History of Institutional Controversy
 Act 14:23

Introduction:

A. Originally all churches of Christ we autonomous units.
   1. Elders in each church. (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; Titus 1:5).
   2. Churches spoken of as independent units.

B. Periodically efforts made to activate the universal church.
   1. Sometimes bringing entire program of churches under a central organization.
   2. Sometimes bringing certain aspects of churches under central organization.
      a. Either under a separate organization
      b. Or under a central congregation.

C. Our purpose in the lesson to show the historical developments leading to centralization in three different periods to help us understand the present situation.

Discussion:

I. Developments near end of first century and following.
   A. Great apostasy prophesied. (2 Thess. 2:3,7)
   B. Developed with the trend toward centralization.¹
   C. Developed into the papacy, but not without controversy²

II. Developments during the "Restoration Movement"
   A. Early efforts at organization.³
   B. American Christian Missionary Society.

III. Developments during this century.
   A. Efforts to get schools in budget.⁴
   B. Controversy heats up after World War II.
      1. Preaching and Practice.⁵ ⁶
      2. Orphanages and Sponsoring churches.
      3. Debates
      5. Lines being drawn⁷

Conclusion:

A. Satan never takes a vacation. Cause History to repeat.

² Church History for busy people, Klingman p.14
³ The Search For The Ancient Order, West, p.151ff
⁴ Bible Banner, Foy E. Wallace, 1938
⁵ Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary, 1946, p. 338.
⁷ Preaching In a Changing World, Irvin Lee, P. 56-57.