... unless she changed her mind.

Chapter 7: The Struggles of a Mixed Marriage

Scott

When Scott's friends began to find out that he had become Catholic, the majority of them, and some family members too, became distant. His relationship with Kimberly became increasingly strained when none of their

Protestant friends were able to refute Scott's arguments. Another complication was the family income, which had been supported by his work in Protestant theology. Scott doubted that he could teach Catholic theology since he was just a beginner himself. However, between his past studies of Thomistic philosophy and the acquisition of mountains of theology works from old seminaries and monasteries, Scott began to immerse himself in Catholic Theology. To his surprise, he was offered a teaching position at the College of St. Francis. This opportunity would alleviate some of the financial strain on the family. A further challenge was presented by the complication of placenta previa in Kimberly's third pregnancy, but with good medical care, their child, Hannah, was safe.

Kimberly

While Scott was respectful of Kimberly's convictions and strove to not aggravate their spiritual separation, Kimberly continued to feel the acute pains of abandonment. She did not know why God was doing this to their solid and formerly spiritually united family. Scott suggested that perhaps this was God's way of eventually leading their family into unity again in the Catholic Church. Her own loneliness was mirrored by Scott's, who was shunned by his former friends and colleagues, and he was without his wife to support him. Their mutual decision against divorce kept their marriage intact during this tumultuous time. Amid her struggles with despair, Kimberly sought the will of the Lord in this situation. A friend suggested that she and Scott were being given an "apostolate of the broken body of Christ," a miniature of the rending of the Church that took place during the Protestant Reformation. Activism against abortion and the upcoming birth of their third child were a couple of bonds of unity that held Scott and Kimberly together. Recognizing Scott's role of leadership in their family, Kimberly agreed to have their daughter, Hannah, baptized Catholic. Kimberly was captivated by the beauty of the baptismal ritual and felt that that experience was a turning point for her.

Chapter 8: A Rome-antic Reunion

Scott

The Hahn family moved to Joliet, IL just a month after Hannah's birth, and Scott began to quickly prepare for the four classes he was to teach. Shortly thereafter, Scott received a phone call from Bill Bales, an ex-friend and Presbyterian pastor. Bill admitted that he had urged Kimberly to consider whether she had biblical grounds to divorce Scott after he converted, but then admitted that, in trying to refute Scott's arguments, he himself was seeing the strength of the biblical basis for Catholicism. While Scott continued to discuss the Faith with Bill, he backed off his pressure on Kimberly, accepting the possibility that she might never become Catholic. Gradually, through little discussions and encounters, like an experience of charismatic Catholic worship at Franciscan University of Steubenville, and a covenantal explanation of Purgatory, Kimberly became more open to the Catholic faith.

Scott also got in contact with like-minded Catholics at the apologetics organization, Catholic Answers. Terry Barber of St. Joseph Communications taped an hour-long talk Scott gave on his conversion and was immediately convinced that God was going to use his story. Suddenly, thousands of tapes were being sold and Scott was getting busy, appearing on EWTN and debating a formidable professor at Westminster Theological Seminary. Kimberly listened to the debate and then to the tape of Scott's conversion – the first time she had ever heard the whole story. They then went to Franciscan University of Steubenville, where Scott interviewed for a teaching position. Their meeting with Fr. Michael Scanlan, who prayed for healing from the sorrow of their second miscarriage and explained his own struggles in discovering authentic Marian devotion, was fruitful. Scott no longer knew where Kimberly was concerning the Catholic faith. After many people asked him about his wife while he was speaking at a Catholic Answers conference, Scott asked Kimberly what she would have him tell them. She replied that she felt that God was calling her to come home that Easter! To Scott's further joy, Kimberly chose St. Elizabeth Ann Seton as her confirmation saint – Scott had been praying

to St. Elizabeth for years on Kimberly's behalf. At the Easter Vigil, 1990, the Hahns were once again united in faith.

Kimberly

Finally, spring began to come to Kimberly's heart. She began to pour herself into study, particularly concerning infant baptism. She studied Catholic theology with Protestant friends, and became increasingly struck by the force of the Catholic arguments, including the teaching about the Eucharist found in John 6:52-69. As her study progressed, Kimberly felt isolated by both Catholics, some of which did not seem to believe all that she was discovering, and Protestants, who felt she was becoming too Catholic. Hearing a talk given by Dr. Mark Miravalle on Mary helped Kimberly to overcome some of her doubts about Marian devotion. She realized that by admiring and honoring God's masterpiece, Mary, one gives glory to God. A friend also helped her see that even though Mary was sinless and had one, perfect Child, we can still relate to her because, as the Mother of all believers, she has a lot of difficult children as well!

Kimberly also saw God work through great suffering in the life of her family, specifically in the death of two children through miscarriage. Heaven became all the more real, as she longed for the day that she would meet these precious souls. Kimberly was also comforted by a new understanding of the communion of saints, since she was surrounded by her brothers and sisters in the Lord who had gone before her and who were interceding for her. Her own suffering led her more deeply into Christ's redemptive suffering. When Hannah, now one and a half, was hospitalized with dehydration and a serious fever, Kimberly gained new insight into how suffering can heal. Hannah couldn't understand why her mommy was covering her with ice-cold cloths to bring down a high fever, but her pain led to her healing.

Kimberly embarked upon the RCIA process to resolve some of her remaining questions. Their instructor answered her question about graven images by pointing out that we have photos of family members in our homes. We do not worship or love the photos themselves; rather, they remind us of the ones we love. Another friend and a little girl making her first Reconciliation helped Kimberly reconcile with her heavenly Mother. Her friend pointed out that, in Revelation 12, we are called "her" (Mary's) offspring. This shed light on Christ's words on the cross which gave St. John, and thereby us, His Mother. And a little child who needed to say two Hail Mary's for her penance but had forgotten the prayer, caused Kimberly, who helped her, to finally pray that prayer herself.

Kimberly accepted that God Himself was behind all the upheaval in her life over the last several years – it was neither Scott's fault, nor that of the Church. When Lent rolled around, she felt that God was calling her to give up herself for Lent and come into the Church. When Scott called from the Catholic Answers conference that night, Kimberly could hardly wait to tell him the good news! She yearned to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, could hardly wait to get to Confession, and even began, after some initial hesitation, to pray the Rosary. Still, her joy was mixed with sadness at the spiritual rift that now existed between her and her extended family, although her parents, for love of her, attended her reception into the Church.

Chapter 9: Catholic Family Life

Scott

Scott remarks that many Protestant converts, he and Kimberly included, did not feel at home in the Church at first, since most parishes lack those community-building ministries that Protestant denominations cultivate. Their experience of dynamic orthodoxy at the Franciscan University of Steubenville proved that this does not need to be the case. Through their work at the University, their talks all over the world and the release of hundreds of tapes, the Hahns have continued to minister together in ways they never dreamed of. Scott was able to meet Pope John Paul II through – ironically – his father-in-law, who, as founder of the Religious

Alliance against Pornography, was giving a presentation in the Vatican. The next morning, Scott was able to attend the private Mass of the Holy Father and briefly share with him his spiritual journey.

Kimberly

Kimberly shares her joy in the Catholic life of her family in her son's First Communion, the vibrant Catholic homeschool support group, and the deep spiritual unity of their family. Their family has many opportunities to share hospitality and minister together and participate in the vibrant faith life of Franciscan University.

Conclusion: Calling Catholics to be Bible Christians (and vice versa)

The Hahns encourage their readers to steep themselves in Sacred Scripture and become familiar with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Everyone is called to holiness, and Catholics must become people of prayer, study, and a sacramental lifestyle. If we do, our example can be a great witness to our separated brethren. As Scott writes, "God fathers His family in one Church." He wishes us all to be united as one body, around the altar. To those who have not yet taken part in the family meal, the Father calls you home!