

**FIVE YEARS A CATHOLIC:  
WITH INCIDENTS OF  
FOREIGN CONVENT LIFE**

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Five years a Catholic: with incidents of foreign convent life by Eliza Smith

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CONVENT LIFE.

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## PREFACE.

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IN sending forth the following pages before the public, I perhaps owe it to myself to say a few words in explanation of the motives which have actuated me—as, of course, I cannot help being aware that I have laid myself open to much criticism, a considerable share of which will, most likely, be of a hostile character.

It is obviously painful to a mind possessing any susceptibility to oppose the views, or wound the feelings, of those whom it is bound to love and esteem, more especially where personal kindness, and, in many instances, multiplied favours, would form the strongest inducement—if anything could—to a different course. In this awkward situation, however, I am placed; and, while feeling its really distressing nature

to the very utmost extent of which a grateful heart is capable, I have yet no choice left me to do otherwise than I have done, by the imperative voice of that internal monitor to which all must submit.

Some time since, I became a convert to the Catholic faith; and, as a few who peruse these pages may be aware, in the ardour of feeling attendant on the step, published a little work, adapted for the young, in vindication of my adopted tenets. Since that time, by a number of circumstances, as unforeseen as they have been singular, and by a course of *heart working*—a very small share of which I have feebly attempted to delineate in the work now before you—I became convinced of the fallacy of the views I had embraced, and their essential errors both in doctrine and practice; and as a natural, indeed inevitable consequence, was led to regret my former hasty step in advocating them as I had done. As in that little work I remarked, "*truth can be but one,*" and, therefore, if, as I *believe now before God,* my present views of

justification by faith alone, through the merits of the *One* Mediator, be that truth, the doctrines therein set forth are dangerous error. Under this conviction—though without any idea that there is sufficient merit in the thing to ensure it a circulation extensive enough to do much injury—I, of course, felt it in the highest degree obligatory, if only for the satisfaction of my own mind, to endeavour, as early as possible, by a candid avowal of my change of sentiment, and the advocacy of the views I *now* believe most consonant with truth—to counteract, as far as in my power, whatsoever amount it may have been instrumental in effecting.

Another motive, too, influenced me, hardly less constraining; and that was, to give my former friends, for whom I still feel the same degree of esteem and affection as I have ever felt, and the memory of whose kindness will always be dear to me, an opportunity of revoking the harsh judgment they may be disposed to form of me, by a fair statement of the feelings and causes which have led to the change; and