"LOST IN THE IMMENSITY OF GOD": 
A PRE—CIVIL WAR METHODIST WOMAN'S 
EXPERIENCE OF THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF GOD

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The week past has been replete with rich blessings 
to my soul. I have dwelt in God and he in me. O 
blessed union with the Infinite! . . . I am nothing—  
have nothing—know nothing. As a mote in the sun-  
beam—as a drop in the ocean, so am I lost in the 
immensity of God! 

Fanny Lamson Bartlett  
June 16, 1850

Fanny Lamson Bartlett was a woman of her time, and yet in some  
ways she transcended the attitudes and beliefs of her time because of her  
sound grasp of the gospel message. She was born in Boston, Massachusetts  
on August 14, 1799 and died in Lima, New York on May 18, 1859 at the  
age of 59.  

The memoir that served as the starting point for this paper was  
published in 1860, the year after her death. (Hereafter, all page numbers  
referred to are from the Phelps volume listed in the first footnote.) It was  
A. A. Phelps who finally convinced Mrs. Bartlett a few months before  
her death to approve the publication of her biography. She did so reluc­  
tantly, having refused offers by several people on several previous  
occasions.  

Phelp's presence is somewhat intrusive in the memoir as he attemp­  
ted to introduce young readers (the targeted audience) to the life of this  
pious woman. Through the use of sporadic entries in her journal, letters  
written to and from friends, letters written about her after her death, and  
even through a sermonette by the editor(!), the story of her life unfolds.  

It is important at the outset to note some things about Fanny Bartlett's  
writing. She had a good vocabulary and excellent grammar and style. She  
used imagery and religious language which included scripture, religious  
poetry and hymns. A total lack of humor reflected the seriousness of her  

1A. A. Phelps, ed. The Life of Mrs. Fanny L. Bartlett, Consort of the Late Dr. Oliver C.  
Bartlett: Containing Copious Extracts From Her Journal, and Eminently Calculated To Lead  
to a Holy Life (Boston: J. V. Degen, 1860), 166-167.  
2The author is indebted to Dr. Joanna Bowen Gillespie of Drew University, Madison, New  
Jersey, and her seminar entitled, "Nineteenth Century Popular Religion: Women's Spiritual  
Autobiography," which provided the opportunity for researching this paper.
character. She did mention some national events such as the election of a new president (without mentioning his name!), the institution of the cheap postage law which she lauded, and the institution of the fugitive slave law which she lamented. Through her writing we see her determined singlemindedness and desire to be useful to God and humanity, a theme which pervades her writings.  

Bartlett's love of people was evident in her manifold charitable works and in her committed activity on behalf of others in many prayer groups. She spoke of the "snares" (p. 27) and "crosses" (p. 15) in her life—the stumbling blocks that challenged her faith and the living of it. Purity, self-denial, and personal holiness were constant themes. To the reader, she appears to be a balanced person—a person who valued quiet times of prayer and meditation and yet who was socially oriented in outreach to the poor, the sick, and the suffering. As we shall soon see, before her marriage the young Fanny Lamson was a social person who loved fun, people, and parties, and it seems she redirected her "people interest" into works of caring and Christian charity following her conversion. Throughout her long life, she was basically a happy person who felt grateful to God for the material blessings which gave her the liberty and means to serve others.

Fanny Bartlett was born into a middle class family. Her father, Samuel Lamson, was engaged in the mercantile business and died when Fanny was 14 years old. No mention is made by the editor of Bartlett's biography of her father’s religious convictions. Her mother, Catherine Lamson, was "one of the earliest members of the Park Street Church (Congregational), but cherished many friendly feelings toward the Methodists, whose ministers were occasionally asked to preach in her house" (p. 7). She died in 1829. Fanny’s only criticism of her mother was that she did not take her religion seriously and did not impress the importance of religion on her daughter. For example, she allowed Fanny to attend parties—something Fanny later came to view as totally incompatible with biblical teaching. The only other family member mentioned (and only later in the work) was a sister who died in 1827 and who left an orphaned daughter who came to live with the Bartlett family later that year.

The beginning of Fanny’s religious awakening came when she was a teenager. The exact year was not given in her biography. She wrote: "On returning at a late hour from a party of pleasure, the Spirit of God spoke in thunder-tones to my heart, upbraiding me for my sins, and set me free from my sins."
ting before my mind the awful realities of eternity." She continued, "... one thought of death and the judgment dashed from my lips the cup of sinful pleasure, and made me wretched indeed" (p. 9). The events and influences which led up to this experience are uncertain, but following this event Fanny attended a Methodist prayer meeting. There were probably "Methodist influences" in Fanny's life prior to this occurrence—possibly through friends not in the "partying group." The subsequent involvement with Methodists brought her under the influence of the Thayer family in whose midst her searching was supported and guided and in whose home she had her conversion experience while singing a hymn that began, "My soul is full of glory . . ." (p.11). Her spiritual pilgrimage continued on to include seeking after perfect love and entire sanctification—both of which, along with Christian perfection, others felt she did attain. 4

Fanny Bartlett's educational opportunities were "not very extensive" but "very good for the times" (p. 7). Obviously very intelligent, she did well in private school. 5 Her personally selected reading included Wesley, Fletcher, and Christian biographies which aided her spiritual journey. Desiring to be a missionary, she and a close friend, Susan Bennett, began attending a school in Nantucket in December of 1819. 6 Fanny was very

4 Fanny Bartlett's spiritual journey fits into the pattern suggested by Methodism's founder, John Wesley. In his sermon entitled, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation" found in The Works of John Wesley (Bicentennial Edition), Sermons III, edited by Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 199-209, Wesley outlined the following steps:

1) Working out one's salvation begins with "preventing grace" which includes "the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against him" (p. 203).

2) "Salvation is carried on by 'convincing grace,' usually in Scripture termed 'repentance' which brings a larger measure of self-knowledge, and a farther deliverance from the heart of stone" (p. 204).

3) We are saved: "through grace' we 'are saved by faith . . .', and there are two parts of this:
   a. Justification—"... we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favour of God. . ." (p. 204).
   b. Sanctification—"... we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God" (p. 204).

4) John Wesley says that salvation begins, "the moment we are justified" and it increases. "... in another instant, the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with pure love to God and man" (p. 204).

5) People must "work out" their "own salvation" (Philippians 2:12) in earnest, wasting no time (p. 204-205).

6) "Thus when you have redemption in the blood of Christ, you will 'go on to perfection' . . ." (p. 206).

5 It is likely that the "private school" Mrs. Bartlett attended as a teenager was probably one of the many academies in New England which admitted young women. The academies are described in The Bonds of Womanhood by Nancy F. Cott (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 101-125. The education acquired there would have fit Rev. Phelps' description of being "not very extensive" but "very good for the times." The Life of Fanny Bartlett, 7.
dedicated and approached her studies and "field work" with great seriousness.

It was while working in area churches that Fanny met Dr. Oliver C. Bartlett, a physician and lay preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church. In her journal she mentioned nothing of their courtship, but only references to "temptations and perplexities" (p. 42). Questions about duty preceded the account of her wedding. Fortunately, these anxieties gradually subsided before the wedding as she became spiritually assured that God blessed the forthcoming union. Dr. Bartlett was a widower, "several years her senior" (p. 44), with five children. A letter written by a friend after Fanny's death indicated that two of the children were minors and three were adults. Two of the older children were already married (p. 265). Their age difference must have been greater than "several years!" Dr. Bartlett was described as being younger in appearance than his years, and she, because of her seriousness, appeared older. They must have looked closer in age than they actually were.

Dr. Bartlett's marriage proposal apparently came as quite a surprise to Fanny, who required the approval of all five children before accepting it. Their marriage took place on April 9, 1820, when Fanny was 20 years old. Following the wedding Mrs. Bartlett received an anonymous letter, probably written by her pastor and dear friend, the Rev. Timothy Merritt, which said, "God has done much for your soul, and has made you a light in the world. He now intends to set that light in a conspicuous place, that it may shine before the world to his glory" (p. 45). This letter proved prophetic.

Being a pastor's wife brought the young bride into contact with many kinds of people, but she found the rich especially trying. She did not compromise herself, and the motivating force of her life remained, "the desire to see the work of personal holiness go forward" (p. 47). She remained humble, but there was power in her work (p. 47).

Power was something Fanny Bartlett had, which she knew she had, and which others recognized in her. Even such occasional references as being "a drop in the ocean" (p. 167), or being "lost in the immensity of God" (p. 167) did not reflect a sense of powerlessness as much as they revealed her humility and her insignificance in relation to God and the fact that she was part of that "immensity." Phrases such as these were common in her writings: "My prayer had power with God" (p. 202), "As

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surely as I ask, I receive” (p. 203), and “I know I am dear to Christ” (p. 40). On one occasion in particular, the power issue came to the fore. She was traveling with her son Melville to visit relatives when he manifested symptoms of cholera, which was rampant in the cities at the time. Of this frightening experience she wrote:

I lifted my heart to God and asked that my child might be spared until I could reach my relatives. I pleaded the promises, and the many marked deliverances which had been wrought out for me in answer to prayer. I had power to lay hold on the throne and claim the blessing of a present answer. My prayer was heard (p. 163).

Melville began to recover within the half-hour! These examples, all in her own words, show that Bartlett was secure in her faith and in God’s love for her. She felt she had power with God, and through God and prayer she had power with other people.

There is no doubt that Bartlett felt an exceptional closeness to God. In her commitment to personal holiness, purity and self-denial she found an inner peace and joy that came from God through a disciplined life. Fanny related some mystical experiences and visions during her lifetime which she understood to be from God and which were meant to affirm her and to strengthen her faith. On her wedding day such an experience confirmed the rightness of her marriage to Dr. Bartlett. In 1833, a vision she received at a watch-night service served “to reveal to me the fact that pure love and its reign within” (p. 95). This gave her mind a lasting sense of peace. In November, 1833, very early one morning, she had a vision reminiscent of the closing chapters of the biblical book of Revelation in which she was part of a special group of angels and people made perfect who were gathered at “the heavenly Jerusalem” (p. 97). This vision was left unfinished for the reader with the words, “But the scene must be left untold—eternity alone can fully disclose it” (p. 98). This had come as she awaited an answer to prayer.

Sometimes Fanny did not understand a vision, let alone how to communicate things of the spirit through the medium of words. She often gave up trying with statements like, “It is impossible for human language to convey an adequate idea of what I then experienced” (p. 161). In one vision she had a revelation during a serious illness of what lies beyond death. The result was such a sense of peace and trust in Christ that she longed to die, and felt confident in being saved by Christ’s “atonning blood” (p. 161).

Likewise, Fanny felt that God made her promises. Like the visions, these promises were sources of strength and consolation for her, even in the midst of personal suffering. God would bring goodness out of any situation.

Fanny experienced the deaths of two of her infants in 1824 and 1825. Regarding each death, she very briefly grieved as a mother and accepted their deaths as God’s will. Another death, that of an older daughter in
1826, was especially difficult for the entire family. Even in the face of agonizing grief her outlook on life may be summed up in her own words recorded on July 21, 1849:

Though furious may be the surging billows I am sure my Father is at the helm; and while this is the case all is safe, and I lift up my head with rejoicing. I love life, because it is the gift of God, and if sanctified, may be rendered a great blessing (p. 167).

Between 1826 and 1833, the Bartletts moved four times. The first move to Aurora, Cayuga County, New York in 1826 was “painful” (p. 79), as they were uprooted from Nantucket. The move was necessitated by Dr. Bartlett’s desire to give more time and attention to his ministry. A move to Jordan, New York followed in 1832 when Dr. Bartlett decided to take a full-time appointment. A move to Aurelius, New York came in 1833 when Dr. Bartlett went on the circuit there. In all things, including the rigors of moving, her husband’s extended absences, the death of her mother, and the death of yet another infant, Fanny’s faith enabled her to be equal to the task as a Christian woman and minister’s wife.

On February 3, 1832, the family was saddened by the death of their nine-year-old daughter. Fanny perceived the reason for her daughter’s illness and death to be her own lack of witnessing when she visited friends in Ithaca. This clearly reflects something of her understanding of suffering. Earlier, after her conversion, Fanny believed she had paid another penalty for not witnessing, and lost her entire sanctification for one year. Suffering, for Fanny, could be a punishment, but it could be other things, as well. In 1851 her niece’s sick baby died while visiting the Bartlett home. Bartlett believed that the purpose of the infant’s death was to bring the parents to Christ. She wrote, “God wounded as gently as possible in order to effect that good in their hearts which he could bring about in no other way” (p. 200). Suffering could serve to bring people to God. In addition, suffering could purify people and make them, “more fully prepared to labor for others” (p. 168). In all things, she believed God used suffering to divine glory.

While living in Aurelius the Bartletts were affiliated with the abolitionist movement. Of the movement Fanny wrote: “It is the cause of God and must prevail . . . it concerns us all . . .” (p. 103). The cause of abolition claimed a great deal of her time and energy over the years, and she worked fervently on behalf of former slaves then living in St. Catharines, Canada, taking part in collections of clothing to be sent there. She even visited St. Catharines in December, 1855 with another Genesee Conference minister’s wife.

7It is worth noting that only rarely did Fanny Bartlett differentiate between any of the Bartlett children on the basis of their parentage. She wrote in a way that showed she was more a “mother” than a “step-mother” to all of them.

8Here Fanny indicates that the nine-year-old daughter was, “My only daughter” — perhaps because this factor accentuated her grief. The Life of Fanny Bartlett, 87.
Fanny affirmed the initiative of the former slaves in earning their own living, but disliked their inclination to keep their children home from school due to the “oppressing influence” (p. 245) they encountered there. Education, she felt, was the greatest need of Black people. “If they would assert their rights and live down prejudice, a most glorious conquest would be gained,” she wrote (p. 245).

Earlier, on a visit to friends and family in Nantucket, Fanny had met, talked with, and prayed with two former slaves. Her comments sound patronizing, but were not intentionally so:

These persons are certainly fine specimens of humanity, and give evidence of what might be done to raise the poor slave from his deep and cruel degradation (p. 136).

Although not totally in favor of all the methods of the abolitionists the Bartletts were firm believers in freedom and “human rights” (p. 252). So strong was Fanny’s hatred of slavery that her pastor, the Rev. John Dennis, stated in her obituary:

She regarded American slavery with the deepest abhorrence, and especially its existence in the M. E. Church. For its extirpation none have labored more earnestly, or prayed more fervently; and in the last moments of consciousness, she requested that her testimony, intensified by the solemn circumstances of the occasion, might be recorded against this sum of all villanies, to be entered up for the judgment.  

Bartlett’s son, Issac, almost died in 1833. Reflecting on the deaths of so many of her children, Fanny wrote, “Our nursery, though a ‘Sabbath of affliction’, has been to me like the ante-chamber of heaven” (p. 105). Indeed, the many death-beds she attended made a tremendous impression on her. She believed that the witness of holy living and triumphant dying strengthened the living.  


10 The “preoccupation with death” in writings of the nineteenth century reflected the general interest in the subject. Robert W. Lynn and Elliott Wright suggest that the reasons for this were, “In part ... an old Protestant tradition, faithfully observed, and in part the reality of high mortality rates and population thinning epidemics.” In addition, “Death was not a forbidden topic. ...” “Real deathbed scenes were household, if not public, events in contrast to the modern cloistering of death in hospital privacy.” As we shall see in the writings of Fanny Bartlett, Lynn and Wright explain, “Death was an occasion for a family educational experience when ‘last words’ were viewed as unusually illuminating and the manner of dying was closely observed. People near death were thought close to eternity and reflections of heaven might be caught in their eyes. And the impact of death ... could inspire others to renew their Christian faith and thus prepare for the ‘terrors of that day’.” In addition, the “preoccupation with death threw the desperate urgency of life into bold relief.” Robert W. Lynn and Elliott Wright, The Big Little School (Birmingham and Nashville: Religious Education Press and Abingdon, 1980), 72-73.
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for spiritual improvement. It often furnishes opportunity to impress truth upon the heart made tender by affliction" (p. 168). As we can see, she also saw the scene as an opportunity for evangelism.

In 1833, the family moved to Lima, Livingston County, New York, the community in which Dr. and Mrs. Bartlett lived until their deaths. Phelps wrote that Lima was, "the scene of her trials and triumphs, of her labors and usefulness" where she "nobly stood up for Christ and an uncompromising Christianity" (p. 124). He used such terms as "majestic individuality," "noble independence," and "unflinching nerve" to describe her bearing in Lima as she carried the standard "in the distinguishing features of Wesleyan Methodism" (p. 124).

Genesse Wesleyan Seminary and, later, Genesee College, were located in Lima, which gave "Mother Bartlett," as the spiritually-minded students called her, contact with young people, with whom she conducted 5:30 a.m. prayer gatherings. This was frowned upon by the administration which eventually ended them. The educational "aristocracy" (p. 244), as she referred to the administrators, was a thorn in her side and there was a constant tension between Bartlett with her approach to religion (i.e., personal holiness) and the academics with their more rational, sophisticated understandings. She viewed them as proud people who by virtue of their education should have been humbled in the process (p. 244). Otherwise, Fanny Bartlett thrived in Lima, becoming acquainted with the area's traveling preachers and meeting people from outside the immediate area through her husband.

In 1836, at 37 years of age, Fanny began to feel older. Many references to this awareness are found in her journal and in letters to her close friends. Often she wondered if she and her friends would ever see each other again in this world. Her friends responded in like manner. She often wrote, "God is weaning my heart from earth and fixing it more fully upon himself (p. 188). During this period of her life camp meetings,\textsuperscript{11} ladies' prayer groups, a Maternal Association she formed "to train children for usefulness and heaven" (p. 134), and her role in establishing a Sunday School in an outlying area, all kept Fanny "useful"!

Another move was made in 1846, which relocated the family to a farm outside of Lima. Fanny Bartlett was very happy here because of the warmth of the people who loved them, and who congregated in their home for times of prayer and religious conversation. Although living in the Finger Lakes area of New York, an area known for its great beauty, she never commented on it. The area's attraction was clearly the people she encountered there.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{12}Elizabeth Hampsten, Read This Only To Yourself (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 29-47.
The potentially isolating rural aspect of her new home was not able to diminish this "world-minded" woman's interests and concerns. On the home front she focused on her children's spiritual welfare and that of an orphaned girl who worked for them. On the national level she was absorbed in the plight of sailors and canal workers (Erie Canal, 1825), the slavery issue and the problems of the cities. She wrote, "... make me more diligent in praying for those who I can benefit in no other way" (p. 159). Her compassion was international in its scope. In a letter written by Prof. George C. Whitlock of Victoria College, Canada, following her death, he summed up this side of Mrs. Bartlett:

Her benevolence, broad as humanity, found fit objects in her own family, in all those around her, in the aborigines of the land, in the guilty ones of the 'great city,' in the pitiable fugitives to Canada, and in the benighted heathen of foreign shores (p. 269).

In July, 1849, Fanny accompanied her son, Melville, to New York City to a reputedly good school for the deaf. Melville had been totally deafened in 1841 during a bout with scarlatina, a form of scarlet fever. His mother was distraught by its effect, but she resigned herself to it in faith. After Fanny was assured of the school's quality, she left him there for training trying not to cry as she left that she might not upset him. Melville returned home in 1851 after ten months at school and she felt comforted by his improvement. She prayed with him and later saw him in his room, "on his knees praying with his fingers." Profoundly moved, she wrote, "My heart was deeply affected. My constant prayer is that Jesus may lead him to himself while young" (p. 200).

Throughout the memoir, Bartlett showed signs of personal growth, certainly in her spiritual life, but also in the degree of tolerance for the weaknesses of others. Earlier, for example, she had been very upset over death-bed confessions of faith, feeling that the dying person should have lived better all along. She was intolerant of certain kinds of sin—especially anything of a sexual nature. By the end of her life she had learned a great deal about living, and had come to the point where she could feel pity for such sinners. She commented on her own soul's sinful passions: "... the blood of Jesus has so completely cleansed them away that those things which would once have awakened a spirit of anger and resentment can now be met with feelings of pity toward those disposed to do wrong" (p. 201).

One thing that did not change, however, was Bartlett's life-long prejudice against Roman Catholics and she tried in earnest, in at least one case, to "instruct" a Roman Catholic girl who worked for them. She criti-

13The anti-Roman Catholic feeling exhibited by Mrs. Bartlett was reflective of the sentiments of that period in our nation's history. Overt anti-Catholic sentiment manifested itself in one of the nation's first such incidents on August 11, 1834 when an Ursuline convent school was burned by a "mob of Boston Protestants" in Charlestown, Massachusetts. Ray Allen Bill-
cised the “unavailing forms” and the “almost impenetrable darkness that
enshrouds the minds of Roman Catholics generally . . .” (p. 166). However, as much as their practices disturbed her, she still cared for the
people as individuals and as souls to be saved.

By April of 1852, in poor health herself, and knowing that her much
loved husband’s death was imminent, she prayed to God for “sustaining
grace” (p. 207). Dr. Bartlett died on September 9, 1853, after a long ill-
ness. At first, Fanny was in shock, but as it began to lessen she wrote to
a friend, “The vacuum now begins to be felt and I miss him everywhere”
(p. 219). In faith she saw a unity between the Kingdom of Heaven and
the Kingdom here on earth (“. . . the kingdoms are but one”) (p. 235).
Fanny wrote further to her friend, “. . . I think it is sinful to yield im-
moderate grief for those who have been transferred from earth to heaven.
We are still one . . .” (p. 219). She experienced widowhood as a test of
her faith, just as her marriage had been! She grieved long and hard, and
found solace in her friends and in her faith. She found it hard to pray,
but persevered. “God,” she testified, “fills the vacuum caused by the
removal of my dear husband with himself” (p. 228).

Fanny Bartlett’s journal writings stop after 1855, except for a few
entries in 1858. As she aged she wrote, “I feel a sort of shrinking from
the idea of becoming useless, and yet I know God will give me ‘strength’
even for such a ‘day’” (p. 248). Fanny was ill for several years prior to
her death and Phelps noted that, “her heart was organically affected”
(p. 25). She was in pain and bedridden the winter before her death. As
her condition worsened due to increasing medical problems, people came
to see her, and she spoke with them according to their spiritual needs!
She also addressed the “value of the narrow way” and the inconsistency
of slavery with “the experience of entire holiness” (p. 257). She had no
regrets about the past and was not anxious about the future, as she had
done her lifework while she was able. When asked by Phelps, who saw
her several times the week of her death, whether she would live as strictly
as she had, were it possible to live her life over, she responded that she
would be even stricter! (p. 258).

Fanny Bartlett died on Wednesday, May 18, 1859 among many friends
and apparently without family in attendance. She died “amid silence,
solemnity, and tears” (p. 259). After her funeral service, at her request,
the hymn “Home At Last” was sung by a number of mourners with “thrill-
ing effect” (p. 260). For a woman who had lived her life so in touch with
the heavenly realm she surely had gone “home.”
In the letters written about her following her death it was clear that Fanny was highly regarded by a variety of people. In addition to the many loving remembrances of her penned by her long-time friends another outstanding tribute was paid her memory by Professor George C. Whitlock, of Victoria College, Canada, who wrote:

As like Fletcher and a few saints that have blessed the world and adorned the history of the church, she seemed almost too far advanced in the heavenly face for a denizen of earth . . . (p. 269).

Obviously, her life and work influenced the lives of many people in many stations in life.

It is important to note here that Fanny, although known and loved for her ministry outside the sphere of her home, was not considered to have overstepped the bounds of a "proper Christian woman." This is surprising considering her forthrightness, strong convictions and the way she related to both women and men. In fact, throughout her life Fanny Bartlett remained a very traditional woman in regard to men and the home. She accepted the prescribed role of a mid-nineteenth century wife, mother, and minister's wife. She never questioned the limits of her role as a woman nor ever intended to challenge the authority of the men she encountered. In a letter written of Fanny after her death a friend in Ithaca, New York commented, "We are aware that after all a woman does elsewhere, it is chiefly by what she is in her domestic relations that she will be estimated" (p. 265). Fanny would have agreed. Interestingly though, in her obituary there is reference to neither her marital status nor motherhood. This was not true of any other women memorialized on the same page!

Another point evidenced in the final letters was that people saw Fanny Bartlett almost completely the way she perceived herself. That is a tribute to her integrity and singlemindedness. She lived what she believed. What they did not see, however, was the tension within Fanny, especially involving the issue of self-denial. The matter of dress, for example, surfaced periodically in her writings and she chose to wear the plain black Methodist style of dress even when tempted to do otherwise. Her conclusion was based upon what she believed the Bible said on the subject.

With "twentieth century eyes" we look back on the life of a nineteenth century woman. Despite the character flaws that mark areas of refining


15 Dennis, "Fanny Bartlett," 98, col. 5.

16 In The Minister's Wife: Her Role In Nineteenth-Century Evangelicalism, Leonard I. Sweet states: "The first half of the nineteenth century witnessed a desultory debate between those who would bring fashion within the pale of taste and those who would drag it into the purview of morality." (p. 95) Fanny Bartlett was one who favored the latter view and, in Sweet's words, "denounced . . . the immorality of spending time and money on fashions at the expense of more meretorious [sic] attractions." (p. 95)
needed in us all, we see a person, a child of God, a woman of God, with tremendous integrity. Hers is a story of faith and godliness, of power, hard work, love, and caring. As was recorded by her pastor, John Dennis:

Just before her redeemed spirit returned to God, she said to her pastor, “All is well, Jesus is more precious than ever before; I gave my heart to him in my early life, and he has been precious to me ever since—he has wonderfully preserved me; in prosperity he has kept me from being overcome by the spirit of the world; in adversity he has sustained and comforted me; O how precious is the narrow way! . . . Tell all my brethren and sisters how much I love them, tell them to be holy, to be faithful and meet me in heaven.”

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17 Dennis, “Fanny Bartlett,” 98, col. 5.