Faith Under Strain

Religious opposition to slavery and the divisions it caused

SS24.US1.10b "Describe the rise of religious opposition to slavery during the Second Great Awakening, including the objections of Quakers, and how this fostered schisms within American churches."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two reasons Christians gave for opposing slavery, circle the Quaker belief that shaped their objection, and number the two church divisions 1 and 2. Use your marks to trace how beliefs led to conflict.

When Churches Divided

1 During the Second Great Awakening, revival meetings drew large crowds in the early 1800s. Preachers urged people to change their lives, not simply attend church. Some Christians applied that call to slavery: if every person had a soul, how could one person own another? Antislavery speakers described bondage as a sin that broke families and denied people control over their lives. They organized petitions, lectures, and abolition societies. Yet revival religion did not produce one answer. Other Christians defended slavery, sometimes using biblical passages to argue that churches should not condemn slaveholders.

2 Quakers, also called Friends, had challenged slavery long before these revivals. Many taught that God's light was present in every person, making the buying and selling of human beings morally wrong. By the late 1700s, many Quaker meetings had acted against members who continued to own enslaved people. During the awakening era, some Friends worked with newer antislavery activists, showing that opposition did not begin with revival preachers. Other church members, however, viewed slavery as a legal property right or a matter outside a church's authority. These opposing beliefs made shared worship and leadership harder to maintain.

3 Disputes over slavery became fights about who could represent a church. In 1844, the Methodist Episcopal Church's General Conference debated Bishop James O. Andrew, who held enslaved people. Delegates voted to ask him to stop serving as a bishop while he remained a slaveholder. Southern Methodists rejected the decision and organized the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1845. Baptists faced a related conflict when northern mission leaders would not appoint slaveholders as missionaries. Southern Baptists formed their own convention in 1845. Neither split meant every member on either side held the same views, but slavery had broken national church cooperation.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the call to change one's life during the Second Great Awakening lead some Christians to oppose slavery?

2. How did Quakers' belief about God's light shape their objection to slavery, and when did their opposition begin?

3. Why did the dispute over Bishop Andrew lead Southern Methodists to form a separate church?

4. How did a disagreement about missionaries break national cooperation among Baptists?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70 to 90 word letter to a church member in 1845 who claims, “All Christians agreed about slavery.” Correct the claim using the Quaker objection, an argument linked to the Second Great Awakening, and the cause of one named church split. Explain why the disagreement affected church leadership or cooperation.

ANSWER KEY

Faith Under Strain

GRADE 10 · SS24.US1.10b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two reasons Christians gave for opposing slavery, circle the Quaker belief that shaped their objection, and number the two church divisions 1 and 2. Use your marks to trace how beliefs led to conflict. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the call to change one's life during the Second Great Awakening lead some Christians to oppose slavery?	**Some Christians applied the call for moral change to slavery, arguing that owning people was a sin because each person had a soul.**
2	How did Quakers' belief about God's light shape their objection to slavery, and when did their opposition begin?	**Many Quakers believed God's light was present in every person, so buying and selling people was wrong. Their opposition began before the Second Great Awakening.**
3	Why did the dispute over Bishop Andrew lead Southern Methodists to form a separate church?	**The General Conference asked Andrew to stop serving as a bishop while he held enslaved people. Southern Methodists rejected that decision and formed a separate church.**
4	How did a disagreement about missionaries break national cooperation among Baptists?	**Northern mission leaders would not appoint slaveholders as missionaries, so Southern Baptists formed their own convention.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear Church Member, Christians have not agreed about slavery. Quakers opposed it long before the recent revivals because they believed God's light was present in every person. During the Second Great Awakening, some Christians argued that a person seeking to live morally could not own another human being. Others defended slavery. This conflict reached church leadership when Methodist delegates asked Bishop Andrew to stop serving while he held enslaved people. Southern Methodists rejected that decision and formed a separate church. Faith did not erase their disagreement.

Accept accurate paraphrases that connect religious beliefs to opposition and disputes over church authority or cooperation. The letter should distinguish the Quakers' earlier opposition from arguments made during the Second Great Awakening.