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Philip Slater Fall: Educator, Reformer, Pastor

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On July 15, 1857, the *Nashville Union and American* announced Philip Slater Fall as the preacher for an evening service at the Third Presbyterian Church, which at that time the First Christian Church rented.¹ Interestingly, in 1821 the recently-founded Baptist congregation had built that building. Some thirty years prior, Fall led that congregation into the Reformation guided by Alexander Campbell. After an absence of twenty-six years (1831-1857), Fall returned to Nashville as the Pastor of the First Christian Church (1858). Later the congregation repurchased their original building. Fall found himself once again pastoring the same congregation in the same building where he began pastoring the "Baptist Church of Jesus Christ" in May 1826.

That same issue announced the return of R. B. C. Howell to the pastorate of the First Baptist Church in Nashville. Howell had earlier led the First Baptist Church to a period of stable growth from 1835-1850. Ironically, both Fall and Howell returned to Nashville within several months of each other, and both congregations welcomed the return of their most celebrated and beloved pastors.

P. S. Fall in Kentucky (1817-1826): Embracing Reform

Philip Slater Fall was born on September 7, 1798 near Brighton in Sussex, England. Colonel James Fall, a former military officer, moved the family to the United States,

¹ *Nashville Union and American*, July 15, 1857, 3.

landing in New Jersey on May 10, 1817. They travelled down the Ohio River from Pittsburg to Louisville and renewed family relationships in Adair County, Kentucky, where Philip's mother died. The family settled in Logan County near Russellville on a four hundred acre farm Philip's father had purchased before he died on Christmas Eve, 1817. Philip, at nineteen, was the oldest of ten, including an eight-month old infant, and he was tasked with caring for the orphaned family.

Though raised Episcopalian by his mother, Philip's great grandfather, James Fall, was a British Baptist minister, and some suggest his father was Baptist.² Isaac Hodgen (1779-1826), an eminent and successful Baptist minister who had officiated the funeral of Fall's mother,³ pastored the Mt. Gilead Church and preached throughout country between Russellville and Hopkinsville, KY. Fall, baptized on October 25, 1818, became a member of the Mt. Gilead congregation. Soon he regularly offered a "word of exhortation" to the church.⁴

Given his classical education, he began teaching at the Forks Elkhorn Academy in Franklin County, KY, in the Fall of 1819.⁵ Shortly after his arrival the Church of the Folks of Elkhorn licensed him to preach on December 11, 1819. The next summer a presbytery of Baptist pastors examined his "call to the Ministry" and

² Pattie Burnley, "Philip Slater Fall," *Register of Kentucky State Historical Society* 7.21 (September 1999) 63.

³ John H. Spencer, *History of Kentucky Baptists* (Cincinnati: J. R. Baumes, 1886), I:241.

⁴ Philip S. Fall, "Reminiscences of Philip S. Fall," MS in the Philip S. Fall Memorial Library, Christian Church, Frankfort, KY.

⁵ "Reminiscences."

theology.⁶ His views were “satisfactory,” though there was significant discussion about Fall’s dubious Calvinism.⁷

Accompanying Jeremiah Vardeman, a leading Kentucky Baptist minister who organized the Baptist church in Nashville, Fall preached for the Nashville Baptist church in July 1821 as well as in June 1822. Though invited to serve as their Pastor, he declined and remained in Franklin County as co-pastor with Jacob Creath, Sr. of the Frankfort Baptist Church from 1821-1822.⁸ Throughout 1822 Fall preached monthly for the Louisville Baptist church. Accepting their invitation, he moved to Louisville as its pastor in January 1823 where he also taught in an academy. Here he began to pay attention to the rumblings of Alexander Campbell.

Fall first heard about Campbell from William Vaughn shortly after Campbell’s debate with the Presbyterian Walker.⁹ Vaughn praised Campbell’s performance as well as his biblical knowledge. He next heard about Campbell from Jeremiah Vardeman during his tour of Tennessee, but Fall did not read from him until 1823 when he read Campbell’s controversial “Sermon on the Law,” delivered to the Redstone Baptist Association in 1816. Next, he began reading Campbell’s new publication, begun July 4, 1823, entitled *The Christian Baptist*. Fall received his first copy from Moses Norvell, a member of the Baptist church in Nashville. Fall

⁶ James A. Cox, “Incidents in the Life of Philip Slater Fall” (B. D. Thesis, Lexington Theological Seminary, 1951), 26-27.

⁷ “Reminiscences.”

⁸ “Reminiscences.”

⁹ Alexander Campbell and John Walker, *A Debate on Baptism* (Pittsburgh: Eichbaum and Johnson, 1822).

remembers his first reaction was “repugnance” though he was “prepossessed in favor of its editor.”¹⁰

Fall “became personally acquainted” with Campbell in November 1824 when the Reformer visited Louisville by which time he had read Campbell’s debates with Walker and McCalla. After hearing him several times and visiting with Campbell in his home, Fall became one of the first resident pastors among Kentucky Baptists to fully embrace Campbell’s reform movement.¹¹ Campbell remembers, for example, a time when “only brethren P. S. Fall, of Kentucky, and Adamson Bentley, of Ohio, cordially espoused the cause” in their respective states.¹²

At the same time Fall was appointed clerk for the Long Run Baptist Association in 1824. Fulfilling his function, he preached the opening sermon of the association on September 2, 1825 and authored a circular letter. This is regarded as the “first movement among the Baptists of Kentucky in the direction of the principles of the Reformation.”¹³ The letter affirmed the Bible as “*the only sufficient and perfect rule of our faith and practice.*”¹⁴ The circular was defeated by one vote.¹⁵

The Louisville Baptist Church aligned itself with Campbell’s reform movement that year. The church unanimously adopted the following statement on September 1, 1825, the day before the Long Run Association meeting began.¹⁶

¹⁰ “Reminiscences.”

¹¹ P. S. Fall, “Interesting Reminiscences,” *Christian Standard* 14 (3 May 1879) 138.

¹² Alexander Campbell, “History of the Reformation,” *Millennial Harbinger* 4.2 (February 1833) 94.

¹³ Cox, 52.

¹⁴ Alexander Campbell, “The Casting Vote, or the Creed triumphant over the Bible,” *Christian Baptist* 3.7 (February 1826) 138.

¹⁵ Campbell, “*The Baptist Recorder*,” *Christian Baptist* 3.10 (May 1826), 207.

¹⁶ Fall, “Interesting Reminiscences,” 138.

We, the Church of Jesus Christ, meeting together in Louisville, do hereby declare and agree that we do renounce all human instruments of union, such as Creeds, Confessions of faith and formulas of doctrine and practice; and that we receive the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as our only Creed, and the only rule of our faith and practice.¹⁷

P. S. Fall in Tennessee (1826-1831): Reforming a Church

On September 3, 1825—the date Fall spoke at Long Run—the Nashville Baptist church “unanimously agree[d] to call Bro. Philip S. Fall to act as [its] pastor.” This latest invitation started a momentous chain of events, which resulted in P. S. Fall, according to Wrather, becoming the “Father of the Christian Church in the South.”¹⁸

Selling the Logan County farm, Fall moved to Nashville in January 1826. He did not come simply as a pastor. Rather, the prestigious Nashville Female Academy, begun in 1816, invited him to teach. Rev. William Hume, the head of the academy, introduced Fall to the public as a “distinguished” teacher who possessed “energy, intelligence and experience.”¹⁹ He was paid six hundred dollars per annum.²⁰

Apparently, some in Nashville feared Fall’s relationship to Campbell’s reform movement. However, John C. Ewing, the clerk of the church, assured Fall in an August 28, 1825 letter: “You need have no apprehensions on this ground, and you will find enough here to support you who are tied to no doctrines but those that are indubitably scriptural.”²¹ While some thought Fall came under false pretenses, he

¹⁷ Cox, 53.

¹⁸ Eva Jean Wrather, “History of the Vine Street Christian Church,” unpublished MSS, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Wrather 120 II/7 Vine Str. Chapter 1 Revised, p. 50, and also so named by Cox, 74.

¹⁹ *Republican Banner*, January 7, 1826, 3.

²⁰ Fall, “Interesting Reminiscences,” 138.

²¹ As quoted by Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1870), II:142.

insisted otherwise: “Letters now in my possession must satisfy every candid mind that whatever my convictions may have been they were well known before my removal to Nashville.”²²

Fall became the pastor of the Baptist church in May, though he assumed the ministerial duties when he arrived in January.²³ He served without remuneration.²⁴ Over the next three months, Fall introduced—with majority support—significant changes.

- Weekly communion was adopted (May 1826).
- Candidates for baptism were received upon a simple confession of faith (June 1826).
- They renounced all creeds as rules of faith and practice, and affirmed the Bible alone as the sole authority (August 1826).

When Alexander Campbell visited Nashville in February/March 1827, he “preached frequently, to the great delight of the Church and the community.” This reception was due to the fact that the church was already “fully engaged in the reformatory movement.”²⁵ This exacerbated current tensions within the Concord Association from which the church withdrew on August 12, 1827. An earlier communication with the Association stated its intent to never unite with any body requiring subscription “to any human instrument of union, as the test of our obedience or practice.”²⁶ On May 28, 1828, the church—at a Saturday conference—resolved:

²² “Reminiscencies.”

²³ R. B. C. Howell, *A Memorial of the First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tennessee* (Nashville: Historical Commission, Southern Baptist Convention, 1942), 42.

²⁴ Cox, 74.

²⁵ Richardson, II:168.

²⁶ Alexander Campbell, “Deferred Articles,” *Christian Baptist* 4.10 (May 1827), 194.

That all forms, rules, decisions, and regulations, in relation to the government, practice, worship, and ordinances of the church (including the Constitution and Rules of Order) be considered null and void; that we take the New Testament as the rule of our faith, and practice; and will form such rules from it, for our worship, and government, as may consist with the spirit and meaning, and the peace, and good order of the church.²⁷

There is no mistaking the Nashville church's reorientation and its explicit association with Campbell's reform movement. Campbell published a letter (January 10, 1828) from the church where she confirms its "departure from *Baptist* customs."²⁸ The congregation numbered one hundred and fifty. After his visit to Nashville in 1830, Campbell described the church, numbering two hundred and fifty, as "advanced in the reformation" because it practiced the apostolic ancient order in its weekly meetings.²⁹ In 1834, the church numbered five hundred.³⁰ By 1841, Campbell identified the congregations in Cincinnati, Louisville, and Nashville as "golden candlesticks" which "illuminate and sanctify the whole world."³¹ Two of these were led into the Reformation by Fall.

Though relations with the Female Academy were congenial, Fall started a new one with the help of his sisters. He opened a "private SEMINARY, for the instruction of Young Ladies" on January 7, 1828. Named the Female Institute, it operated out of his home and included "religious instruction."³² The school was a tremendous success, but between an "ever-enlarging school and a growing church at

²⁷ Howell, 62.

²⁸ Campbell, "Extract of a Letter to the Editor," *Christian Baptist* 5.9 (April 1828), 154.

²⁹ Campbell, "The Church in Nashville," *Millennial Harbinger* 2.3 (March 1831) 123.

³⁰ Campbell, "Summary of News," *Millennial Harbinger* 5.7 (July 1834) 334.

³¹ Campbell, "Excursions—No. I," *Millennial Harbinger* 2nd series, 5.5 (May 1841) 225.

³² *National Banner and Nashville Whig*, December 8, 1827, 3.

a center of influence” the load was too much. His health declined.³³ He closed the school, resigned his pastorate, and removed to Kentucky.³⁴ Though the church was disappointed, the “Baptist Church of Jesus Christ in Nashville Tennessee” lavished him with praise and affection in a parting letter.³⁵ He left a three hundred member strong church in July 1831, and he remained “strongly attached” to the Nashville church, visiting frequently throughout the years.³⁶ In a letter to his wife, for example, he recounts his July 1833 visit when he baptized fifteen people.³⁷

When the school closed, a letter to the editor from a “Lover of Science,” commented: “The loss of such an institution is to be deplored.”³⁸ However, his sisters—Kitty, Mary, and Charlotte—stayed in Nashville and established “Miss Fall’s Academy.” Charlotte, who later married Tolbert Fanning, became a leading educator in Middle Tennessee for the next fifty years.

P. S. Fall in Kentucky (1831-1858): Church Planter and Educator

Fall moved to Popular Hill, outside of Frankfort, KY, to a “large home on [a] farm.”³⁹ Country living suited Philip, and his health improved. He “was a most

³³ Wrather, 49.

³⁴ Elizabeth Fall Taylor, “Fall,” *Register of Kentucky State Historical Society* 1 (May 1903), 55.

³⁵ Cox, 92.

³⁶ Pattie Burnley, “Philip Slater Fall,” *Register of Kentucky State Historical Society* 7.21 (September 1999) 67.

³⁷ Cox, 164.

³⁸ *Nashville Banner* (July 1831), 3.

³⁹ “Philip Fall Sr.,” <http://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Fall-145> (accessed January 12, 2015).

enthusiastic and intelligent gardener” with a greenhouse “celebrated” for its “many scientific experiments in floriculture.”⁴⁰

With improved health, Fall’s passions re-emerged. Initially, Fall planted and nurtured a congregation in Shelbyville, KY, which grew to sixty-six members in a few months.⁴¹ At the request of five people in Frankfort, who were unaffiliated with any other religious body, he and his wife planted a new congregation on December 2, 1832, which became the Frankfort Christian Church. He was its only “regular preacher” for twenty five years, and he served it “without any compensation.”⁴² The new congregation, however, drew fire from others, and the church struggled “against much opposition.”⁴³

The Christian Church erected its own building in February 1842, and Fall gave the inaugural sermon, which Campbell published. He characterized Fall as “a well-cultivated and discriminating mind” who was “the oldest ‘reformer’ in Kentucky.” His educational and reforming work is “both known and highly appreciated throughout the Valley of the Mississippi.”⁴⁴

How does the church lead the world to Christ? Fall’s answer: “BY ITS OWN UNITY.” This includes common thought and practices. This unity—same acts, truths, and spirit—is embodied through love for another. But such unity is worthless if the

⁴⁰ Burnley, 65.

⁴¹ G. W. Nuckols, “Progress of Reform,” *Millennial Harbinger* 3.12 (December 1832) 608.

⁴² L. F. Johnson, *The History of Franklin County, Ky* (Franklin, KY: Roberts Printing Co., 1912), 256.

⁴³ F. W. Emmons, “Progress of Reform: Extracts from Letters,” *Millennial Harbinger* 5.5 (May 1834) 233.

⁴⁴ Campbell, “A Discourse,” *Millennial Harbinger*, 2nd series, 6.11 (November 1842) 515.

“members of the church do not love one another,” including loving across denominational boundaries. Consequently, church bodies must not “separate themselves” and “work themselves up to the highest possible degree of difference and animosity.” At the center of this conviction is the confession “God is love.” “If divisions, hatred, strife, emulation, injustice, falsehood, unmercifulness, instead of their opposites, distinguish the church, how can the church exhibit the [love] of God to mankind?”⁴⁵

To this end Fall was deeply involved at regional, state, and national levels of the Christian Church, particularly promoting cooperation and education. He was a founding trustee of the Kentucky Christian Education Society, established in 1854.⁴⁶ He was also one of the “foreign managers” of the American Christian Missionary Society at its founding in 1849.⁴⁷ Fall was a life-long supporter of society movements within the Christian Church, although David Lipscomb—based on personal conversations with Fall—insisted Fall never advocated for nor participated in societies after his return to Nashville in 1858.⁴⁸ In fact, the Nashville Christian Church did not support the society until 1881, several years after Fall returned to Kentucky.⁴⁹ He was also a trustee of both Bacon College and Bethany College, and he served as vice president of the Western Literary and College of Professional

⁴⁵ Ibid., 515, 517-8.

⁴⁶ S. Arnes, “Independency’s Legitimate Offspring,” *Millennial Harbinger* 4th series, 6.8 (August 1856) 443.

⁴⁷ “The Convention of Christian Churches,” *Millennial Harbinger* 3rd series, 6.12 (December 1849) 691.

⁴⁸ Herman Norton, *The Life of Philip Slater Fall* (M. A. Thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1951) 70-72 and David Lipscomb, “Consistency,” *Gospel Advocate* 29 (6 April 1887) 215.

⁴⁹ Wayne H. Bell, “A History of Vine Street Christian Church,” in *Seven Early Churches in Nashville* (Waynesboro, TN: Elder’s Bookstore Publisher, 1972), 85.

Teachers.⁵⁰

Fall established the Female Eclectic Institute in 1832. A visitor to the school in 1846 described his home as “one of the most beautiful and romantic spots in the state.” Its educational system was “thorough, developing the powers of thinking, as well as those of acquiring knowledge.” Indeed, by 1846, “owing to the great celebrity of this school, the Principal has to reject many applications for admission.”⁵¹

In 1842 Fall described the substance of the school. Every morning began with song, prayer, and the oral reading of Scripture (several chapters and the Psalms). The following daily schedule reflects Fall’s motto: “Study is the business and pleasure of all.”⁵²

Day	Morning	Afternoon
Monday	Natural Philosophy, Arithmetic, and Writing	Drawing
Tuesday	English Grammar, Arithmetic, and Writing	Geography
Wednesday	History, Arithmetic and Writing	Reading
Thursday	French	Drawing
Friday	Astronomy, Arithmetic, and Writing	Reading
Saturday	Preparation for Monday	Preparation for Monday
Sunday	Worship and Rest	Worship and Rest

⁵⁰ Sarah Harwell, “Fall, Philip Slater (1798-1890),” *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 330.

⁵¹ Extracted from the *Protestant Unionist*, “Educational Institutions,” *Millennial Harbinger*, 3rd series, 3.9 (September 1846) 429-430,

⁵² “Bishop P. S. Fall’s School Near Frankfort, Kentucky,” *Millennial Harbinger*, 2nd series, 6.6 (June 1842) 284-85.

Once again, however, Fall's incessant activity in both church and school affected his health. The educational enterprise grew more wearisome. Fall's wife wrote to her daughter: "we will not have a school much longer. Your Father seems more wearied than I ever saw him. He would not mind having a few day pupils, but he does not expect to have boarders but very little longer."⁵³ Providently, in 1857 the Nashville church invited him to return.

P. S. Fall in Tennessee (1858-1876): Pastoring a Church

The Nashville Christian Church from 1831-1861

When Fall left the Nashville church in 1831 it numbered three hundred members, and within a few years it grew to six hundred. In the early 1850s a thousand would gather to listen to its preacher. However, in 1857 the church numbered only fifty-six members. So, what happened?⁵⁴

After Fall's departure, the elders decided to care for the flock themselves but employed two "Evangelists" for Middle Tennessee. The evangelist "was not regarded as the 'pastor' of the congregation, but was subject to the brethren."⁵⁵ Tolbert

⁵³ "Philip Fall Sr.," <http://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Fall-145> (accessed January 12, 2015).

⁵⁴ Johnny Tucker, *Like a Meteor Across the Horizon: the Jesse B. Ferguson Story* (Fayetteville, TN: Tucker Publications, 1978), James R. Wilburn, *The Hazard of the Die: Tolbert Fanning and the Restoration Movement* (Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing Co., 1969), and Robert E. Hooper, *Crying in the Wilderness: The Life & Influence of David Lipscomb* (Nashville: Lipscomb University, 2011) narrate the history of the Nashville church in the 1830s-1850s.

⁵⁵ Tolbert Fanning, "The Church in Nashville," *Gospel Advocate* 3 (March 1857) 71.

Fanning and Absalom Adams planted and nurtured new churches throughout the region, and the Nashville church grew to “about six hundred members.”⁵⁶

Tolbert Fanning married Charlotte Fall, Philip’s sister, on December 25, 1836, and they started a female seminary in Franklin, TN in 1837. Later they moved to Elm Crag about five miles east of Nashville and renamed it “Electic Institute for Young Ladies.”⁵⁷ Fanning planted a new church in Elm Crag and later founded Franklin College (1846).

Without their evangelists and with the size of the congregation hovering around six hundred (including over two hundred and fifty African slaves), the church appointed Dr. W. H. Wharton its Pastor, and he served part-time from 1842-1847. His congregational duties and medial practice created significant pressures. Eventually, the charismatic, young preacher Jesse B. Ferguson caught their eye during his 1842 and 1844 revivals.

In 1846 Ferguson became the only full-time resident minister among the Christian Churches in Tennessee.⁵⁸ Wildly popular, he attracted large crowds. To accommodate them, the congregation sold the Spring Street building and erected a new one on Cherry Street, which seated twelve hundred people. However, controversy soon erupted. Ferguson sparked it with an article entitled “Spirits in

⁵⁶ Alexander Campbell, “Sketch of a Tour of 75 Days,” *Millennial Harbinger* 6.6 (June 1835) 280.

⁵⁷ Alexander Campbell, “Female Seminaries,” *Millennial Harbinger* 2nd series 4.8 (August 1840) 384.

⁵⁸ Bell, 87.

Prison” (1 Peter 3:19) where he argued for a “second chance” after death.⁵⁹

Ultimately, Ferguson embraced Spiritualism, Universalism, and Unitarianism.

In November 1853 twenty-five members signed a formal protest. They objected to Ferguson’s theology, the lack of growth in membership (despite larger attendance), and his worldly leadership. Wharton resigned as associate Pastor, and fifty withdrew and began meeting at the old Spring Street building. After years of controversy, Ferguson resigned in June 1856. The ownership of the Cherry Street building was then contested. After the anti-Ferguson faction took possession of the Cherry Street building, it burned (“the general and confidential opinion [is] that it was set on fire”).⁶⁰ Consequently, the Nashville Christian Church returned to where it started—it rented and then purchased the Spring Street building. But now it was only fifty-six members (including fourteen African slaves).

Some believed the church should return to its pre-Ferguson days and encourage elders to nourish the flock. Tolbert Fanning, who worshipped with the Franklin College congregation on his farm, offered this warning: “Should the members determine to hire another pastor to come to Nashville to take charge of the worship of God for them, no better results can be anticipated than those already experienced.”⁶¹

Yet, the church decided their best opportunity for revival was the return of Philip Slater Fall. “While we know it to be wrong to trust to an arm of flesh,” they wrote Fall, “we believe that, as far as human means go, you are the one person who

⁵⁹ Jesse B. Ferguson, “Spirits in Prison,” *Christian Magazine* 5 (April 1852) 115.

⁶⁰ *Nashville Republican Banner*, April 9, 1857, 3.

⁶¹ Fanning, “Church in Nashville,” 74.

can save the church.”⁶² Fall returned as Pastor of the Nashville Christian Church in January 1858, and the congregation was encouraged by a visit from Alexander Campbell that year.⁶³

In the summer of 1861 Fall reported the church’s progress to the *Christian Pioneer*. “I am happy to say that the cause of Christ is in a measure restored to its former status in the city.” With the immersion of sixty persons in the recent past membership now totals “as many as in the best days of the congregation,” two hundred and sixty-five “white members.” The “colored members were organized into a separate church [1858]; and there are possibly more than two hundred of them together now; but some twenty prefer to remain with us.” Consequently, the Christian Church in Nashville was nearly as large as when Ferguson arrived in 1847. “The greater number of the old members have returned to their places,” Fall said, “and now value their privileges more highly than ever. Peace and love abound amongst us...The unpleasant past is forgotten; and the author of the evil is rarely ever mentioned.”⁶⁴

The Civil War

Darkness soon descended upon all the churches of Nashville with the outbreak of the war and Tennessee’s July 1861 succession from the Union. The two leading Protestant Pastors of the city, R. B. C. Howell and P. S. Fall, were avid

⁶² “Philip Fall Sr.,” <http://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Fall-145> (accessed January 12, 2015).

⁶³ Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* (Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1870), 2:638.

⁶⁴ Philip S. Fall, “Letter from Elder Philip Fall,” *Millennial Harbinger* 5th series, 4.9 (September 1861) 530. See also Fall Papers, ““Discourse on the Reconstruction of the Congregation, No. 1,” 1-5.

supporters of the Confederate cause. Both encouraged their members to join the Army of Tennessee.⁶⁵ In fact, Fall's son, Albert, enlisted and was killed at Fort Donelson on February 14, 1862.

When Union forces occupied Nashville, church buildings were converted to hospitals, public schools were closed, and ministers were required to swear loyalty to the Union. Every minister in Nashville, who refused the oath, including Howell,⁶⁶ served time in the penitentiary except for Fall. He escaped by appealing to his British citizenship: "If the oath I have taken (in order to become a voter) is not sufficient, I prefer to remain a British subject."⁶⁷

Fall served the city throughout the occupation. When public schools closed in occupied Nashville, Fall began one in his home, which continued until 1871. He ministered to the sick, helped needy prisoners, and comforted the dying, significant because other ministers were languishing in prison.⁶⁸ After the battle of Stone's River (December 1862), Brigadier General Smiley restored Fall's building to the Pastor, and said: "I believe that Mr. Fall's teaching in that church will do more than all the bayonets to subdue, regulate and control this community."⁶⁹ Despite his rather benevolent treatment, Fall refused to support the Union war effort and, in particular, refused Andrew Johnson's order to offer a thanksgiving prayer for the death of the Confederate General John Morgan. He retorted: "I will 'render unto

⁶⁵ Joe Early, Jr., "Tennessee Baptists and the Civil War," *Tennessee Baptist History* 8 (Fall 2006) 12; Taylor, p. 56.

⁶⁶ Early, 12.

⁶⁷ Taylor, 56.

⁶⁸ Taylor, 56-57.

⁶⁹ Burnley, 68.

Caesar the things which are Caesar's,' but no man shall dictate to me what I say in my pulpit."⁷⁰

Christian Church in Nashville After the Civil War

The postwar years were difficult in Nashville as the destitute, widows, and orphans were numerous in Middle Tennessee and the South. Fall joined David Lipscomb and Tolbert Fanning in raising funds for the poor throughout the Christian Church "brotherhood."⁷¹ Fall encouraged this national request for benevolence in the newly revived *Gospel Advocate* (1866), asserting, "Nothing we possess is our own."⁷² Ultimately, they raised \$100,000 for the southern poor.

The relationship between David Lipscomb and Tolbert Fanning with P. S. Fall was cordial and brotherly. For a time, Fall was an associate editor of the *Gospel Advocate* with Lipscomb and Fanning.⁷³ Lipscomb enjoyed Fall's preaching, and he sometimes published his sermons in the *Gospel Advocate*.⁷⁴ But differences between them existed, and they were pronounced at points. Three points are particularly important.

1. *Pastor System*. Fanning and Lipscomb advocated a "mutual edification" approach to Christian assemblies and believed the church was most effectively nurtured by a plurality of leaders. Fall, however, thought this was dangerous. In a letter to his sister, Charlotte Fanning, he warned she

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ W. K. Pinkerton, "A Big Proposition," *Millennial Harbinger* 37.12 (December 1866) 561. Cf. P. S. Fall, "Letter from a Committee Composed of Fall, V. M. Metcalfe, and David Lipscomb, Nashville, Tenn., Dec. 16, 1866, Concerning Relief for the South," *The Evangelist* 7 (5 January 1867) 8.

⁷² P. S. Fall, "The Responsibility of the Disciples of Christ as Stewards of God," *Gospel Advocate* 6 (23 October 1866) 673-688, quote from p. 679.

⁷³ P. S. Fall, "To the Readers of the Advocate," *Gospel Advocate* (3 January 1867) 2.

⁷⁴ For example, P. S. Fall, "What Must I Do to be Saved? Acts xvi.30," *Gospel Advocate* 18.21 (25 May 1874) 483-504.

would “never be edified by the crudities of those who do not know how even to read the scriptures & much less, to interpret them...And the notion...that everyone is ‘able to teach’ ...is too absurd for anyone of sense to hold.”⁷⁵ Fall thought an educated Pastor should lead the church.

2. *The War Question*. Both David Lipscomb and Tolbert Fanning opposed participation in the Civil War. They were long-time advocates for peace and peacemaking, and they opposed any kind of violence.⁷⁶ Fall supported the Confederate cause in the war.
3. *Scripture and the Holy Spirit*. During the 1850s controversy erupted between Tolbert Fanning and Robert Richardson (Campbell’s son-in-law). Fanning located the work of the Spirit in the written word of God while Richardson affirmed a sacramental work of the Spirit within the believer.⁷⁷ Fanning feared a renewal of Ferguson’s spiritualism. Fall sided with Richardson.⁷⁸ In a letter to Fall, dated July 30, 1857, Richardson wrote: “It gives me great satisfaction to know that this view I have given of faith is acceptable to one of such excellent judgment as yourself.”⁷⁹

Despite these differences, they shared a common vision of the practice the Christian Faith as a New Testament church, including the exclusion of instrumental music from the worship of the body.⁸⁰ Following the “pattern” of the New Testament, it is “perfectly practicable to reconstruct an apostolic congregation.”⁸¹ This ecclesial unity was sufficient for the time, though a day would come when the theological trajectories of Fanning and Fall would result in two distinct bodies: the Churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ.

⁷⁵ Philip S. Fall, “Letter to Charlotte Fall Fanning” (November 21, 1885), Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Fall Papers, II/16.

⁷⁶ Fanning published thirteen articles in the *Gospel Advocate* throughout 1861 as he attempted to dissuade his readers from participating in the war effort.

⁷⁷ This controversy is explained in C. Leonard Allen and Danny Gray Swick, *Participating in God’s Life: Two Crossroads for Churches of Christ* (Orange, CA: New Leaf Books, 2001).

⁷⁸ Norton, 84.

⁷⁹ Cox, 162.

⁸⁰ David Lipscomb, “An Explanation,” *Gospel Advocate* 53.16 (20 April 1911) 465. Fall’s congregation did not introduce the instrument until 1891 (Bell, 85).

⁸¹ P. S. Fall, “How Old is your Church?,” *Gospel Advocate* (3 January 1867) 3.

Throughout his ministry in Nashville Fall was fully engaged with the city, particularly in education and city development. At various times, he was President of the Agricultural Society,⁸² President of the Chamber of Commerce,⁸³ President of the State Association of Teachers,⁸⁴ a member of the Public Education Board (sometimes President),⁸⁵ and an “examiner” for several schools (e.g., Columbia).⁸⁶

Conclusion

Fall returned to Frankfort in 1877. His Frankfort friends supplied him with a modest home as a token of their loving appreciation.⁸⁷ Retiring from the pastorate, he continued to preach. He regularly spoke, for example, for the Presbyterian Church in Frankfort as well as the First Christian Church.⁸⁸ In 1887, Fall returned to Nashville to preach the last sermon in the original Spring Street building before the congregation moved to Vine Street.⁸⁹ On his 92nd birthday “his faculties were unimpaired,” and he “preached a powerful sermon in his old church [Frankfort], from the text, ‘And the books were opened.’ A most impressive occasion to all.”⁹⁰ He died a few days later on December 3, 1890. His obituary remembered, “No man was

⁸² *The Pulaski Citizen*, December 20, 1867, 2

⁸³ *Nashville Union and Dispatch*, February 9, 1868, 3

⁸⁴ *Daily Union and American*, November 16, 1866, 3.

⁸⁵ *Nashville Union and Dispatch*, May 14, 1868, 3.

⁸⁶ *The Columbia Herald*, August 22, 1873, 2.

⁸⁷ Taylor, 57.

⁸⁸ Burnley, 68.

⁸⁹ Wayne H. Bell, “A History of Vine Street Christian Church,” in *Seven Early Churches in Nashville* (Waynesboro, TN: Elder’s Bookstore Publisher, 1972), 85.

⁹⁰ Burnley, 68.

ever more beloved by his Church, his friends, and the community generally than was Mr. Fall.”⁹¹

The legacy of Philip Slater Fall is an important one.

- As Reformer, he was one of the earliest and most ardent supporters of the Reformation inaugurated by Alexander Campbell.
- As Educator, he provided education for young people wherever he lived and advocated for public education even as he supported private institutions among the Christian Church.
- As Pastor, whether reforming congregations, planting others, or reviving the one in Nashville, he was regarded as an eminent preacher and passionate presence by his peers.

⁹¹ *Frankfort Roundabout*, December 6, 1890, 4.