WHY IS THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND ARGUING ABOUT ITS LINKS TO SLAVERY?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The Church of England is facing growing opposition to a plan to create a fund worth £100 million to address its historical links to the transatlantic slave trade. Research found that an older church investment fund, created in 1704, invested money in the South Sea Company. That company helped transport about 34,000 enslaved Africans across the Atlantic. The church also received donations from people connected to the slave trade, including Edward Colston, whose statue was thrown into Bristol harbour during a protest in 2020. Church leaders say the new fund should support communities affected by slavery and help repair some of the damage caused by the church's past actions. Critics argue that the plan is legally uncertain and that the money should be spent in other ways. The disagreement shows how evidence about the past can lead to arguments about responsibility in the present.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

The story connects the history of the British Empire and transatlantic slavery with a modern debate about responsibility. It shows that historical research can affect powerful organisations today. It also raises a difficult question: if an institution benefited from injustice in the past, what should it do now?

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

"What should an organisation do when its past includes profiting from slavery?"

Source: The Guardian

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/oct/13/church-of-england-slavery-compensation-fund