

John Nichol, Diarist, and Early Friends in Scotland

JOHAN NICHOL, who flourished from 1590 to 1667,¹ was a Writer to the Signet and Notary Public. He compiled a Diary in two volumes from 1637 to 1649, and from 1650 to 1657. Vol. i. has been lost, but vol. ii. (1650-1657) was printed by the Bannatyne Club in 1836. The following are his principal references to Friends:—

“ In this moneth of Januar 1655 & in sundry ither monethis preceeding & mony monethis following, thair rais up great numberis of that damnable sect of the Quakeris; quha, being deludit by Sathan, drew mony away to their professioun, both men & women, sindrie of them walking throw the streitis all naikit except their schirtis, crying ‘ This is the way, walk ye into it ’—utheris crying out: ‘ The day of salvatioun is at hand, draw men to the Lord, for the sword of the Lord is drawn, & will not be put up till the enymeis of the Lord be destroyed.’ . . .

“ Sum of the Englische sodgeris, & sum Scottis men & wemen being deludit & possest with the same spirite of error . . . the evil spirite prevaillit with much pepill & chargit thame to deny all ministeriall teaching & ordinances, togidder with all notionall knowlege, formarie gayned by use of such meanis, to becum as thocht thai haid niver learned anything thairby savinglie & to lay ane new ground-work, viz to be taught of God within ourselfis, by wayting upone ane inward licht ” (page 147).

“ In the end of Apryll & beginning of May 1656, multitudes of Quakeris increst, both men & wemen, alsweill Scottis as Englische, & publictly schew thameselfis throw the streitis of Edinburgh, & making twyse at leist in the week thair pretendit sermoundis, & hortationeses, at the Castell hill of Edinburgh: to quhome resortit much pepill, sum to heir & sie, & sum utheris to reverence thair judgementis, errouris & opiniounes. And the divisioun of the Ministrie in thair judgmentis & opiniounes did much contribute to the increas of these errouris ” (p. 177).

The diarist also notes the visit of two Friends to Westminster Hall, 14 May, 1655 (p. 153), the attempt of Susanna Pearson to raise the dead (p. 193), and the arrest of Lord Swinton at a Friends’ house in King Street, London in 1660 (p. 296).

That which is hath been already ; and that which is to be hath already been ; and God seeketh again that which is passed away.—*Eccles.* iii. 15.

¹ So states *D.N.B.*; it seems a long time for a man to “flourish.” Nichol is quoted by M. C. Cadbury in her *Robert Barclay*.