

Presbyterian History and Tradition

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Remember that ECO has strived to be Reformed and Evangelical.

Sometime those are natural partners. At other points they are hard to stay together.

Part of this tension is a deep part of our ECO heritage.

Let me start further back

Pietism and Puritanism

The early years of the Reformation had a powerful dynamic of faith

Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and Knox led a movement of grand proportions.

By the late 1500s and early 1600s the Reformed faith had become more scholastic and a bit arid.

This was 3rd generation in many places.

Two renewal movements tried to inject

Pietism came out of the Lutheran Reformed world.

Puritanism was focused on the English reformation.

Both tried to bring head and heart together.

Both emphasized the experience of the Christian life over simply doctrinal issues.

Both movements brought together important passions to stimulate deeper faith.

Both movements also brought tensions within the faith.

Presbyterian got to America in the 1640s – landing first on Long Island.

For the early years there was no structure to support the local churches of immigrants from Scotland, England and Ireland.

No Presbytery until 1708. No General Assembly until 1789.

But there were dynamic Presbyterian congregations holding to the reformed faith.

In the 1730s the First Great Awakening broke out – another renewal movement.

For Presbyterians the Great Awakening was a coming together of a Reformed and Evangelical/Revivalistic convergence.

The tension was so high among Presbyterians that they divided into Old Light and New Light Synods – one more strictly Reformed, and the other infused with revivalist passion.

They were apart from 1741-1758.

A similar dynamic happened in the 19th century – a movement known as the Second Great Awakening. Eventually the Presbyterians split from 1837-1869 with similar tensions. In the midst of that split came another split over slavery. That split persisted until 1983.

To understand ECO today you have to appreciate these tensions.