

Rome Sweet Home: Our Journey to Catholicism Study Guide

Rome Sweet Home: Our Journey to Catholicism by Scott Hahn

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Plot Summary

Rome Sweet Home is the story of Pastor Scott Hahn and his wife Kimberly's journey from Reformed Presbyterianism to Roman Catholicism. The book is part autobiography and part apologetic for the Catholic Church. Its purpose is to convince "Bible-believing" Christians to become Roman Catholics and to convince Roman Catholics to pay greater attention to the Bible. They believe themselves to have been "brought home" to Catholicism by the Holy Spirit, that God led them directly from their once anti-Catholic attitudes to fall "in love" with the Roman Catholic Church.

This book takes its place within a long series of apologetic works written by Americans on behalf of the Catholic Church over the last fifty years. Many Christian conservatives see great moral decay in society and see the Protestant Churches as largely unable to resist it. The Roman Catholic Church, due to its hierarchical structure, is able to resist moral decay and hold fast to Christian tradition in the face of modern ideologies. Further, since the Second Vatican Council, Catholics have opened up to ecumenical dialogue with Protestants and many figures in the Catholic Church have written books and articles explaining the doctrines of the Catholic Church to Protestants. Many Catholics have become quite aggressive in evangelizing Protestants. Rome Sweet Home is the story of one man deeply affected by learning about the true teachings of the Catholic Church after decades of being a staunch anti-Catholic. He and his wife were also drawn to the Church for its long-standing commitment to family values.

The story begins with Scott's story of how he came to become a Christian believer in the first place and how he came to be deeply interested in theology. He became convinced that Reformed/Calvinist theology was the deepest and most thoughtful theological approach to take to Christianity. Traditional Reformed theology is very anti-Catholic and Scott Hahn takes on these attitudes. The book describes his journey as a professor of theology, Bible study teacher and pastor who continues to deepen his knowledge of theology and is led, piece by piece, towards Catholic positions. His wife, who holds an MA in theology was a committed Presbyterian as well, whose father was a Presbyterian minister. She and her husband are deeply divided about whether to become Catholic. He is eager to join and she is eager to stay Presbyterian. For four years after Scott Hahn's conversion, they live under incredible stress because they are members of separate churches. Finally Kimberly converts. After this the book moves to explain their joint perspective being Bible-believing Christians in the Catholic Church and exhort their fellow Bible-believers to come into the Catholic faith. They also encourage Catholics to pay more attention to the teachings of the Bible as they are consonant with and never at odds with the teachings of the Church.

The book is narrated separately by both Scott and Kimberly. They describe their own perspectives of their being led into the Catholic faith.



Chapter 1, From the Cradle to Christ

Chapter 1, From the Cradle to Christ Summary and Analysis

Scott Hahn, one of the two main characters of the book, begins narrating. He starts with telling us his life story. He is the youngest of three children and is baptized Presbyterian but raised only nominally Protestant. His church is fairly liberal, sometimes questioning core Christian doctrines. Scott decides that he does not want to attend a church that does believe, even though he has developed his own doubts. He lives a typical teenager's life, appearing in juvenile court, smoking marijuana and so on. He and his friend Dave are not very good kids. His first year of high school he meets a guy named Jack who brings him into Young Life, a Christian Youth group. He uses Scott's crush on Kathy to bring Scott to Church. Scott then reads several books about the faith and decides to convert. He loses many of his friends as a result of his commitment. Over time he acquires "an insatiable hunger for Scripture." He even begins to attend seminary classes in his senior year.

Scott begins to become inspired by the leaders of the Reformation, Martin Luther and John Calvin. He begins to read their works and develops strongly anti-Catholic views. It becomes his mission to correct and "liberate" Catholics raised in a "works-righteousness" faith. The central doctrine of Protestants—*sola fide*—or the doctrine that we are saved by faith alone apart from our moral works, is anathema to the Catholic Church but to Scott is the core of true Christian doctrine. Various other experiences harden his anti-Catholic views.

The chapter now turns to Kimberly, who was born in 1957. She was raised a devout Presbyterian, unlike Scott. She decided that she would commit herself to God at an early age. She also had a strong desire to learn more about her faith. She decides to go to a Reformed Christian College, Grove City.



Chapter 2, From Ministry to Marriage

Chapter 2, From Ministry to Marriage Summary and Analysis

Scott spends four years at Grove City College studying theology, philosophy and economics. He continued to do work with Young Life. Scott continued to aim his teachings at lost Catholics and easily shot down the errors of the Catholics he spoke to. He also becomes deeply attached the Reformed "Covenant Theology" or seeing the Bible as a series of covenants of promises by God to an individual or group of people. He believes that the covenant is key for understanding the Bible. In his senior year he decides that he is going to "marry the most beautiful and spiritual woman on campus, Miss Kimberly Clark." They minister together and he proposes marriage to her. He graduates from Grove City with highest honors. They then move to Cincinnati to spend the summer planning their wedding.

Kimberly takes over. She starts at Grove City working towards a degree in Communication Arts. She chose Grove City to deepen her faith. She also felt like she was not placing Jesus at the center of her life. She becomes more involved with campus ministry and meets Scott when he is a resident assistant. Scott immediately "drills" her about her theological thinking to, he says, "see what you were made of." They work together in Young Life ministering to high school students. They hang out often by themselves after meals and when three weeks pass Scott tells Kimberly that if they spend more time together "I'm going to fall in love with you. And I don't have time this year to fall in love." So they stop dating but continue to serve together. Kimberly has always wanted to be a minister but Scott and his friends convince her that God does not want her to be a pastor because of the Scripture's teaching on a woman's role in the church and the house, so she gives up her dream and decides to help Scott achieve his. She recounts the story of her parents thinking she and Scott would get married but she rejects the idea, thinking that they disagree too often and will not be able to get along. However, Scott intends to marry her and finds their dreams to be complimentary. He wants to be a minister and professor and she wants to be a pastor's wife. Scott wants to write and Kimberly likes to type and edit. They are eventually engaged and are delighted to find that they both want children. On August 18th, 1979, they are married.



Chapter 3, New Conceptions of the Covenant

Chapter 3, New Conceptions of the Covenant Summary and Analysis

Scott and Kimberly decide to go to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, where they will begin their graduate studies. Scott meets a fellow seminarian, Gerry Matatics, who becomes a close friend. Together they are among the most anti-Catholic seminarians on campus. However, in his second year, Scott learns that prior to 1930 all Protestant Churches agreed with the Catholic Church that contraception is immoral. He introduces the idea to Kimberly and they decide together to use Natural Family Planning. This is the beginning of Scott coming to discover how reasonable Catholic doctrines are. They come to believe that the marital act is sacred and that to use unnatural contraception is to selfishly isolate one aspect of God's gifts from the others. They do not see Natural Family Planning—abstinence during periods of high fertility—as the same thing; it is not entirely clear why. Scott and Kimberly are shocked that only the Catholic Church has stood against contraception. Scott and his fellow seminarians do not like the infallible nature of Catholic tradition; they think instead that tradition may have to be abandoned from time to time and theology rebuilt from the ground-up. He also explains the Protestant theory of justification, or how one becomes saved. The Reformation thinkers, or the early Protestants believed that one was saved by being declared righteous by God through no merit of your own. This is where the doctrine of sola fide arose and it is a doctrine held tightly to by Calvinists and Presbyterians, including Scott. However, Scott begins to discover that Sola Fide is not scriptural and was not Paul's view. He calls his professor, Professor Shepherd, to talk to him about it, and ultimately decides the doctrine is problematic. He then begins to question whether the Reformation is a good thing at all, because the Reformers held that their differences with Rome all hinged on their distinct doctrines of justification. Due to their differing theology of contraception, Scott and Kimberly become pregnant. Scott graduates at the top of his class and is called to a pastorate at a local church and becomes a teacher at a local high school.

Kimberly recounts the same events. Kimberly works as a secretary funded by a Harvard research grant and works with many people of many different religions. However, then she decides to start her own MA in theology. She begins to think about contraception just as Scott does. She begins to believe that she is thwarting God's will for her life. She argues that Scripture speaks against contraception. Kimberly comes to believe that the source of her doubts about quitting contraception come from not trusting God. This is only one of many theological questions she struggles with. She, like Scott, becomes convinced that Luther was wrong about justification. Kimberly does not consider this change as seismic as Scott does, however.



Chapter 4, Teaching and Living the Covenant as Family

Chapter 4, Teaching and Living the Covenant as Family Summary and Analysis

Scott begins his pastorate in Virginia, preaching every Sunday. He continues his anti-Catholicism. However, he begins to see the importance of liturgy, something that Catholics do. He begins to alter the structure of church services accordingly. He also wants his congregation to take communion every week, also as Catholics do. He recounts a story about how some Catholics correct him during a Bible study. Then the Catholic kids tell him that he is going to become Catholic. He admits his growing positive attitude towards the Roman Church. He also questions the Presbyterian belief that communion is just a memorial of Christ's death and resurrection and wonders whether the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist is true. He ultimately decides on the Catholic position. He begins to think about moving his family to the Episcopal church.

As time passes he begins to question another core Protestant doctrine, the notion of Sola Scriptura, or that the Christian faith is based on Scripture alone. He realizes that it is not a Scriptural doctrine and so is self-contradictory. He then begins to believe that the Bible teaches that Scripture respects tradition outside of Scripture as well. He presses various experts he knows on these issues and is dissatisfied with their answers. He eventually realizes that he has to resign from his pastorate and look for another job.

Kimberly is very happy at Trinity Presbyterian Church with Scott and living close to the Fairfax Community School, where Scott teaches. She discusses the birth of their son Michael. She discusses Scott's struggle with theology as well and notes that it leads them to return to Grove City. Scott receives a teaching position there.



Chapter 5, Scott's Search for the Church

Chapter 5, Scott's Search for the Church Summary and Analysis

Scott accepts a job as assistant to the president of Grove City College. This gives him time to read constantly at night. He continues to read about Catholicism and adopts increasingly Catholic opinions. He considers the Orthodox Church but rejects it over its sectarian nationalist divisions and their position on the filioque. He also continues to read major Catholic apologists, like the 19th century British Cardinal Henry Newman. He begins to talk with his friend Gerry about these books he is reading over the phone. Kimberly hopes Gerry will quiet Scott's interest in Catholicism but Gerry is unable to do so. Scott continues to grow more Catholic, is anonymously mailed a Rosary and decides to try praying to the Virgin Mary. The petition he makes to the Virgin Mary is answered several months later. He then gives various Scriptural arguments for the doctrines concerning Mary taught by Catholicism. He then gets Gerry, himself and one of their favorite professors, Dr. Gerstner, together to discuss theology. Scott presents his Catholic arguments and he is unsatisfied with Dr. Gerstner's replies. He repeats the line that Protestantism is a form of anarchism with tens of thousands of denominations and that Christ did not mean for Christians to be so divided. He also defends the infallibility of the Pope. He tells Kimberly that he wants to convert, and Kimberly asks him to wait until 1990 so they will have time to make financial and geographical preparations.

We now hear the story from Kimberly's perspective, and she recounts many of the same details about Scott. She becomes increasingly uncomfortable with Scott's growing affinity for Catholicism, particularly for the saints. Kimberly is very unhappy because she would not have married Scott had he been a Catholic at the time they were dating. She also does not have time to assess all of the arguments. She is very displeased that he is praying the Rosary as well. This begins the "winter" of Kimberly's soul as she starts to feel divided from her husband.



Chapter 6, One Comes Home to Rome

Chapter 6, One Comes Home to Rome Summary and Analysis

Scott begins his study in Catholic theology in Milwaukee. He begins to see "how true and beautiful" the Catholic Church's teachings on the family and society are. He is surprised, however, at how few Catholics speak up for the Church. He and Kimberly are encouraged to get involved with anti-abortion and anti-pornography activism in Milwaukee by a friend Monica. During this time, the theme of the book becomes romantic as he tries to lead his wife to Rome. He begins to sneak off to Mass and wants desperately to partake in the Latin Mass. He is scared, however, because he promised his wife he would not become Catholic until 1990. However, he is "falling in love" with the Eucharist. His friend Gerry decides to become Catholic and will become one before Scott will. He speaks to Kimberly about conversion and she releases him from his promise to wait until 1990 to convert, although she is devastated by his decision. He begins to attend mass at a quite orthodox Catholic church known as Saint Bernard's Church. The priest, Monsignor Bruskewitz, is a trained theologian and helps Scott with his struggles. He suggests that Scott not try to convert his wife but instead minister to her with romance and love. On Easter Vigil 1986, Scott converts and receives the sacraments for the first time. His wife comes but she is grieving, while he is overwhelmed with supernatural joy.

Kimberly notes the difficulties she has during the same events. She discusses the satisfaction she derives from anti-pornography activism. She despairs that Gerry and his wife are converting to Catholicism. She tries to get friends to convince Scott not to become Catholic, but they fail. She is terrified to become Catholic. She is devastated that they will not take communion side-by-side unless she becomes Catholic. It is the greatest challenge their marriage has ever faced.



Chapter 7, The Struggles of a Mixed Marriage

Chapter 7, The Struggles of a Mixed Marriage Summary and Analysis

Scott receives a great deal of ostracism for his conversion. However, his pain is outweighed by the joy of his conversion. Kimberly, however, does not want to hear about it. Some tell Kimberly that Scott's positions are not truly Catholic but this proves false. Scott is so energized to explain Catholic doctrine to his fellow parishioners, many of whom are life-long Catholics. He is troubled by only being a layman in the Catholic Church however, and wishes to be a theologian. Scott is offered the chance to teach Catholic Theology at the College of Saint Francis in Joliet, Illinois and miraculously comes to possess hundreds of books for a small amount of money. He continues to read and study Catholic theology and is offered and takes the position. Scott still accompanies his family to their Presbyterian Church. His wife Kimberly has some trouble with her pregnancy during a church service there and Scott prays for the intercession of Saint Gerard and Saint Joseph. His prayers are answered and their child survives.

Kimberly struggles in agony but is happy that Scott does not force her to submit to the Catholic Church although she realizes that the children will have to be raised Catholic. Scott and Kimberly fight about which church to be members of and Scott tells Kimberly that the Lord is giving her a gift by having him suffer for becoming Catholic first. They cease having interesting theological discussions; instead they become gut-wrenching exchanges. She notes Scott's loneliness. The Bible is Kimberly's consolation although she begins to agree with Scott's anti-sola scriptura positions. Kimberly is sometimes so upset that she contemplates divorce; some of her friends encourage her to do so. She ultimately decides that God does not want her to live in a mixed marriage and decides to think about conversion to bring their family back together again. She decides to have their third child baptized Catholic. Kimberly continues to resist conversion though. Their daughter Hannah Lorraine is born on August 7th, 1987 and Kimberly is stunned by the beauty of the Catholic baptismal liturgy; this helps convince her of the beauty of Catholicism. The day is a "turning point" for her.



Chapter 8, A Rome-antic Reunion

Chapter 8, A Rome-antic Reunion Summary and Analysis

Scott and Kimberly move to Joliet and buy a house near the College of Saint Francis. Scott is working on learning the materials for the courses he will teach. He continues to encourage Catholics who have abandoned their faith. Scott continues to offer love rather than arguments to Kimberly, and shares his feelings with her. He also begins encountering tough anti-Catholic fundamentalists but delights in arguing with them. Scott describes some of his encounters. He also describes some of his arguments with Kimberly, particularly about the case for the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory. Scott also begins to work with a Catholic apologetics organization, known as Catholic Answers. He then records something called "the tape" where he answers various objections to Catholicism. It later becomes quite famous and within a few years 35,000 people have listened to it. Scott is later invited to appear on EWTN to discuss the tape. He debates the doctrines of sola scriptura and sola fide with a famed Protestant theologian and apparently wins the debate. As time progresses Scott is offered a job by Dr. Alan Schreck at Franciscan University in Steubenville and decides to take it. Gil Kaufmann, a friend of Scott's from Opus Dei, a traditionalist Catholic society within the Catholic Church, continues to encourage him to beef up on romance with Kimberly and back off on doctrine. While at a conference, Scott tells his audience that Kimberly has not yet converted. He calls her and she tells him that she has decided to convert on Easter in 1990. Everyone at the conference knows soon. Scott discusses the story of how Kimberly picks her patron saint, Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton. His patron saint is Saint Francis De Sales, a 16th century Catholic apologist. On Easter, Kimberly converts and they share their first Eucharist.

Kimberly takes over and discusses many of the same issues. She continues her studies in Catholic theology. She realizes now that if her sons become clergymen, as she had hoped they would, they could not have children. She struggles with the doctrine of the Eucharist, that it is the true body and blood of Jesus. She discusses struggling with not divorcing Scott and having friends of hers recommending divorce. She also feels herself being drawn to the church and some of her Protestant friends begin to exclude her. She gradually becomes comfortable with the Catholic piety towards Mary as well. She briefly recounts a theological discussion she has with Scott about the matter. She discusses how God "allowed us special suffering" through two miscarriages in 1989. This makes some of their differences more poignant and real for her, clearing away a lot of "nonessentials" and drawing Scott and Kimberly closer together. She also begins to become comfortable with praying to Saints. She decides that the Saints in heaven are her "older siblings in the Lord." She decides to begin Catholic catechism courses, RCIA (Rite of Initiation into the Catholic Church) which will teach her Catholic doctrine and qualify her for membership in the Catholic Church. She then recounts telling Scott about her intention to convert over the phone while he is at the conference. While in RCIA she



has an experience concerning Mary and develops a hunger for the Eucharist. She then recounts a long passage from her prayer journal about her journey with God to the Catholic Church. She calls her father, who is a Presbyterian Pastor to let him know that she intends to convert. He is surprisingly accepting. She was afraid he would not be. She then recounts her entry into the church on Easter Vigil in 1990. This is the "summer" of her spiritual walk with God.



Chapter 9, Catholic Family Life

Chapter 9, Catholic Family Life Summary and Analysis

The final chapter begins again with Scott, who discusses the "ecclesiastical culture shock" that Protestants experience when they convert to Catholicism. Sometimes they do not feel "at home." However, eventually they begin to find their faith completed. Since Kimberly converted, the Hahn family tries to attend Mass every day. Kimberly and Scott minister across the country and the world. Scott discusses the death of his father and his founder of R.A.A.P. (the Religious Alliance against Pornography) and was invited by the Roman Hierarchy to lead a three-day session at the Vatican on anti-pornography issues. Scott then recounts his meeting with the Holy Father. He is truly overwhelmed. Kimberly's father introduces Scott to the Pope, John Paul II. After meeting the Pope, Scott feels as if God is telling him that "the best is yet to come."

Kimberly takes over and discusses the joy she has when their oldest son Michael has his first communion. Their life is more full of joy than ever. Scott and Kimberly's unity is restored. Some dreams died but others replaced them. They enjoy regular confession and daily communion. They continue to appreciate the Bible-oriented evangelical tradition. Kimberly and Scott feel very privileged to be members of the Catholic Church.



Chapter 10, Conclusion: Calling Catholics to Be Bible Christians (and Vice Versa)

Chapter 10, Conclusion: Calling Catholics to Be Bible Christians (and Vice Versa) Summary and Analysis

The conclusion functions as the epilogue. It is told by both Scott and Kimberly at once. They encourage Catholics to learn more about their tradition and to find Catholic doctrines in Scripture and to read about Vatican II as well. They encourage Bible Christians to seek out the Catholic sacraments and the liturgy. They admit that many non-Catholics put them to shame when it comes to knowing their Scripture, although the Catholic Church has more resources to nourish the soul. They encourage their Catholic brothers and sisters to challenge Protestants, and they encourage Protestants to reunite with the Church of Rome because it is Christ's body.



Characters

Scott Hahn

Scott is one of the book's two main characters. Scott is born to a liberal Presbyterian family who are not terribly interested in their Christian faith. He grows up as a standard American teenager does, trying drugs, slacking off at school from time to time. Sometimes he slips into worse things, like juvenile delinquency. Eventually a friend reaches out to him and encourages him to convert to Christianity. From the moment Scott "gives his life to Christ," he begins to feel isolated because of his faith, losing friends and having to make new ones. He acquires great zeal for converting people and studying the Bible, particularly taking aim at converting Catholics. When he graduates from high school, he goes to Grove City College and studies philosophy and theology.

At Grove City he becomes only more strongly confirmed in his Presbyterian faith, deciding to become a minister and study at a seminary after college. He continues to deepen his anti-Catholicism. He also meets and courts his wife-to-be, Kimberly Kirk, while at Grove City. They are married around the time of their graduation. In seminary Scott becomes only more zealous and convinced of Presbyterian theology until he takes a Christian ethics class and decides that contraception is immoral, but the only church he knows of that teaches that it is immoral is the Catholic Church. This begins a long path of Scott reexamining his Presbyterian positions and slowly changing them to Catholic ones until he finally decides to convert to Catholicism. He and his wife have trouble for four years because they are in different churches but after much thought and prayer, Kimberly decides to convert as well. Then Scott becomes a full-time Catholic apologist, along with his wife.

Scott's character then should be clear. He is extremely enthusiastic, eager to learn, fascinated by Christian doctrine and Scripture, argumentative and eager to convert others to his positions. He is kind but adamant and unyielding and becomes so wholly convinced of the truth of Catholic doctrine that he devotes his entire life to bringing people into it.

Kimberly Hahn

Kimberly Hahn is Scott's wife, holds an MA in theology and is the mother of their four children. Kimberly grows up as a pastor's kid in the Presbyterian church. She has no non-Christian period and has the standard childhood of a serious Christian pastor's child in America. In college she meets Scott in their youth group Young Life and they witness and minister together while having theological conversations deep into the night. They decide to date and after taking a break for a few months, then get back together and eventually become engaged and marry. They both go to seminary, where Kimberly gets her MA in theology. She originally wants to be a pastor herself but Scott and his friends convince her that her dream is not biblical so she decides that she would like to be a



pastor's wife. When they are in seminary they begin to become interested in Catholic teaching but Scott is far more interested. Kimberly is concerned by Scott's interest in Catholic theology but does not worry about it until Scott decides he wants to convert. She is incredibly upset and feels betrayed. The denominational difference puts a great strain on their marriage but within four years of suffering, she finally decides to convert. She does not face the same loneliness and hardship that Scott experiences being Catholic, although her father is still a Presbyterian minister. She is now happily helping her husband spread Catholic doctrine all over the world.

Kimberly is clearly a kind, humble and incredibly smart woman with a strong Christian commitment. She is an eager and devoted wife and mother and spends a great deal of time in the book describing her joy being a mother and her struggles to be a good wife.

Michael, Gabriel, Hannah and Jeremiah

The Hahn's four children they have in the course of the book. For most of the book they do not exist, and they are quite young in the rest of it so they do not play a large role in the story.

Jack

The leader of the Young Life youth group—he brings Scott to Christianity.

Kathy

A girl Scott has a crush on that Jack uses to lure Scott into Young Life.

Dr. John Gerstner

A seminary professor whose courses Scott sits in one from time to time. Later in the book he fails to convince Scott to remain Presbyterian.

Gerry Matatics

A fellow Presbyterian seminarian with Scott and a close friend. They are both theology buffs and both end up converting to Catholicism. At one point, when Scott is interested and Gerry is not, Kimberly hopes that he will save Scott from Catholicism, but instead the opposite occurs.



Monica Miller

A doctoral student at the Catholic university where Scott teaches. She and Kimberly become friends and Monica gets the Hahns involved in anti-abortion and anti-pornography activism.

Monsignor Burkewitz

A Catholic priest at Saint Bernard's Church, the Catholic church that Scott becomes a member of.

Greg and Chris Wolfe (no relation)

The two men who sponsor Gerry and Scott when they become Catholic.

Jerry Kirk

Kimberly's father and a Presbyterian minister.

Pat Madrid

The director of Catholic Answers, a Catholic apologetics group— he invites Scott to speak with them.

Terry Barber

A worker for Saint Joseph Communications, a Catholic communications group. He records and distributes a tape of Scott defending Catholic doctrine that eventually has thousands of listeners.

Bill Steltemeier

An employee with EWTN, a Catholic television station, who is a fan of Scott's and reaches out to Kimberly to push her towards conversion.

Pope John Paul II

The Pope at the time of Scott's visit/pilgrimage to Rome. Scott is overjoyed to meet the Holy Father.



Objects/Places

The Bible

The Christian Scripture. Scott believes that his faith as a Presbyterian is grounded solely in the Bible but comes to believe that the Catholic Church is the infallible interpreter of Scripture.

Young Life

The youth group where Kimberly and Scott meet.

Humanae Vitae

A mid 20th century Catholic Church pronouncement that the historical ban on contraception will continue within the Catholic Church.

Vatican II

The Second Vatican Council which modernized the Catholic Church in various ways.

The Eucharist

The term given to the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ as present in the bread and wine in the Catholic practice. Catholics believe that the bread and wine shared during their most holy ceremony is literally transformed into Christ's body and blood. Most Protestants believe that the communion ceremony is only a memorial for Christ's death and resurrection and does not include his literal presence.

Intercessory Prayer

The Catholic practice of asking Saints who have died to pray to God for them. Many Protestants reject this practice as idolatrous.

The Rosary

A string of prayer beads coupled with a prayer for the intercession of Mary. It is quite popular among Catholics and reviled by Protestants.



Sola Fide

The Protestant doctrine that salvation comes through faith alone and not through works.

Sola Scriptura

The Protestant doctrine that the Bible is the primary and only infallible revelation from God, not the Church Hierarchy.

The Covenant

A common idea in the Bible of a promise between God and a man or group of men. It plays a large role in Presbyterian theology and Scott sees its true fulfillment in Catholic theology.

Grove City College

The conservative Presbyterian college where Scott and Kimberly receive their undergraduate degrees.

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

The Presbyterian seminary where Scott and Kimberly receive their graduate degrees.

Trinity Presbyterian Church

The Church where Scott serves as Pastor until he resigns.

College of Saint Francis

The first Catholic institution where Scott teaches.

Steubenville University

The second Catholic institution where Scott teaches.

The Tape

A tape defending Catholicism that EWTN helps Scott make that make him and Kimberly famous.



Themes

A Detective Story

The Hahns basically set out the major themes of the book for the reader. The first theme is that of a detective story. Scott and Kimberly are deeply committed Christians and are extremely interested in theology and biblical interpretation. They consider themselves to be on the hunt for true Christian doctrine.

The detective story unfolds as Scott begins to study Presbyterian theology deeply and Covenant theology specifically. He believes he has found the key to unlocking Scripture. The core idea of Covenant theology is that God makes a series of promises to men or groups of men in the Scripture and that each Covenant brings about a closer relationship between God and humanity. However, the detective story continues as Scott begins to develop concerns about his Presbyterian faith. He discovers first that contraception is wrong; he then begins to question the Protestant doctrine of Sola Fide. As time goes on, all the big doctrines fall: Sola Scriptura, a memorialist interpretation of communion, rejection of prayer to saints, and so on. The detective story becomes a story to find the true Church, which in Scott's view is more and more clearly the Roman Catholic Church. The detective story leads Scott to slowly embrace Catholic doctrine until he finally solves the case and decides that Catholicism is the right religion, and that the Catholic Church is Christ's true church.

A Horror Story

Scott is nothing but self-assured at most stages of this book. When he first becomes a Christian he is absolutely certain that Catholicism is wicked and by the end of the book he is absolutely certain that nothing but Catholicism is true. He has the personality of a man who loves intense commitments. The horror story begins when Scott realizes that his Presbyterian commitments and his anti-Catholic commitments may be in error. The first horror for Scott is that Catholicism might be right about something, like the rejection of Sola Fide. He then realizes that Catholicism might be right about even more, such as the rejection of Sola Scriptura and the Eucharist. As time goes on he realizes that the horror story is a true story—that his anti-Catholicism had been deeply in error and that he must convert to Catholicism.

The horror story includes Kimberly as well for at first she sees Scott's interest in Catholicism as a passing thing. However, over time she begins to see that Scott's interest is not going away. When she prays that friends will bring him back into the Presbyterian fold, they indeed try but always fail and often end up going with Scott to the Catholic Church. Kimberly and Scott's joint horror story is the division and fights they have due to their being members of different churches and Kimberly's deep and profound feelings of betrayal about Scott's conversion.



A Romance Story

The final stage of the book is a romance story. However, there are really two romances. The first romance is between Scott and the Catholic Church. Scott literally falls in love with the Catholic Church and decides that its doctrines are not only true but beautiful as well. As he gets to know the Church he only becomes more and more excited about joining Her ranks. The more central romance story is the reconnection of Scott and Kimberly. As mentioned in the last theme, Scott and Kimberly are deeply divided over the Catholic Church. Kimberly remains, with the rest of her family, a loyal Presbyterian and she is deeply uncomfortable with Catholic doctrine and Catholic practice. Scott's theological detective story leads him to the Church and to convert four years prior to his original promise to Kimberly (which she released him from). Their struggle is terrible and Kimberly even thinks about divorcing Scott over his conversion. Their Christian commitments were their defining characteristics and this division is destroying their common unity.

The romance begins as Kimberly starts to soften her opposition to Catholicism, which begins with her experience of the baptismal liturgy of the Catholic Church. Over time she becomes friendlier and friendlier to Catholicism up to the point where her Protestant friends are sure that she is going to convert and begin excluding her from their prayer/Bible study group meetings. She finally converts and she and Scott are reunited after four years of division.



Style

Perspective

There are two major perspectives in the book, those of Kimberly and Scott. Kimberly's perspective is that of a Presbyterian pastor's daughter whose primary desire in life is to serve God. She grows up interested in serving God and little changes for most of her life throughout the book. She wants to be a pastor but then decides she wants to be a pastor's wife. She marries a pastor, has children and is living the good life as she sees it. Her life is rocked when Scott becomes interested in Roman Catholicism. Her dreams and community connections are shaken to their core because Catholicism will potentially detach her from her family and friends and alter her conception of her faith that she has held for all of her life.

Scott's perspective is of a boy who wandered aimlessly through life with great talents until he found Christianity in high school. He quickly takes on the perspective of an ardent zealot, eager to preach and convert others. He also has a deep hunger for philosophical, theological and biblical topics. He becomes extremely hostile to Roman Catholicism and seeks to convert people away from it. However over a period of study he decides that his anti-Catholicism was misplaced and that Catholicism is the truest Christian Church. He then transfers his zeal to Catholicism and is content to spend the remainder of his life converting people to the Catholic Church and defending Catholicism against objections. His perspective is of an enthusiastic, intellectual proselytizer who is eager to convince his reader of his positions. He shares that, but to a much lesser extent, with his wife.

Tone

The tone of *Rome Sweet Home* is kind, gentle, committed, and pious, but is also aggressive and one-sided. The book has a kind tone because it has a seriously Christian veneer. Both Kimberly and Scott are clearly kind to their opponents and express a Christian love for all those they encounter. The book is not rude or harsh. The book has a gentle tone because it shies away— particularly in Kimberly's portions of the book—from negative and sharply condemnatory language. It also avoids bombast and hyperbole, unlike many other similar tales of conversion. The book has the tone of two committed Christians, people that are absolutely convinced that Christianity is true, seemingly with no doubt at all. They believe that Christ is the center and focus of their lives and that this is the ideal for all other persons. They speak as individuals deeply involved in the Christian community and fully immersed in the Christian worldview. The book is full of many religious experiences and epiphanies. There are many descriptive expressions of faith and piety towards God and, towards the end of the book, Mary and the Saints of the Catholic Church. Both Scott and Kimberly are obviously deeply committed and in love with God.



Yet the tone is also aggressive. First, the book clearly has the agenda of convincing Bible Christians to become Catholics. That is its primary purpose, to convert. It is clear in its attempts to show that Protestantism is without a solid intellectual foundations and that most Protestants, even quite sophisticated ones, are unable to defend themselves, particularly against Scott's energetic and powerful intellect. Finally, the book is one-sided because it often presents simplistic critiques of Protestantism. Granted these are probably simplified for the reader but any serious theologically educated Protestant has heard these Catholic apologetic arguments before and has developed thoughtful responses. Scott's attitude is one of a man who believes that for five hundred years of Catholics making the same apologetic arguments that he encounters, that Protestants have developed no sophisticated replies worth struggling with at great length. Over and over again, once Scott fully understands the Catholic position, he appears to simply accept it as obviously true. This gives the tone of the book a one-sided feel.

Structure

The book is structured in a standard plot arc with some minor twists. The story begins by introducing Scott and Kimberly to the reader and then explaining their Christian, specifically Presbyterian background, how they met and their community of fellow Christians in Young Life. The over-arching conflict of the book is Scott and Kimberly's struggle in coming to the Catholic Church. The major plot that arises towards the last third of the book is the lag between Scott's conversion and Kimberly's, which divides them and threatens to destroy their marriage. The book climaxes with Kimberly's conversion to Catholicism. The denouement comes with Scott's increasing fame as a Catholic apologist and the Hahn family settling into Catholic family life and a Catholic parish community.

The book has nine chapters and is only about 182 pages. Chapters 1 and 2 are primarily introductory. Chapters 3 through 6 are the story of the unraveling of Scott's anti-Catholicism and his conversion to Catholicism. Chapters 7 and 8 describe the major tension in the book: Scott and Kimberly's struggle to resolve their mixed marriage. And Chapter 9 is the resolution of the book. Each chapter is divided between Scott and Kimberly's perspective. Scott tends to focus on theological debates, his own pious struggles and his difficulties with being rejected by his community. Kimberly tends to focus on her feelings, her worries about Scott and details about their growing family. The combination of the two perspectives gives a fairly full picture of one family's struggle with Catholic theology.



Quotes

"In truth, the journey began as a detective story, but soon it became more like a horror story, until it finally ended up as a great romance story—when Christ unveiled his Bride, the Church." (xiii)

"God's grace became something much more than divine favor; it was the actual gift of God's life in divine sonship." (30)

"In fact, the whole Reformation flowed from this one difference." (31)

"We could offer our own bodies as a sacrifice in worship—there was a physical side to being spiritual." (37)

"That pyramid looks a lot like the Catholic Church, with the Pope at the top." (46)

"Sometimes I think you might be Luther in reverse." (48)

"I announced my resignation to the elders of Trinity Presbyterian Church." (55)

"Does that mean you're becoming Roman Catholic?" (54)

"Gerry and I could see that if the Catholic Church was wrong, it was nothing less than diabolical. On the other hand, if it was right, it must have been divinely established and preserved; but that was hardly a serious option for either of us." (62)

"Kimberly and I found much-needed common ground as pro-family activists in fighting abortion and pornography throughout the Milwaukee area." (86)

"I received the sacramental 'grand slam': conditional baptism, reconciliation, confirmation and First Communion." (91)

"It seems more than a little ironic that both men were being led by Wolfes into the Catholic Church." (94)

"Marriage is not hard; it's just humanly impossible. That's why Christ reestablished it as a sacrament." (98)

"Neither one would even consider hiring a papist pariah like me." (100)

"Perhaps he's converted me first, and had me go through terrible loneliness—isolated from many Protestants, Catholics on campus who really don't care what I did, and definitely the loneliness between the two of us—all so he could gradually show you the beauty of the Catholic Church?" (107)

"I overheard him say a Hail Mary with a friend. Each one of those things was a stab in my heart. Each one was another reminder of the disunity we had." (112)



"I know today is a turning point for me." (118)

"Terry reported that he was getting a wonderful response." (129)

"You don't have a right to be here! You're going to become Roman Catholic!" (143)

"I was concerned that the Rosary was an example of vain repetition that had been clearly condemned by Jesus." (160)

"Then it finally dawned that he was asking for me." (170)

"To state it simply, they study the menu while we enjoy the Meal!" (179)

"I will build my Church." She is not your Church, nor is she mine; she is Christ's. He is the builder; we are only the tools. (180)



Topics for Discussion

Do you think that Scott's previous ardent anti-Catholicism contributed to his strong Catholic commitments later in life?

What was the best way for Scott to handle helping Kimberly to convert?

Should Kimberly have divorced Scott? Should she have converted?

What are Scott's arguments against Protestantism? Are they successful?

Is Scott fair to his opponents? If so, why doesn't he spend more time on their counterarguments? If not, in what ways is he not fair?

What really motivates Scott's conversion to Catholicism?

How does Scott and Kimberly's marriage suffer as a result of Scott's conversion?

Is Scott's willingness to sacrifice anything for the Catholic Church selfish or selfless?