My scholarly interest in Quakers began when I read Anne Emlen’s “Notes on Religion” at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania almost twenty years ago. I found Emlen’s immersive narrative striking in its exhaustive focus on spiritual contemplation. Her worldview was saturated with religious precepts and actions as she strove to live a godly life drawn from Quaker, biblical, and literary sources. Emlen’s spiritual practice was evident throughout her notebooks, which served as a form of meditation: her need to observe “the waiting silence of the day,” being led by God’s spirit, and the dangers of a prescribed piety. While she used typical Quaker phraseology, she also invoked religious tropes employed by evangelical Protestants: “greatly am I exercised in mind, on beholding the dangerous path of my walking. Grant me patience dearest Lord in every conflict and probation.”1 This commingling of traditions raises questions about how Friends navigated the early nineteenth century as religious freedom, democratic politics, and market economics transformed the early republic.

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