

# History of Institutional Controversy

Act 14:23

## Introduction:

- A. Originally all churches of Christ were 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.<sup>1</sup>
  - C. Developed into the papacy, but not without controversy<sup>2</sup>
- II. Developments during the "Restoration Movement"**
  - A. Early efforts at organization.<sup>3</sup>
  - B. American Christian Missionary Society.
  - C. United Christian Missionary Society.
- III. Developments during this century.**
  - A. Efforts to get schools in budget.<sup>4</sup>
  - B. Controversy heats up after World War II.
    - 1. Preaching and Practice.<sup>5 6</sup>
    - 2. Orphanages and Sponsoring churches.
    - 3. Debates
    - 4. Social Gospel fruits.
    - 5. Lines being drawn<sup>7</sup>
    - 6. Gap gets wider.

## Conclusion:

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

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<sup>1</sup> Civilization Past and Present, Third Edition, p. 230

<sup>2</sup> Church History for busy people. Klingman p.14

<sup>3</sup> The Search For The Ancient Order. West, p.151ff

<sup>4</sup> Bible Banner, Foy E. Wallace, 1938

<sup>5</sup> Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary, 1946, p. 338.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 1958, pp. 218, 219.

<sup>7</sup> Preaching In a Changing World, Irvin Lee, P. 56-57.