

## Sir Jonathan Trelawny, Bishop of Bristol 1685–9

By JOSEPH BETTEY

*'Trelawny he's in keep and hold  
Trelawny he may die  
But here's twenty thousand Cornish men  
Will know the reason why'*

The 19th-century poem entitled *The Song of the Western Men* by the Revd Robert Hawker, the eccentric vicar of Morwenstow, has become the Cornish national anthem.<sup>1</sup> The hero of the ballad, Sir Jonathan Trelawny, was bishop of Bristol when he was imprisoned in the Tower of London for defying the orders of James II. Trelawny was an unlikely choice as a bishop. He came from a long line of Cornish landowners and inherited many of their characteristics. A recent biographer conceded that he was not distinguished for piety or academic achievement, and that he 'enjoyed good wine, good tobacco and boisterous company'.<sup>2</sup> He was born at Trelawne in the parish of Pelynt, a short distance inland from the Cornish fishing ports of Looe and Polperro. His family had been prominent in the service of the Crown in Cornwall since at least the early 15th century and loyalty to the Crown and attachment to the Protestant faith of the Church of England were the guiding principles in which Jonathan Trelawny was raised and to which he adhered. At the time of his birth in 1650 the family was gravely impoverished by their support for the royal cause during the Civil War. His grandfather, Sir John Trelawny, had at his own expense recruited a regiment of Cornish infantry to fight for the king. Their conspicuous bravery was shown at numerous engagements including Stratton, Lansdown, Roundway Down and Bristol. The contribution to the royal cause by Cornish loyalists was acknowledged by Charles I in the letter of thanks which he addressed 'To the Inhabitants of Cornwall' in recognition of 'their zeal for the defence of our person and the just rights of our crown' written from 'Our Camp at Sudeley Castle 10 September 1643'. The king's letter continues to be displayed in Cornish churches. The costs of supporting the Crown and the fines levied by the Commonwealth meant that the Trelawnys, like many other Cornish gentry families, were left in serious financial difficulties.<sup>3</sup>

Sir John Trelawny's son, Jonathan Trelawny (father of the future bishop), also fought on the King's side in the conflict. He was imprisoned and heavily fined under the Commonwealth. With a family of six sons to support, he was obliged to mortgage his estate and the family remained impoverished throughout the reign of Charles II. The eldest of the six sons was John Trelawny, whilst Jonathan, the future bishop who was born in 1650, was the second son. John Trelawny was expected to inherit the estate at Trelawne, together with the baronetcy, and the four younger

1. In his *History of England* (1914 edn.), II, 1018, Lord Macaulay records that the Revd R.S. Hawker had told him that the refrain of this poem was sung in Cornwall at the time of Trelawny's imprisonment. There is no evidence for this statement.
2. M.G. Smith, *Fighting Joshua: Sir Jonathan Trelawny* (1955), 17. See also article by A.M. Coleby in *Oxford Dict. of Nat. Biog.*
3. M. Coate, *Cornwall in the Great Civil War* (1933).

brothers made careers in the army or navy, but the second son, Jonathan, was destined for the Church. Accordingly, he was sent to Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford. He was ordained in 1676 and became the incumbent of St Ives and South Hill between Liskeard and Callington, but continued to live at Trelawne. His elder brother, John, died in 1680 and his father died in 1681, so that Jonathan unexpectedly inherited the estate and the baronetcy. The heavy burden of debt he acquired with his inheritance led him to spend much energy in an unsuccessful search for preferment within the Church. At the same time, as a leading local landowner, he devoted himself to secular administration in Cornwall, becoming a justice of the peace, taking over his father's command of the county militia, and from 1682 carrying out the important duties of vice-admiral along the south Cornish coast. It was to be the efficiency with which he carried out these services to the Crown and the prestige which they brought him, rather than personal piety or status within the Church, that was to lead to his appointment as a bishop.<sup>4</sup>

When the Catholic James II succeeded to the throne following the death of his brother Charles II, he immediately faced a challenge from the Duke of Monmouth who had landed at Lyme Regis with a small force on 11 June 1685. As a Protestant and an illegitimate son of Charles II, Monmouth was welcomed by the farmers and craftsmen of south Devon, Dorset and Somerset as the saviour of the Church of England from the popery likely to be imposed by the new monarch. For James II there was a real danger that the Cornish would join in the growing rebellion against him. It was largely due to the influence of Sir Jonathan Trelawny in the powerful position of vice-admiral in Cornwall that the fighting power of the Cornish militia was efficiently mobilized in support of James II and did not join the Duke of Monmouth's supporters. Trelawny's military prowess at this time and his apparent unsuitability for the priesthood led some sections of the press to ridicule him as 'Fighting Joshua'. In that biblically literate age this would at once have been understood as a reference to the leader of the Israelites who combined the functions of both a spiritual and military leader. As in the Civil War it was the fierce loyalty of the Trelawnys and many other of the gentry families of Cornwall that ensured their support for the Crown, in spite of their misgivings about the religious views and intentions of James II. In the event the rebellion was decisively defeated at Sedgemoor on the night of 5–6 July 1685, but the king did not forget the contribution to his eventual victory made by Jonathan Trelawny.

Although Trelawny had been desperate to secure advancement in the Church in order to reduce the financial burden of debt which he had inherited at Trelawne on the death of his father only four years previously, the news that the king had decided to appoint him to the bishopric of Bristol filled him with alarm. Bristol was the least well-endowed of all bishoprics, and the inevitable expenses of consecration and settlement would increase rather than diminish his financial liabilities. In a string of letters to the Privy Council and to Archbishop William Sancroft, Trelawny pleaded for some other more profitable bishopric, but to no avail. He wrote to Lawrence Hyde, Earl of Rochester, who was the king's brother-in-law, on 10 July 1685 pleading for a more lucrative see. The letter shows the way in which Trelawny, like so many contemporaries, adopted an excessively obsequious style in his formal letters to those from whom he hoped for favours. It is a style which has done much to advance the idea that he was desperate to curry favour with influential persons.

'My Lord

Give me leave to throw myself at your Lordship's feet, humbly imploring your patronage.....I hear his majesty designed me for Bristol, which I should not decline, was I not already under such pressure by my father's debts, as must necessarily break my estate

4. Smith, *Fighting Joshua*, 11–12.

in pieces, if I find no better prop than the income of Bristol, not greater than £300 per annum, and the expense in first fruits, consecration and settlement will require £2000.....

I shall not deny Bristol, though my own ruin goes with it, if it be the King's pleasure or any way for his Majesty's service that I should accept of it, but I hope the King will have more compassion on his slave, and that your Lordship will vouchsafe a better lot to

My Lord, Your most humble and devoted servant,  
J. Trelawny.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of his protests, he was consecrated bishop of Bristol by Archbishop William Sancroft and six other bishops at Lambeth on 8 November 1685. As bishop of Bristol, Jonathan Trelawny has received a good deal of unjust criticism from historians who have portrayed him as an untrustworthy man, concerned only with his own advancement within the Church. His contemporary Gilbert Burnet, bishop of Salisbury, differed from Trelawny in personality, doctrine and churchmanship. In the *History of my Own Time* he did his best to present Trelawny in a bad light.<sup>6</sup> Bristol historians have also condemned him. In their influential book *Bristol Past & Present* published in 1882, the Bristol librarians G. Nicholls and John Taylor cast doubt on Trelawny's sincerity and concluded:

‘How far Trelawny was in earnest in his resistance to the *Declaration of Indulgence* is a question; that he was a disappointed man, a truckler and a time-server is, we fear, beyond dispute.’

They noted that he had received much popular support in Bristol for his stand against James II in 1688, but dismissed this with the lofty verdict ‘to us he is only another example of the inability of a frenzied populace to estimate moral character’.<sup>7</sup> Trelawny fared no better with John Latimer in his *Annals of Bristol in the Seventeenth Century* (1900). As a Unitarian, Latimer did not approve of the Stuarts and was out of sympathy with a fervent royalist such as Trelawny, describing him as ‘a man eager to win preferment by the ignoblest means’.<sup>8</sup>

It is true that Trelawny was keen to rise in the Church, but these opinions ignore the basic principles which guided his action and from which he never wavered. He was profoundly attached to Cornwall and to his estate at Trelawne, keen to free it from debt, and continued throughout his career to spend as much time as possible there. Like his forbears, he was fiercely loyal to the Crown, and he genuinely cherished the honour and interests of the Church of England as established at the Reformation. In spite of his reluctance to accept the position, he threw himself with energy and efficiency into the affairs of his bishopric. There is no doubt that as a sincere Christian he was a strong supporter of the Church of England as a stabilizing influence in the country. His churchmanship harked back to the traditional orthodoxy and respect for ceremony and seamliness of Archbishop William Laud. As a bishop he insisted on the appropriate and reverent celebration of the sacraments, and on suitable furnishings and ornaments of the altar as ordered by the Book of Common Prayer.

Although he remained at Bristol for only three years, Trelawny achieved a good deal. As a bishop he was expected to spend much time in London in order to attend the House of Lords, and

5. J. Bettey, *Records of Bristol Cathedral* (Bristol Rec. Soc. 59, 2007), 106.

6. G. Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (1823 edn.), V, 337.

7. G. Nicholls and J. Taylor, *Bristol Past and Present*, III (1882), 118.

8. J. Latimer, *Annals of Bristol in the Seventeenth Century* (1900), 428.

it was not until January 1686 that he arrived in Bristol. There he faced several major problems, but his friendly manner and emollient style provided an effective solution to many of them. He had acquired an administratively-impossible diocese, consisting of the parishes within and around Bristol coupled with those of the county of Dorset more than 40 miles distant. Moreover some 45 of the Dorset parishes were ‘peculiar’ of the dean or members of the chapter of Salisbury cathedral, and were largely outside the control of the diocesan bishop. Because of its poor endowment, few bishops stayed long at Bristol, so that there was a very weak tradition of episcopal supervision. Trelawny’s two immediate predecessors, William Gulston (1679–84) and John Lake (1684–5) had been quite ineffective, while Guy Carleton (1672–9) had enjoyed a colourful career as a soldier in the Royalist army during the Civil War, and proved to be abrasive and quick to engage in quarrels and controversy. He vigorously pursued the persecution of Catholics and of the numerous Protestant dissenters in Bristol, and had also managed to provoke a fierce quarrel with the city council. The mayor, aldermen and councillors had been accustomed to go in solemn procession in their scarlet gowns preceded by the mace-bearer to the cathedral to attend sermons, and special seats had been provided for them and their wives. Bishop Carleton found their pretensions intolerable. He objected to the elaborate gallery containing the councillors’ seats, and refused to allow services to start with a bidding prayer for the corporation. He also objected to the mayoral sword being displayed in the cathedral on a gilded unicorn on which the council had spent £21 9s. in 1678. Bishop Carleton’s description of the city councillors as ‘a parcel of coopers and heelmakers’ was hardly calculated to produce good relations with the corporation, and his vigorous enforcement of the various laws against dissenters made him unpopular among many Bristolians.<sup>9</sup> It is a tribute to Trelawny’s friendly manner and negotiating skills that he was immediately able to make peace with the councillors. One of his first actions in Bristol was to appear in person at a council meeting and agree on a compromise ‘for promoting and continuing a fair correspondence between the Magistracy and Clergy of the City and that the Magistracy may not be debarred from coming into the Quire solemnly to hear Divine Service’. It was agreed that seats should be provided for the councillors and that the ceremonial sword should be carried before the mayor and laid on a cushion in front of him during the services. ‘Mr Mayor and the Common Councill then undertook to attend on Sunday next accordingly to begin the new method’.<sup>10</sup>

In his dealings with the cathedral Trelawny was fortunate that the dean, Richard Thomson, who had been at loggerheads with the previous bishop, died early in 1686. With the new dean, William Levett, Trelawny was able to establish good and amicable relations. Levett was to write to Archbishop William Sancroft in January 1687 praising the work of Trelawny and in appreciation of the help and support he had received from the bishop.<sup>11</sup> A primary visitation of the cathedral was conducted by the bishop, and although this produced no startling revelations, the names and duties of all the cathedral clergy and staff were carefully recorded.<sup>12</sup> This was followed by visitations of the Bristol parish churches. The surviving churchwardens’ accounts for several parishes provide evidence of Trelawny’s ability to create relaxed and convivial relations with clergy and parishioners. At the church of St John the Baptist the churchwardens recorded:

‘February 1686

Paid to the Ringers when my Lord Bishop visited the church

3s. 0d.

9. For details of Guy Carleton’s episcopate and the quarrels he provoked, see Bettey, *Rec. of Bristol Cath.*, 86–93. For Carleton’s career and personality see *Oxford Dict. of Nat. Biog.*

10. Bristol Record Office (BRO), M/BCC/CCP/1/7 Council Minutes 1670–87, p. 257.

11. Smith, *Fighting Joshua*, 27–30, quoting from Bodleian Library, Tanner MSS CXXIX, CXXX Letters to Archbishop Sancroft 1685–7.

12. BRO, EP/J/1/34 Episcopal Visitation of the Dean and Chapter of Bristol Cath. 1685–6.

Paid for a Collation when my Lord Bishop visited the church	£1 0s. 0d.
Paid for wine at that time	13s. 0d.
Spent with the Vestry at the Bell Tavern when my Lord Bishop visited the church	15s. 0d. <sup>13</sup>

At St Mary Redcliffe, St Werburgh's and other city churches there was similar expenditure at the bishop's visitation in April 1686.<sup>14</sup>

The cultivation of friendly relations with the diocesan clergy did not prevent Trelawny from being greatly distressed at the neglect of duty and the inadequate performance of services and pastoral functions which he found in his diocese. He addressed these failings clearly and directly in his visitation charge to the clergy. He refused to tolerate non-residence, unlicensed preachers and inappropriate behaviour. He ordered that divine service should be read in all churches every Sunday and holy day and that there should be regular preaching and catechizing of the young in the principles of the Christian religion. The liturgy was to be performed solemnly and with dignity. Decent ornaments and books were to be provided. The communion table was to be placed north and south at the east end of the chancel, and not elsewhere as had been the custom under the Commonwealth and which had survived in some Bristol parishes. It was to be protected by rails, with a door in the middle to provide access. He had discovered that in many parishes the church silver communion plate was lent out to be used at weddings and funerals, and 'being heartily troubled at such irregular and irreverent practice' he ordered that such uses were to cease forthwith. He insisted that marriage services at irregular times or without the publication of banns should cease, and that marriage licences should be granted sparingly 'and but to persons of Quality'. He had found to his dismay that people had been coming from neighbouring dioceses in order to obtain such licences. Marriage licences were only to be accepted and acted upon by the clergy if signed by the bishop himself. The bishop was well-justified in addressing what had become a scandal in the diocese. Large numbers of marriage bonds granted under successive bishops from 1660 show a remarkable proportion of marriages in which neither party belonged to the parish in which the marriage took place. Many couples came from outside the diocese. The bonds allowed marriages to be conducted without the proclamation of banns. The majority of bonds are dated on the day of the wedding or in some instances a day or two later. Before Trelawny's arrival neither clergy nor diocesan officials seem to have been concerned about such irregularities.<sup>15</sup>

No minister should be admitted to preach unless properly licensed. He ended his visitation charge with the words: 'I nothing doubt of your ready Obedience therein, and soe commend you to God's grace, Your loving Friend and Diocesan'. This was followed by letters to the clergy insisting on higher standards. They were told by the bishop:

'It is found by dayly Experience that all Errors and Heresies hath  
their birth and growth from the ignorance of the principles of the  
Christian Religion.'

They were ordered to preach regularly and simply and to ensure that the young were instructed in the Catechism. Sermons should explain the Baptismal Vows, the Articles of the Creed, the petitions of the Lord's Prayer

13. *Ibid.* P/StJB/ChW36 Churchwardens' accounts of St John the Baptist 1635–1710.

14. *Ibid.* P/St MR/ChW 1e Churchwardens' accounts of St Mary Redcliffe 1660–90.

15. D. Hollis and E. Ralph (eds.), *Marriage Bonds for the Diocese of Bristol 1637–1700* (BGAS Rec. Section 1, 1952).

'by this Means turning Catechising into preaching and preaching  
Into Catechising as was used by the Fathers in the purest of tymes  
And required by his Majesty's instructions'.

The bishop's orders were to be publicly read at Sunday services in all churches of the diocese.<sup>16</sup> The visitation of Bristol parishes and charge to the clergy was followed by a visitation of Dorset and a similar address given to the clergy gathered at Cerne Abbas, a conveniently central location in the county. Few previous bishops had carried out such careful visitations or produced such detailed instructions to the clergy.

Having been appointed as a bishop by James II, Trelawny was anxious to respect the king's wishes concerning the treatment of Catholic recusants and Protestant dissenters, whatever his own personal views might be. Throughout his visitations of the diocese Trelawny had emphasized the importance of obeying the king's wishes in not preaching against Catholic recusants. In a sermon he preached before the clergy in Bristol he urged them to maintain loyal behaviour to the government and to outdo Catholics in leading a good life rather than by attacking the pope and the Catholic Church from the pulpit. His attitude was summed up in a letter to the Secretary of State, Charles Spencer, Earl of Sunderland written from Trelawne on 25 June 1686. In this Trelawny emphasized that while in Bristol he had been careful to urge all persons 'strictly to observe his Majesty's commands'. He added that:

'It hath been the blood and pride of our family to be at all times true  
to the King. I would be sorry if I was the only man of the family  
that ever fell under the displeasure of his prince'.<sup>17</sup>

Trelawny's concern to respect the king's Catholicism and his desire that there should be no persecution of the king's co-religionists meant that he was suspected in Bristol of being a secret Catholic sympathizer and was attempting to impose the pope's rule on his diocese. This brought him great unpopularity in a city where most people were fervently anti-Catholic and suspected the pope of being at the bottom of all sorts of ills affecting the country. This anti-Catholic feeling had been greatly increased by the events in France where in 1685 Louis XIV had revoked the *Edict of Nantes* which had provided limited toleration for Protestants. The persecution which had followed produced a stream of French refugees coming to Bristol and the West Country. This is evident from the references to collections made for the French Protestants which occur in the churchwardens' accounts. For example, at St Augustine the Less during the early months of 1686 no less than £20 1s. 6d. was donated for their relief by pious parishioners.<sup>18</sup> Trelawny was evidently much concerned about the plight of French Protestant refugees or Huguenots. It was because of his persuasion that the Bristol corporation agreed to lend them the Chapel of St Mark, which had been used as the Lord Mayor's chapel for their services. This generous arrangement was to last until 1721 when the Huguenots acquired their own chapel.<sup>19</sup>

The suspicion of Trelawny's motives was intensified by his refusal to proceed against a Catholic priest who had been arrested and accused of celebrating mass at a house in Hotwells. It seems likely that Trelawny was correct in suspecting that the business of the alleged Catholic priest at Hotwells was invented by Sir John Knight. He was one of the MPs for Bristol, a determined persecutor of Catholics and dissenters, and suspicious of Trelawny. Knight had written to the

16. BRO, EP/A/37 Bishop Trelawny's Orders to the Clergy, 13 June 1686.

17. *Cal. of State Papers, Domestic* 1686-7, 723-4.

18. BRO, P/St Aug/ChW 1a.

19. C.E. Lart (ed.), *Registers of French Churches in Bristol* (1922); A. Sabin (ed.), *Registers of St Augustine the Less, Bristol* (1956), xix.

Earl of Sunderland, Lord President of the Privy Council, accusing Trelawny of being a crypto-Catholic.<sup>20</sup> In a long reply to the earl, written from Trelawne, the bishop justified his action over the matter as follows:

‘Being well informed that before I went down [from London to Bristol early in 1686] the character of my being a Papist went before me, and from persons who were there believed, I was jealous of myself that something of that nature would be offered me at my first coming as a trial of me and accordingly it happened; for the next day after I came, which was Sunday, I had information brought me that at a particular house Mass was then saying, upon which I replied it being not my business I would talk with the Mayor, and so looking on this thing brought to try me, I told Mr Mayor that he ought to look into it, and bring me an account of it, which the Mayor afterwards upon inquiry finding to be false, I was the more convinced that this report was laid as a snare for me.’<sup>21</sup>

Likewise, during his visitation of Dorset he had dismissed a case brought against a dozen Catholic recusants who were brought before him at Cerne Abbas. He had also severely rebuked one of his clergy in Dorchester for ‘a very impudent sermon against popery’. The unfortunate man was only saved from suspension after his hearty repentance and the pleas of Sir Winston Churchill of Minterne Magna.<sup>22</sup>

Trelawny’s early unpopularity in Bristol was further exacerbated by an unfortunate coincidence. The political situation in the city was already explosive, owing to a new Charter which had been given to the city in 1684. This had greatly increased the King’s power to remove and replace city councillors, and this ability was being frequently exercised by James II to dismiss those opposed to his religious policy. Moreover, exaggerated reports by royal spies and informers gave the impression that Bristol was awash with nonconformists and created unease and suspicion throughout the city. Controversies between members of the ruling elite in Bristol over the treatment of religious dissent and over royal interference in membership of the city council had led to public disorder and riot. In consequence a contingent of the royal army was stationed in Bristol. By chance this was commanded by the bishop’s younger brother, Colonel Charles Trelawny.<sup>23</sup> The presence of this regiment was heartily detested by the citizens, and their concern was increased by the wild behaviour of the soldiers. In October 1685 the city council had protested against this military presence and had asked the Lord Lieutenant, the Duke of Beaufort, to inform the king ‘shewing the grievances and insolences of the soldiers to the Citizens’.<sup>24</sup> In March 1686 the city council complained that the presence and behaviour of the soldiers was leading ‘Ill-minded men’ to put ideas of ‘Arbitrary power and other Jealousies into the heads of the people’. Colonel Trelawny and his fellow officers were frequent guests at the bishop’s palace in the former Augustinian abbots’ lodging beside the cathedral. These visits no doubt enabled the bishop to enjoy ‘good wine, good tobacco and boisterous company’, but they created much ill-will towards him in Bristol.

Bishop Trelawny’s royalism and desire to obey the king’s wishes in religious matters was put to the test in April 1687 when the king issued his *Declaration of Indulgence*, suspending laws against

20. *Cal. of State Papers, Domestic 1686–7*, 673.

21. *Ibid.* 723.

22. *Ibid.* 553.

23. The Charter of 1684 is printed in R.C. Latham, *Bristol Charters 1509–1899* (Bristol Rec. Soc. 12, 1947), 178–210. This also gives details of the political controversies during 1684–9, see pp. 46–58.

24. BRO, M/BCC/CCP/1/7, f. 225v. City Council Minutes, 20 Oct. 1685.

both Protestant and Catholic nonconformists. Bishops and clergy were expected to sign an address of thanks to the king, effectively giving their support to the *Declaration*. For Trelawny, as for many others, this confronted them with the stark choice between their support for the rightful king and their attachment to the Protestant Church of England. He agonized over the choice he had to make and took more than three weeks to come to a decision. At last he decided not to sign and, when this became known, the clergy followed his lead. Only two of the clergy in the Bristol diocese signed, both from Dorset.<sup>25</sup>

It is possible that Trelawny's resolve to defy the king's wishes was strengthened by conference with two fellow bishops who were both gravely troubled by the royal policy. They were the highly respected Thomas Ken, bishop of Bath and Wells, and Francis Turner, bishop of Ely. Turner was foremost among the bishops in urging his colleagues to defy the king. Ken was on good terms with Trelawny. He had stayed in Bristol in March 1687 when he baptized Trelawny's first child.<sup>26</sup> Francis Turner may have visited Bristol at the same time. Evidence for his visit has previously rested on a reference by Nicholls and Taylor to an entry in the churchwardens' accounts of St Peter's which were destroyed in 1940. They mention a payment to the ringers 'when the Bishops of Ely and Wells came', but Nicholls and Taylor speculated that 'Ely' was a slip of the pen and should read 'Bath'. In fact two other accounts record the visit of the bishop of Ely. St Mary Redcliffe accounts for 1687 include expenditure of 5s. to the ringers 'when the Bishopp of Ely was att Church'. At the same time the Christchurch accounts record payments for welcoming both the bishop of Bath and Wells and the bishop of Ely.<sup>27</sup>

The refusal of bishop and clergy to signify their support for the first *Declaration* did not produce any immediate response from the king. A year later, in April 1688, came an even greater test. The King reissued the *Declaration of Indulgence* and ordered the bishops to ensure that it was read from the pulpit in every parish church in their dioceses on two successive Sundays in May and June. In May 1688 Archbishop William Sancroft, together with William Lloyd, bishop of St Asaph, Francis Turner, bishop of Ely, John Lake, bishop of Chichester, Thomas Ken, bishop of Bath and Wells, Thomas White, bishop of Peterborough, and Jonathan Trelawny, bishop of Bristol, all refused to submit to the royal order and presented a petition to the king. The bishops argued that although they were not against 'due Tenderness' to dissenters, such an important change should be considered and enacted by Parliament and Convocation. Without parliamentary sanction, the *Declaration* was illegal, and they refused to order it to be read in their churches. On 8 June all seven bishops were arrested and imprisoned in the Tower. This was followed by their trial for seditious libel in Westminster Hall, where finally on 30 June the jury found them not guilty. Their acquittal and release after three weeks imprisonment was greeted with great rejoicing. For Trelawny it meant that any unpopularity he may have suffered in Bristol was completely forgotten. Histories of Bristol record that bells were rung and bonfires were lit to celebrate the release. For example, St Peter's churchwardens' accounts record expenditure of 5s. 'To the ringers when the Bishop was discharged out of the Tower'.<sup>28</sup> It is odd that none of the other Bristol churchwardens' accounts mention payments for ringing on this occasion, but this may be because parishes did not feel obliged to pay the ringers so that the peals are not recorded.

25. Smith, *Fighting Joshua*, 43–5; *Cal. of State Papers, Domestic* 1687, 371.

26. Trelawny married Rebecca, the 14-year old daughter of Thomas Hele of Babcombe, Devon, in 1684. They were to have a family of 13 children. The baptism is recorded in the register of St Augustine the Less: Sabin, *Reg. of St Augustine the Less*, 192; Nicholls and Taylor, *Bristol Past and Present*, II, 238–9.

27. Nicholls and Taylor, *Bristol Past and Present*, II, 134. St Peter's records were destroyed by enemy action in 1940. BRO, P/St MR/ChW 1e; P/XchW/ChW1c.

28. *Ibid.*



The King had overplayed his hand in trying to force toleration for Catholics and dissenters on to a reluctant nation. Moreover, on 10 June 1688 the king's second wife, Mary of Modena, had given birth to a son who would have precedence over his two half-sisters, Mary and Anne, and would ensure a Catholic succession to the throne. Many people refused to believe that the queen really had given birth to a son. Some suspected that the child had surreptitiously been introduced into the queen's bed. Evidence of doubt in Bristol occurs in St Mary Redcliffe churchwardens' accounts for 10 June 1688, 'Paid for ringing when the Prince was supposed to be borne 6s. 0d.'<sup>29</sup> Nine months earlier, however, in August–September 1687, the king and queen had both visited Bristol. Peals of welcome are recorded in the churchwardens' accounts, and further peals were rung when the king went duck-hunting on the river Avon. A lavish banquet was provided by the city council, but afterwards the queen is said to have complained of indigestion. Could this have been an indication of the early stage of pregnancy?<sup>30</sup> Support for the monarchy rapidly evaporated after the birth of a Catholic heir, and several leading figures made contact with William of Orange, who was fighting for the Protestant cause in the Netherlands, and who was the husband of James's daughter, Mary. On 5 November 1688 William landed with a small army at Torbay. Remarkably, James II had not lost faith in Trelawny and remained confident of his fundamental loyalty to the Crown. At this fraught time, with a foreign army in the West Country, he summoned Trelawny to London and bestowed on him the bishopric of Exeter. This would put Trelawny in charge of the prestigious diocese covering the whole of Devon and Cornwall. He was also granted the income of the rectory of Shobrooke, Devon, and the sinecure position of Dean of the Royal Peculiar of Buryan, consisting of the parishes of St Buryan, Sennen and St Levan in the far west of Cornwall.<sup>31</sup>

On 5 December 1688 part of the army of William of Orange commanded by Charles Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, marched into Bristol. The city had been surrendered by Henry Somerset, Duke of Beaufort, the Lord Lieutenant, who claimed implausibly that Bristol was 'incapable of defense', although he had successfully defended it against Monmouth's forces in 1685.<sup>32</sup> The earl brought with him a letter to Bishop Trelawny from William of Orange soliciting his support. The bishop replied immediately in the same obsequious style which he habitually adopted for such correspondence. Thanking William for his letter and kind opinion, he wrote:

'My Lord Shrewsbury (with whose conduct we are all extremely pleased) will give you a full account of what has been done here, which if your Highness shall approve of it, will be a great satisfaction to me, that I have borne some part in the work which your Highness has undertaken with the hazard of your life, for the preservation of the Protestant religion, the laws and liberties of the Kingdom'.<sup>33</sup>

A cynic might suppose from this letter that Trelawny was deserting James II in order to further his own interest. In fact the situation was much more complex, and it is only with hindsight that the course of events leading to William of Orange accepting the throne can be understood. At the time it was far from inevitable, and Trelawny's letter of 5 November merely welcomed William's support for the Protestant religion. It was not until 23 December when James II finally fled to France that the possibility of William taking the throne became apparent. Even then Trelawny remained undecided, as detailed research on the speeches and votes of the bishops in the House of Lords has revealed. Not until 13 February 1689, when it became obvious that James II had left

29. BRO, P/StMR/ChW 1e.

30. *Hist. MSS Com. 12th Rep. appendix ix* (1891), 90; Latham, *Bristol Charters*, 55.

31. *Cal. of State Papers, Domestic 1687–9*, 1940 (16 Nov. 1688).

32. *Oxford Dict. of Nat. Biog.*, s.v. Somerset.

33. The full letter is printed in Bettey, *Rec. of Bristol Cath.*, 111.

the throne vacant, did Trelawny vote that William and Mary should jointly be proclaimed king and queen.<sup>34</sup>

Far from supporting William in order to ensure his translation from Bristol to Exeter, the necessary formalities had already been completed well before James II had fled the country. The constitutional crisis following the king's flight meant that Trelawny was not finally installed as bishop of Exeter until 13 April 1689. He remained at Exeter until 1707, when he was translated to the even more lucrative bishopric of Winchester. He stayed at Winchester as bishop until his death in 1721 at the age of 71. His body was taken back to Trelawne and he was buried at Pelynt. His periods as bishop of Exeter, and then of Winchester, were full of incident and controversies, not least because of Trelawny's readiness to enter into legal battles, both ecclesiastical and secular. The expenses of litigation and his extravagant lifestyle meant that he continued throughout his life to be heavily in debt. Eleven of his thirteen children survived and were a burden on his income; large sums were spent on controlling parliamentary elections in the numerous Cornish boroughs; and he engaged in extensive building work at Trelawne, including the construction of a large new chapel. Never again, however, did he have to face the dilemma which he had encountered at Bristol of the choice between his two guiding principles of loyalty to the monarch and support for the Protestant Church of England.

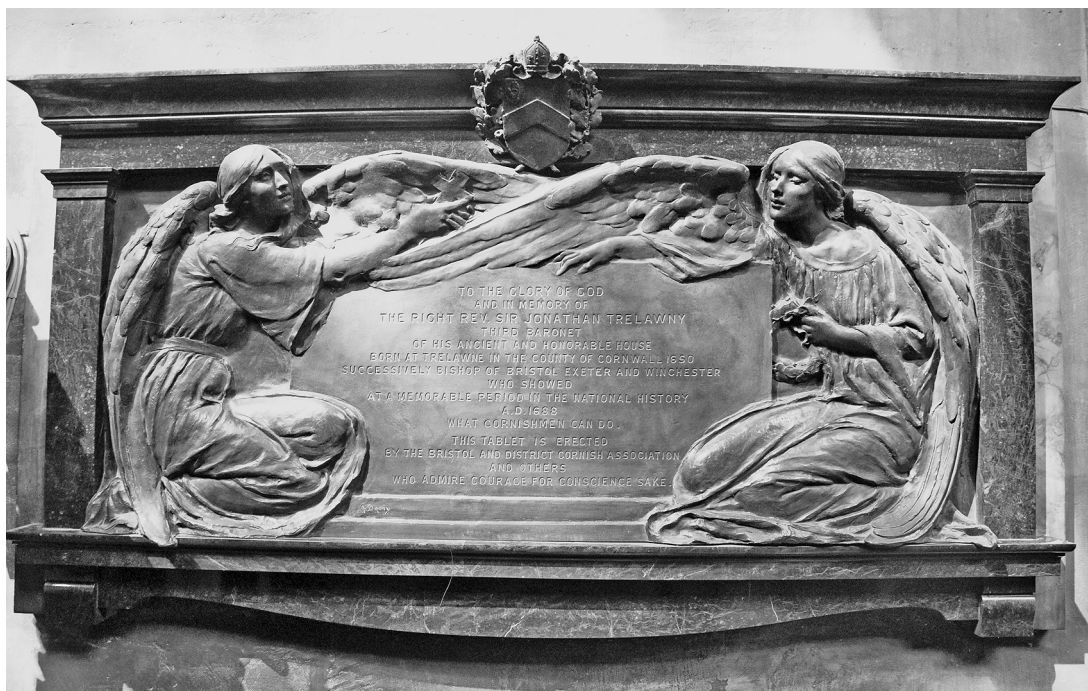


Fig. 1. The memorial to Bishop Trelawny in the Newton Chapel of Bristol Cathedral, erected by the Bristol and District Cornish Association (photo: Jon Cannon).

34. Smith, *Fighting Joshua*, 56–9.