

**HISTORY VINDICATED  
IN THE CASE OF THE  
WIGTOWN MARTYRS**

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History Vindicated in the Case of the Wigtown Martyrs by Archibald Stewart

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**ARCHIBALD STEWART**

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WIGTOWN MARTYRS**



HERE LYES MARGRAT  
WILLSON DOUGHTER  
TO GILBERT WILLSON  
IN GLENVERNOCH.  
WHO WAS DROUDED  
ANNO 1685 AGED 18

LET EARTH AND STONE STILL WITNES BEARE  
THEIR LYES A VIRGINE MARTYRE HERE  
MURTERD FOR DUNING CHRIST SUPREAME  
HEAD OF HIS CHURCH AND NO MORE CRIME  
BUT NOT ABJURING PRESRYTRY,  
AND HER NOT DUNING PRELACY,  
THEY HER CONDEM'D, BY UNJUST LAW,  
OF HEAVEN NOR HELL THEY STOOD NO AW  
WITHIN THE SEA T'YD TO A STAKE  
SHE SUFFERED FOR CHRIST JESUS SAKE  
THE ACTORS OF THIS CRUEL CRIME  
WAS LAGG-STRACHAN WINRAM AND GRHAME  
NEITHER YOUNG YEARES NOR YET OLD AGE  
COULD STOP THE FURY OF THERE RAGE.

FACSIMILE FROM PHOTOGRAPH OF MARGARET WILSON'S TOMBSTONE  
IN WIGTOWN CHURCH YARD.

WIKISOURCE.COM

HISTORY VINDICATED

IN THE CASE OF

THE WIGTOWN MARTYRS.

BY THE

REV. ARCHIBALD STEWART,

MINISTER OF GLASSGOW

*SECOND EDITION.*

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Alexander Cochrane  
of Boston*

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PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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**T**HOUGH this little book met with a very favourable reception on its first appearance, that is not the reason why a *Second Edition* is now offered to the Public. So many *new* proofs (some of which have been published in an ephemeral shape) have come to light, that it is thought desirable to collect the whole in a permanent form. This task the Author has undertaken, at the suggestion of those to whose opinion he could not but pay deference. If he has succeeded in collecting and exhibiting such evidence as shall settle the controversy on the question at issue, and at the same time vindicate Wodrow's credibility as a *narrator of facts*, he shall have no occasion to regret the trouble (not inconsiderable) which he has had in doing so. The greater part of the Pamphlet has been re-written; so it may be considered rather a new work than a new edition. The Author is glad to take the opportunity of expressing thanks to those who have kindly aided him by lending him documents, rare books, and pamphlets. To one friend he owes special thanks—the Rev. Thomas Gordon, of Newbattle, who has, with much trouble, made investigations in the Register House, Edinburgh, and in the public libraries, which the Author, from remoteness, could not easily have done.

GLASGOW: MANSIE,  
February 1869.





## INTRODUCTION.

THE following pages are designed to exhibit the proof of a historical fact which has lately been disputed, viz. the execution, by drowning, of Margaret Lauchlison and Margaret Wilson, at Wigtown, during the persecution for religion in 1685. This fact was stated in the controversial pamphlets of the time, and was never *directly* denied. A full account of it was published in Wodrow's *History* in 1722, on the authority of the local church courts, who made themselves responsible for its truth. Though this story of martyrdom was thus officially given to the world just thirty-seven years after the event is said to have taken place, and while many were still living who were personally acquainted with all the facts of the case, no one came forward *then* to say, 'This story is false and calumnious.' In place of being contradicted and disproved, it has been repeated as a fact by all respectable historians down to our times. It is only lately that it has been called in question by Mr. Napier, in his *Memorials of Dundee*, and in his more recent work, the *Case for the Crown*, expressly designed to prove the Wigtown martyrs 'to be myths,' and the received story regarding them to be a 'fable' and a 'calumny.'

Every one who values history has reason anxiously to inquire if Mr. Napier has really succeeded in proving the negative in this case, because, if he has, his argument will extend much farther than merely to the case of the Wigtown women, which in itself, he says, 'would be a trifling question to deal with elaborately and systematically.' His design is to show that the history of Scotland during the Restoration period has been falsely written;—not merely that a wrong interpretation has been put upon the events of the period, and false lessons deduced from them, but that the events themselves have been falsely set down;—that what Wodrow has given for history 'is a calumnious tissue of monstrous fables.' The motto of the *Case for the Crown* is, '*ex uno disce omnes*'—the Wigtown story is false; so are all the others. 'Weeded of fable, calumny, and fanatical railing,' says Mr. Napier, 'Wodrow's two folio volumes would vanish, or resolve into an appendix of public documents that contradict him.'<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Napier's avowed design, then, is to destroy the credibility of

<sup>1</sup> *Case for the Crown*—Preface.

Wodrow, who, he informs us, 'has misled all our historians of mark, from David Hume to Lord Macaulay, who have blindly followed him, and lazily or lovingly submitted to his rubbish without an attempt at investigation. And thus it is,' he continues, 'that the national character of Scotland has been defamed by a mock and mythical martyrology of the lowest stamp, and her soil desecrated by fanatical monuments, not to commemorate martyrs, but to perpetuate a calumny.'<sup>1</sup> It is well that he admits, that in the 'weeding' which he thinks Wodrow needs, the 'public documents' quoted—the Acts of the Scotch Parliament, the Royal Letters and Proclamations, the Records of the Privy Council, and of the Courts of Justice—are still to be left, when all the fables and other rubbish are to be cleared away. If the public documents of the Restoration period are left as authentic materials of its history, it will give Mr. Napier some trouble to get quit of the martyrology, and to persuade intelligent and unprejudiced minds, that the monuments of those who suffered in those times are to be looked on now, not as commemorating martyrs, but as perpetuating a calumny. Wodrow made large use of public documents. These, he tells us in his preface, 'are the great fund of which this history is formed.' As he proceeds year by year through the dreary period of the Restoration, he not only analyzes and comments on these documents, but quotes them at large; and he thus puts it in his reader's power to judge for himself, and to differ in opinion if he see cause. He says: 'I design that as little of this history as may be should lean upon me; let every one see with his own eyes and judge for himself, upon the very same evidence I have.'

But a history made up of Acts of Parliament and Council, and of Records of Justiciary, would be a very dull one; Wodrow, therefore, collected materials from other sources. He was himself the first who attempted a *history* of the Church of Scotland during the Restoration, though others had written *memoirs* of it in different shapes. These he had before him, and doubtless also the controversial pamphlets which were written both before and after the Revolution. But next to public documents, Wodrow was doubtless most indebted for the materials of his history to the accounts of the sufferings for religion within their bounds, furnished to him by the several judicatories of the Church of Scotland. He was avowedly the historian of the Church of Scotland, and she gave him her countenance and aid in the execution of his work.

It is the statements of Wodrow, made on the authority of the Courts of the Church of Scotland, that Mr. Napier assails. He fixes on the account of the *Wigtown Martyrdom* as the point of attack, and to its demolition he devotes 142 pages of energetic pleading in his *Case for the Crown*. In his preface, having taken credit to himself for other good services done to the cause of Scottish history, he says: 'I now sit down before this last stronghold of the Wodrow martyro-

<sup>1</sup> *Case for the Crown—Preface.*