Scott Hahn, in First Comes Love, uses the idea of family to explain Catholic thought about the Trinity. Hahn believes that the relations among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are a model for the relations among every nuclear unit composed of father, mother, and child. And he believes that the family of the Church helps people emulate the Trinitarian family and can heal them when they fall short of such holiness. Hahn moves easily from personal anecdote to Scriptural analysis, making his case that Jesus understood all of humanity as part of one family when he called his followers brothers, sisters, mothers, and fathers. First Comes Love makes the salutary point that neither romance nor parenthood alone can give us a sufficient sense of belonging. God built us all to live in a much larger family, to experience a much larger love ... a love that extends infinitely. -- Michael Joseph Gross
Scott Hahns First Comes Love is, overall, a very fine book. It is a Trinitarian treatment of biblical theology that focuses on sacrificial self-giving as the mode of divine life that is to be replicated in the life of the church and to transform family life. Family is the dominant idea, encompassing the divine Trinitarian family, nuclear and extended human families, and the church. Within this overall theme, Hahn makes a number of intriguing specific points: 1) He sets things up by pointing out that Adam was not to be alone but was called into family life. When Jesus comes, however, He calls people away from their primal families, their tribes toward participation in the divine family. (At some points, Hahn expresses this using the language of nature and supernature, which strikes my ear as a dissonance.) 2) He has some profound points on Sabbath, points that bear much more extensive meditation and study. The covenant name, Yahweh, he points out, does not appear in the creation account until after the Sabbath, and he uses this common observation to highlight the fact that the Sabbath is already at creation a sign of covenant. As he puts it, with the Sabbath, something has changed in the relationship between God and creation. Most especially, something has changed in the relationship between God and His highest creation. . . . As a result of the seventh day, the day of the oath, God lives in covenant, a family bond, with humankind. God is not just our creator but our Father. On the one hand, I want to say that a covenant relationship exists from the moment of the creation of Adam. Covenant is not something added to Adams life as such. (Hahn, I think, disagrees; and I sense the presence of a nature/supernature framework intruding again.) On the other hand, the sudden use of the covenant name in 2:4 is striking, and perhaps suggests some kind of formalization of covenant relationship with the Sabbath day. Perhaps, though, the use of the covenant name serves to introduce the work of the sixth day (2:4 begins a new section in Genesis), a point that would support the notion that Adam is CREATED always already in covenant with God, rather than created and THEN brought into covenant with God. 3) Hahn points out that the serpent uses a plural verb in the temptation of Eve, confirming that he is addressing both Adam and Eve. Further, he suggests that the serpents assurance that You shall not die if they eat the fruit implies the opposite as well: You shall die if you do not. Pointing out that the Hebrew word for serpent describes a dragon, he describes the temptation scene this way: if the serpent was indeed a monstrous beast, and if Adam did indeed dread death, then suddenly we can understand our forefathers silence. He feared his own death. Moreover, he feared physical death more than he feared offending God by sin. He stood by quietly while Eve continued in conversation with the beast. He stood in silence while the serpent issued his veiled threat. 4) And this very fine formulation of covenant: Every covenant required a sacrifice symbolic of mans total self-giving. For a covenant is not a contract; it is not an exchange of goods. A covenant is an exchange of persons. One person gives up his former self, his former identity, to be accepted into a new family. Not unexpectedly, there are some typically Roman Catholic turns in the argument that I object to. But to repeat, overall this is a stimulating and helpful book.