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**The Revd John Adey Pratt (1811–1867) of Kingsland Chapel,  
Bristol: a previously unknown likeness, and his life and ministry**

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## The Revd John Adey Pratt (1811–1867) of Kingsland Chapel, Bristol: a previously unknown likeness, and his life and ministry

By M.J. CROSSLEY EVANS

The likenesses of the early 19th-century nonconformist divines who dominated the religious life of the city of Bristol are well-known to us as a result of the copper and steel engravings of portrait miniatures painted on ivory or card by such well-known Bristol artists as Nathan Branwhite. It is by such means that we know the faces of such men as the Baptist pastors Robert Hall and John Foster. From the 1840s onwards photography gradually replaced other forms of portraiture, but it was not until well into the second half of the century that the likenesses of Bristol's leading ministers became familiar to the religious public through the steel engravings based on photographs which appeared in popular denominational publications. Thus the faces of such notable Bristol figures as Urijah Reece Thomas of Redland Park Congregational chapel; Lawrence Henry Byrnes of Pembroke chapel; and David Thomas and his son Arnold Thomas of Highbury chapel are well-known and are a measure of their fame as preachers and lecturers. Other clerical likenesses appeared in printed chapel and Sunday school histories, and have ensured that we are familiar with the faces of many of the ministers of Old King Street and Buckingham Baptist chapels. However, photographic likenesses of other Bristol ministers, particularly in the period 1840–80, are very uncommon and we tend to be familiar only with the likenesses of those ministers who had rich and fashionable congregations.

A sepia *carte de visite* printed by the Bristol photographer Frederick Snary, of 26 Castle Street, about the year 1860, recently came into the possession of the author.<sup>1</sup> Frederick Snary was listed in *Mathews's Bristol Directory* between 1856 and 1888,<sup>2</sup> and is called variously a 'portrait, landscape and architectural photographer'<sup>3</sup> and 'artist and photographer'. It depicts a seated male figure and on it an unknown hand has written, in a copper plate, 'the late Revd J.A. Pratt'. The subject is shown in profile, dressed in a clerical frock coat and white stock, reading a large volume, presumably the Scriptures. He has thick iron gray or 'salt and pepper' hair; whiskers in a modified form of the then fashionable 'Piccadilly weepers' or 'Dundreary's'; a strong, kindly, handsome face; and a clean shaven chin. His age is probably about 50 (Fig. 1).

Who was the subject? J.B. Taylor in his poem *Arno's Vale*, of c.1880, describes a tour of the Bristol's necropolis and outlines the lives of a number of its most famous residents.<sup>4</sup> Included

1. I am grateful to Mr A.H. Stevens for drawing this photograph to my attention.
2. He was in business at 2 West Street in 1862 and at 26 Castle Street from before 1865: *Mathews's Bristol Directory* (1862), p. 325; (1865), p. 231. After his death the business was conducted by his widow and subsequently by his son Frederick until the early 1920s: *ibid.* (1921), p. 63.
3. See the advertisements in the front of S.D. Major, *New Illustrated Handbook to Bristol, Clifton, and Neighbourhood* (Bristol, 1872).
4. J.B. Taylor, *Arno's Vale: To Which is added a Metrical Paraphrase of Some of the Principal Passages of the Song of Solomon* (Bristol, c.1880), pp. 8–9.



Fig. 1. Image of the Revd John Adey Pratt (1811–67): *carte de visite* produced by Frederick Snary of Bristol c.1880.

among them is a meditation on the life of John Adey Pratt, whom he singles out for his gifted children's ministry:

.... a man of stirring worth,  
 Who ranked among the the purest sons of earth.  
 A pastor he, who, while he taught the truth  
 To crowds adult, took special care of youth.  
 And here close clustered at the pastor's knee,  
 A listening group of children we may see,  
 His hand upraised towards heaven's azure dome....  
 though long years since then have passed away,  
 Thy place remains unoccupied to-day;  
 For though good men we have and true, who preach  
 With consecrated fire, and children teach,  
 Yet none, like thee, are fluent to unfold  
 The Gospel truths thy lips so often told  
 With winning words of anecdote and grace  
 To please and fascinate the rising race.

John Adey Pratt was born in Painswick, Gloucestershire, in 1811. On his maternal side he was descended from a family of Dissenters<sup>5</sup> which claimed as an ancestor John Adey (c.1640–1713), the son or grandson of a Parliamentarian soldier during the Civil War.<sup>6</sup> His grandfather, Daniel Adey I (1730/7–1803),<sup>7</sup> a maltster of Painswick, left a large family, of whom his fourth daughter, Lucy, became the mother of the subject of this paper (see Fig. 2).<sup>8</sup> She was married in the parish church to William Pratt (1779–1834), a baker from the adjoining parish of Miserden on 14 February 1809.<sup>9</sup> John was the eldest of their four children.<sup>10</sup> The census returns record his birthplace as Painswick, where the minister of the Upper chapel had been Cornelius Winter (1741–1808),<sup>11</sup> a protégé of George Whitefield and the highly regarded tutor of William Jay (1769–1853) of Argyle chapel, Bath.<sup>12</sup> The pulpit used in the Upper chapel by Cornelius Winter was made and presented by one of Lucy's three brothers.<sup>13</sup> Of these Daniel Adey II (1763/72–1836), was a yeoman farmer in Chiswick,<sup>14</sup> and is said to have founded a Sunday school

5. *Congregational Yearbook* (1868), pp. 292–4.

6. Gloucestershire Archives (GA), GE 84 and GE 66, which it supersedes.

7. Gloucester Diocesan Records (in GA), will dated 30 June 1803, proved 7 April 1804. He held a mesuage with appurtenances and tenements there. His father was said to have assisted in the erection of the Upper chapel, Painswick.

8. She was born in 1778/9.

9. GA, P 244/IN 1/14, in which William Pratt's domicile is called Miserdine, an alternative spelling for Miserden. I am grateful to Dr John Juřica for this reference.

10. Both of John Adey Pratt's brothers were involved in Christian work: Daniel Pratt (1815–73) was the publisher of the Nonconformist newspaper *The British Banner*, and the Revd William Coulling Pratt was Independent minister in Keynsham. He was born in 1816 and was alive in 1873.

11. He served as a missionary catechist with Whitefield in Georgia between c.1768 and 1771 and was rejected for ordination in the Church of England due to his association with Whitefield. He was minister of Painswick between 1788 and his death. See W. Jay, *The Life and Character of Cornelius Winter* (1808).

12. He was one of the most well-regarded ministers of the age.

13. *Congregational Yearbook* (1868), pp. 292–4.

14. He moved to Chobham c.1806.

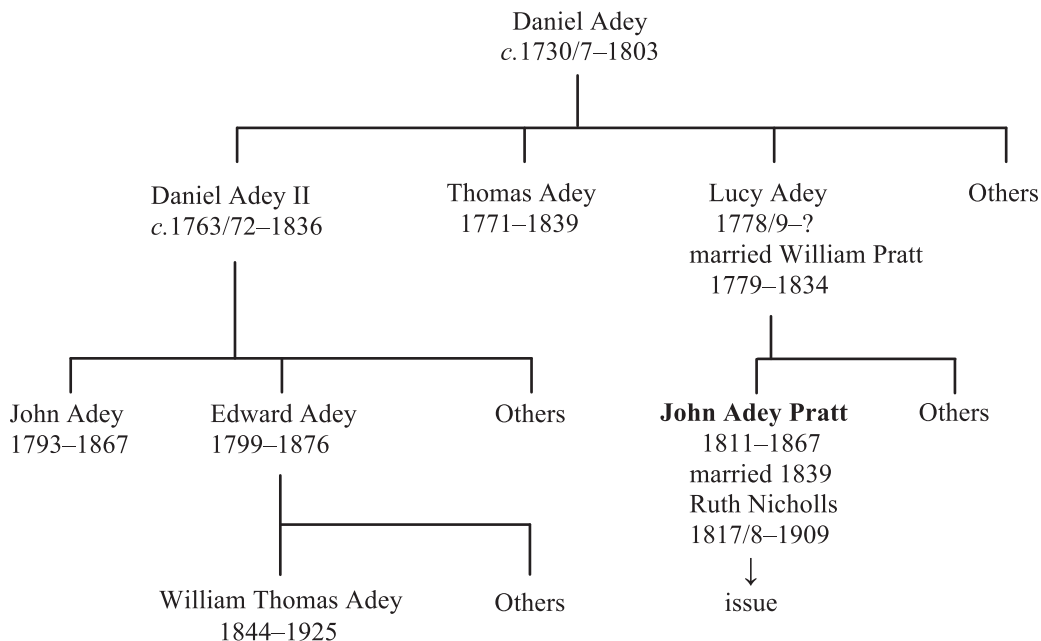


Fig. 2. Family tree of the Revd John Adey Pratt: sources Gloucestershire Archives, GE 84; GE 66; wills; and parish records. Only people mentioned in the text are named.

before Robert Raikes began his pioneering work in Gloucester in 1788, while Thomas Adey (1771–1839) was a cheesemonger and grocer in Chiswick.<sup>15</sup>

Two of Daniel's sons, John and Edward Adey, were to play an influential part in the life of their cousin. The Revd John Adey (1793–1867) was much influenced in his early life by Cornelius Winter, whom he accompanied in his ministry in Painswick. Adey began his working life as a draper's assistant in Westgate Street, Gloucester, before becoming a minister.<sup>16</sup> A director of the London Missionary Society, he was a hymn writer and an advocate of early closing for shops. He visited the North Sea fishing fleet and was involved in missionary work among seamen, publishing sermons in the *Penny Pulpit*. An estimated 150,000 copies of his tract *Night Cometh* were distributed. His brother, the Revd Edward Adey (1799–1876), was pastor of Leighton Buzzard Baptist chapel between 1828 and 1853, where there was open communion. He worked amongst the railway navvies, who were regarded as wild, ungodly, immoral and dangerous, and wrote hymns and advocated the principles of abstinence from all intoxicating liquors. He travelled with William Knibb, the anti-slavery campaigner, between 1832 and 1833.<sup>17</sup>

15. He moved from Turnham Green to Chiswick in 1800.

16. He was successively pastor of the Independent chapel, Ramsgate (1830–5); of Union chapel, Parish Street, Horsleydown (1836–58); and of Bexley Heath, Kent (1858–68): *Congregational Yearbook* (1871), pp. 300–1.

17. His son William Thomas Adey (1844–1925), after serving as a printer's apprentice, trained at Regent's Park Baptist College between 1862 and 1866. He held numerous pastorates including Prewett Street Mission, Bristol, between 1913 and 1919. He was a hymn writer, conducted numerous missions and visited factories and public houses.

Almost nothing is known of Pratt's early life. He is believed to have attended the grammar school in Painswick, and the Upper chapel with his mother. That the connections between the Congregationalists and the Church of England were cordial and sympathetic at that time is confirmed by John Adey Pratt's baptism which took place in Painswick parish church on 6 October 1811.<sup>18</sup> Apprenticed to a tailor in Painswick he moved to Kingston-upon-Thames in 1831, where he lived with a relative.<sup>19</sup> It was there that he was lent a copy of *Pike's Persuasives to Early Piety*<sup>20</sup> by the minister, William Crow,<sup>21</sup> and underwent a conversion experience. He became an active teacher in the Sunday school,<sup>22</sup> and collected together a Sunday school of chimney sweeps. His teaching 'combined then, as afterwards, inexpressible tenderness with unbending firmness'.<sup>23</sup> He also held prayer meetings with other young men in places as diverse as Kingston bridge and a cow byre! William Crow had served with the London Missionary Society in Travancore, India and this stimulated the interest of the young Pratt in foreign missions, which was later evident in his involvement in the Society's work in Bristol and his drive to increase church giving.<sup>24</sup>

Whilst in Kingston Pratt also developed a deep dislike of alcohol and its effects upon those who over-imbibed. We learn that a number of the church members at Kingston were keen on 'tippling'. This resulted in some being rebuked by fellow members at church meetings and others being temporarily excluded from membership by means of excommunication.<sup>25</sup> Intoxication was regarded as a sad reflection on the frailties of human beings, and particularly those who had accepted Christ into their lives, and Pratt became an ardent adherent and advocate of the Temperance movement.

Pratt moved to Southwark in 1836 to set up in business on his own account. He 'was punctual and obliging; in fact... a model man of business. By prudence and frugality he succeeded not only in paying his way, but in effecting some small savings'.<sup>26</sup> He attended his cousin<sup>27</sup> John Adey's ministry at Union chapel, Parish Street, Horsleydown,<sup>28</sup> became noted as an advocate of missions

18. GA, P 244/IN 1/6. I am grateful to Dr John Juřica for this reference.

19. This may have been the widow of Peter Pratt. He was amongst the first members of Kingston chapel established by covenant in 1799. A haberdasher, he revived the Methodist chapel, which was in a failing condition, and turned it into an Independent chapel. He became its senior deacon and died in the autumn of 1806: A.C. Sturney, *The Story of Kingston Congregational Church* (privately printed, 1955), pp. 23, 26–7.

20. John Deodatus Gregory Pike (1784–1854), Baptist pastor of Brook Street chapel, Derby, 1810–54 and editor of the *General Baptist Repository* 1822–54. The title was first published in Derby in 1819 and was frequently republished in the 19th century, including editions by the Religious Tract Society. I am grateful to Mr Michael Richardson, Special Collections' Librarian, University of Bristol, for this information.

21. Dr Williams's Library, London, The Sermon Card Index of Congregational Ministers. Upon his return to England from India, Crow served a number of pastorates. He was at Kingston between 1830 and 1839 and Well Street chapel, Hackney, from 1839 to 1841 and is last heard of as minister of Silver Street Baptist chapel, Worcester (1841–7). J. Waddington, *Surrey Congregational History* (1866), p. 238; E. Cleal and T.G. Crippen, *The Story of Congregationalism in Surrey* (1908), p. 188.

22. A.C. Sturney, *270 Years: The Story of Kingston Congregational Church* (place of publication unknown, 1932), p. 27. The first Sunday school in Kingston was founded by a Dissenter in 1798.

23. *Congregational Yearbook* (1868), pp. 292–4.

24. J. Sibree, *London Missionary Society: A Register of Missionaries, Deputations, Etc. From 1796 to 1923* (4th edn. 1923), pp. 23–4; Sturney, *270 Years* (1932), pp. 29–30.

25. Sturney, *270 Years* (1932), pp. 29–31.

26. I. Jones, *Bristol Congregationalism: City and County* (Bristol, 1947), p. 77.

27. His obituary, see footnote 23, refers to John Adey as his uncle rather than as his cousin.

28. Adey arrived at the chapel in May 1836: Waddington, *Surrey Congregational History*, pp. 228–9; Cleal and Crippen, *Congregationalism in Surrey*, pp. 54–5.

and the Temperance movement and was known as ‘the children’s preacher’.<sup>29</sup> With John Adey, his brother Daniel Pratt and the deacons, Pratt established a Sunday school which eventually grew to be 500 strong.<sup>30</sup> Amongst his scholars were eight or nine future ministers, as well as teachers and missionaries. In due course he became one of the deacons of the chapel and in the early 1840s when his cousin was unable, due to illness, to keep a preaching engagement, Pratt was sent in his place and subsequently preached in chapels, rooms and the open air within a twenty-mile radius of London.

Pratt married Ruth daughter of Thomas Nicholls, a miller, at Union chapel on 10 October 1839.<sup>31</sup> He continued in the trade of tailor and at the time of the 1841 census Pratt and his wife were living at Grey Terrace, Great Dover Street, Southwark, with his brother, Daniel, and their eldest child, James Colway Pratt.<sup>32</sup> In due course James was followed by three other children, Kate, Thomas, and Lucy.

According to Pratt’s obituary notice, his attention was drawn to the vacant pastorate at Kingsland Independent chapel, St Philip’s, Bristol in the autumn of 1850 and, after due enquiry, he was invited to preach his first sermon there on Sunday 6 October. It was a success. He was asked to preach the following Sunday and then for the whole of November. He impressed the congregation so much that he received an almost unanimous call to the pastorate. He brought the matter to the Lord in prayer and after careful thought he resolved to abandon his business and to accept the pastorate, which he commenced on 31 March 1851.<sup>33</sup> There is no record of when, where, or by whom he was ordained.

The chapel was situated in a poor and populous part of the city known as ‘the Dings’. It had been founded by Frederick Wills (1804–75)<sup>34</sup> as a Sunday school in 1834 and opened as a chapel on 1 December 1836. Many of its congregation were employed at the Great Western Cotton Works, situated about half a mile away in Barton Hill. The historian of the Congregational church in Bristol, the Revd Ignatius Jones, notes that ‘Pratt soon won the respect of the church... He became an outstanding personality of his time in church life and was loved by all’.<sup>35</sup> By the time of the 1851 census he was living with his wife and children and a 13-year old maid whom they had probably brought with them from London, at 31 Armoury Place, a respectable suburb of Trinity St Philip’s.<sup>36</sup>

Thomas Buller Mitchell (1833–1909), who subsequently worked as a gas fitter and plumber in Bristol, attended the chapel shortly after Pratt’s arrival. In his autobiography, *Tommy’s Tale*, he attests to Pratt’s personal charisma and his successful ministry among the young. At some point in 1852 Mitchell, then a young man of 19, and his sweetheart, Eliza, a young servant girl, went to hear Pratt preach one Sunday evening at the suggestion of one of their friends. Mitchell was already an ardent teetotaler, and was attracted by the man and the message in his sermons. Thomas

29. GA, GE 84.

30. Waddington, *Surrey Congregational History*, pp. 228–9. A new Sunday school building was opened in March 1838.

31. Copy of his marriage certificate, in possession of the author. Ruth was born in Great Waltham, Essex, in 1817/18.

32. The National Archives (TNA), HO 107/1065, book 1, f. 6. James Colway Pratt (1840–88) was a clerk in a coal company by 1861.

33. *Congregational Yearbook* (1868), pp. 292–4. Jones, *Bristol Congregationalism*, p. 77, states, incorrectly, that he became minister in December 1851.

34. S.J. Watson, *Furnished with Ability: The Lives and Times of Wills Families* (Salisbury, 1991), p. 31. He was a son of H.O. Wills I (1762–1826) and a manager in the family business.

35. Jones, *Bristol Congregationalism*, pp. 76–7.

36. TNA, HO 107/1954, f. 371, p. 13.

and Eliza both became regular attendees. Before long Pratt had spoken to them, shaken ‘the hand very heartily’, and invited them to attend the Inquiring Class held each Tuesday evening. He lent them both a book entitled *The Anxious Enquirer*,<sup>37</sup> which they found enlightening about the central truths of Christianity and a ‘good spiritual help for us’. After three months in the class they formally joined the chapel, and subsequently helped in the work of the Sunday school. ‘Tommy’ attended both the morning and the afternoon school and Eliza attended in the afternoon. Mitchell states that ‘we having entered into the work Mr. Pratt said, “Now having entered into the service of Christ you wear out, not rust out”’. Soon afterwards Mitchell became a Sunday school teacher. Thomas and Eliza found their spiritual life and their commitment to Christian work growing and deepening, as well as their attachment to each other. On 25 July 1857 they were married by Pratt ‘and he did it free of charge, which was very acceptable for money was none too plentiful’.<sup>38</sup>

In due course Mitchell began a concert party for his Bible class which met once a week in the Sussex Street school room for singing, recitations, dialogues and Temperance addresses from Pratt. Eliza ran a refreshment stall selling tea, coffee, ginger beer and oranges and used the profits to help pay for the room and their expenses. Mitchell’s work with the Sunday school was blessed. He won many young people to the service of Christ, and it is a testimony to the success of Pratt’s ministry, and the value of his prayerfulness, dedication and warm, thoughtful helpfulness.

We catch a fleeting glance of Pratt in the journal of Lawrence Henry Byrnes (1822–1902), who was then the minister of the Independent chapel in Kingston-upon-Thames where Pratt was converted as a young man.<sup>39</sup> In February 1864 Byrnes was asked to preach at Brunswick chapel, Bristol, with a view to settlement. He described the building as ‘a very beautiful structure. Holds about a 1,000; attendance about 400 in the morning a few more in the evening’. During his visit he went to the Broadmead Room to hear a lecture on Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* and upon arrival was recognised, asked to sit on the platform and to open the meeting with prayer. He found himself sitting next to Pratt, who gave him an unfavourable impression of the chapel. Byrnes confided to his diary: ‘The work would be very hard: & probably much more than appears in a hint dropped by Pratt... viz that it wants an Extraordinary man to fill Brunswick & keep it full’.<sup>40</sup>

The Revd Mr Caston, writing in 1859, refers to Kingsland chapel’s ‘present useful minister, the Rev. J.A. Pratt...whose labours hitherto have been largely blessed. The church at the present time numbers more members in fellowship than it has at any previous period, and never more visible and cheering tokens of Divine favour enjoyed. The congregation is good. The schools are flourishing; and not a few are being gathered from month to month into the fold of the chief Shepherd’.<sup>41</sup>

George Wood, minister of Zion chapel, Bedminster,<sup>42</sup> said of Pratt in his funeral address:

37. *The Anxious Inquirer after Salvation Directed and Encouraged* (5th edn., London: Religious Tract Society, 1835) by John Angell James (1785–1859), Independent minister of Carr’s Lane chapel, Birmingham, from 1803 to 1859. It appears that this volume, first published in 1834, was frequently translated and went through many editions. I am grateful to Mr Michael Richardson for this information.

38. I.S. Bishop, *Stories from St. Phillip’s: A Trilogy of Local History* (Ruddington, 2002), pp. 146–7.

39. Byrnes was minister of Pembroke chapel, Clifton, between 1869 and 1890.

40. MSS diaries of the Revd L.H. Byrnes (in possession of the author), I, 20–29 February 1864.

41. M. Caston, *Independency in Bristol: with Brief Memorials of the Churches and Pastors* (1860), pp. 206–7.

42. H.B. Cozens, *The Church of the Vow: A Record of Zion Congregational Church, Bedminster, Bristol, 1830–1930* (Bristol, 1930), pp. 22–3. Wood might have doubly valued Pratt’s ministry as it was said of him that ‘his learning and thoughtfulness had rather a deterrent influence upon young people, giving the impression that he was unapproachable’.



How he fulfilled his ministry many of you know better than I can describe:- with what devoutness of spirit; with what simplicity and godly sincerity'; with what tenderness, pathos, and fidelity; with what sanctified ingenuity of representation and illustration; with what infectious happiness of heart and cheerfulness of countenance (though not without such occasional depression and despondency as visit all earnest ministers when they think of the comparatively small results of their endeavours, and especially of those among their hearers to whom they have long preached in vain), how as a pastor he allured the young, encouraged the timid, sought the wandering, comforted the sorrowful, and ministered as he was able to the wants of the needy; how he rejoiced with the joyful, and wept with the weeping; how he exulted when sinners were brought to repentance, and saints adorned the Gospel; how he mourned over the inconsistent and the fallen, and faithfully warned them of their peril; and how through these long years he maintained an unsullied reputation, and preserved a constant freshness in his presentation of the truth, and an earnestness, more manifest than ever of late, which made all but the utterly callous feel how intense was his desire for their salvation... The Church over which he presided was maintained in unbroken peace, and grew remarkably in numbers...

His spiritual and moral qualities, manifesting themselves in all he did and said, were the more essential elements of his attractiveness and success. That uniform piety and unswerving consistency; that remarkable and unvarying affectionateness, amiability, and good nature; that sunny countenance, revealing the perpetual sunshine within; that utter absence of selfishness; that readiness to aid all; that incapacity of knowingly inflicting injury on any by deed or word; that unaffected humility and modesty; that conscientious and self-denying laboriousness in the service of his Master and his brethren.... that thorough and all-pervading sincerity, which made him the same man always and everywhere.<sup>43</sup>

Ministers of religion were often the objects of expressions of hostility from members of the ordinary urban working class population, who intensely disliked being preached at about the joys of another kingdom and the need for the development of sobriety, industry and piety. Writing twenty years later, the lay minister Charles Richard Parsons (1840–1918), who ministered in many of the same foetid slums and courts as Pratt, wrote of his own experiences:

I try to find out if he [the person upon whom he had called] has a Bible in the house, but [he replied that] if he had his mind he would hang every 'holy Joe' with their white chokers [the distinguishing badge of a minister] up by the neck! I was quite innocent of the said appendage – but he has set me down as belonging to a very offensive class, and all at once he closes the conversation by slamming the door.<sup>44</sup>

Four aspects of Pratt's work call for particular comment: practical Christianity; Temperance work; the London Missionary Society; and Sunday school work. A reporter, writing in *The Bristol Mercury* on 5 January 1867, the day after his death, said of him:

Since [he arrived in Bristol in 1851] all the social movements for the amelioration of mankind, especially of the working classes, in whom he always manifested a deep interest, have commanded the attention of the rev. gentleman, and by his kind-heartedness and liberality a considerable

43. Wood's funeral address for Pratt quoted in *The Congregational Yearbook* (1868), pp. 292–4. Wood was an old friend of L.H. Byrnes, with whom, before the latter was married, he took a number of holidays. Wood preached the funeral address for Byrnes's much loved first wife Lydia, née Pamphilon, formerly Beynon: G. Wood, *Stroke of death: being notes of a Sermon preached at Pembroke Chapel, Clifton, February 20th 1876, on the occasion of the death...of Lydia, wife of L.H. Byrnes* (Bristol, 1876).

44. C.R. Parsons, *Records of five years' Mission Work in Bristol* (Bristol, 1883), p. 11.

part of his private means became absorbed.<sup>45</sup> Amongst other excellent movements which he promoted was one of a provident character. He started a saving club amongst the inhabitants of the district in which his chapel was situate, by means of which he induced the poorer classes to put some portion of their earnings during the summer that they might meet the increased requirements of winter, adding to every 9d. so funded 3d. as interest. Of course, to carry out this project he was obliged to draw upon the benevolence of his friends, but to so successful a point had he brought the movement that shortly before his death he distributed among the humbler classes resident in his neighbourhood a sum of about £180.

Pratt's obituary in the *Congregational Yearbook* called him 'a consistent adherent and zealous, but courteous, advocate of the cause of total abstinence from intoxicating liquors'. Mention has already been made of Pratt's influence on Thomas Buller Mitchell and his sweetheart and how thereby they were drawn from Bridge Street Independent chapel to attend Pratt's ministry.<sup>46</sup>

That ministry also embraced the Bristol Auxiliary of the London Missionary Society, to which he devoted many hours, improving its organization and encouraging greater philanthropic giving among the congregations of the country chapels in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Somerset. Among the members of his own chapel was one of the great missionary heroes of the 19th-century, Dr William Wyatt Gill (1828–96). Born in the Dings, he served with the London Missionary Society in Polynesia and New Guinea between 1851 and 1888, and revised the version of the Raratongan Bible then in use and translated the remaining books of the Bible for the use of his flock. Although no evidence survives, we can be reasonably certain that Pratt and his congregation would have remained in contact with Dr Gill, both directly and through the Bristol Missionary Society, although by the time of Dr Gill's return to Kingsland chapel to preach in 1887 Pratt had been dead for 20 years.<sup>47</sup>

Pratt also took an active interest in the work of the non-sectarian City Mission, which was founded in 1826 in order to bring the Gospel to those who attended no place of worship and were amongst the poorest and most neglected inhabitants of the city. This was done by means of volunteers and paid agents. The Mission specialised in home visits and offered the means of consolation and spiritual comfort to 'all who would listen to the means of Grace'.<sup>48</sup>

The sphere of work closest to his heart, however, and the one in which he excelled was the children's ministry. George Wood said of this aspect of his ministry:

The Sunday-schools in Bristol owe to him a deep debt of gratitude, and have lost in his removal an invaluable friend and helper.... A large proportion of his Sunday afternoons, which most preachers feel, and justly feel, they need to spend in quietness at home, he devoted to the service of the Sunday schools. At anniversaries, missionary meetings, tea meetings, his presence and aid had come to be regarded as almost indispensable, and they were as freely rendered as they were constantly sought.<sup>49</sup>

The reporter on *The Bristol Mercury* wrote:

To the school children of nearly every chapel in connexion with the Independent body in Bristol he was especially well-known and beloved; and for a long number of years, on the occasion of any

45. When he came to Bristol he brought a small property with him, presumably saved from his time in business as a tailor.

46. Bishop, *Stories from St. Phillip's*, pp. 133–76.

47. Sibree, *London Missionary Society*, pp. 64–5; G.H. Wicks, *Bristol Missionary Society 1812–1912: The Story of Bristol's Association with the Work of the London Missionary Society* (Bristol, 1912), p. 26.

48. *Arrowsmith's Dictionary of Bristol* (Bristol, 1906), p. 256.

49. *Congregational Yearbook* (1868), pp. 292–4.

school gathering the deceased has been the particular favourite of the children. No minister that we know was more happy in his addresses to the young than was Mr Pratt, and his appearance at any tea meeting or social gathering was sure to elicit a most hearty and cordial welcome.<sup>50</sup>

John Adey Pratt died suddenly on Friday, 4 January 1867 aged 55, at his residence, 2 Claremont Buildings, Easton Road, Bristol. He had previously enjoyed excellent health and had only taken one Sunday off through illness since he commenced his ministry in Bristol. Although he had been unwell for four days, he had addressed a large gathering of Sunday school pupils at Zion chapel, Bedminster, only two evenings before he died,<sup>51</sup> and gave a talk to members of his own congregation the night before. On 4 January he ate dinner, felt faint, slipped from his chair and fell to the ground dying.

*The Bristol Mercury* reported his death the following morning, recording that he was 'greatly liked by his congregation, and amongst his large circle of friends'.<sup>52</sup> Writing almost forty years later, Thomas Buller Mitchell recalled that Pratt's sudden death cast a great gloom on the Church and all connected with it. 'Mr Pratt was well-known, he was greatly loved by all, both old and young; he was a man ready to help in any good work. At the time of his death there was [*sic*] over 400 members in the Church and a large Sunday school with a good staff'.<sup>53</sup>

A week following his death *The Bristol Mercury* printed the following encomium. Pratt was:

Gentle, amiable, almost child-like in his manner, with an intense love of the bright, cheerful and pleasant aspect of everything around him, he presented a striking contrast to those who only look upon the dark side of human nature, and too often paint the evil to be avoided without picturing the comfort and happiness to be attained by following the right course. His homely simplicity and goodness strongly appealed to the young, by whom he was beloved to a degree rarely met with, and by whom his loss will be lamented with an intensity which will not very soon be forgotten.

The writer went on to say that throughout his whole life Pratt had devoted:

His unusually persuasive powers, his undoubted talents, and unsurpassed energy to the cause of ameliorating the condition of the poor, of expounding the truths of Christianity to adults and winning children to the truths of the Gospel.<sup>54</sup>

The day of Pratt's funeral was wild and inclement. The cortège was followed by three mourning carriages carrying the male members of his family, although as was customary at the time neither his widow nor the other female members of the family attended the interment. These were followed by about 30 private carriages carrying Baptist, Independent and Dissenting ministers of other denominations, demonstrating the respect in which he was held and the mutual support which existed across the denominational boundaries within the city, and many men of 'position in the neighbourhood who appreciated the sterling qualities of the deceased'. The six pall bearers, all Sunday school teachers, wore mourning cloaks and hatbands.<sup>55</sup> The service in the cemetery chapel at Arno's Vale was conducted by John Glendenning (1812–71), minister of the Bristol Tabernacle,<sup>56</sup> assisted

50. *Bristol Mercury*, 5 Jan. 1867, p. 8, col. b.

51. Cozens, *The Church of the Vow*, p. 58.

52. *Bristol Mercury*, 5 Jan. 1867; Jones, *Bristol Congregationalism*, p. 77, wrongly states that Pratt died on 16 October 1867.

53. Bishop, *Stories from St. Phillip's*, pp. 162–7.

54. *Bristol Mercury*, 12 Jan. 1867, p. 3, col. c.

55. They included Thomas Buller Mitchell.

56. A native of Halifax, he became minister in 1859, resigned c.1869/70, and died on 25 May 1871. *Congregational Yearbook* (1872), p. 320; Jones, *Bristol Congregationalism*, p. 27; Caston, *Independency in Bristol*, p. 126.

by Henry Isaac Roper (1799/1800–1872), minister of Bridge Street Independent chapel. The moving address and prayers of the former brought tears to the eyes of many of those who were present. George Wood (1817–1901), minister of Zion chapel, Bedminster, officiated at the graveside, surrounded by several hundred people who remained in spite of the torrential storms of rain and wind.<sup>57</sup>

Pratt died in reduced circumstances, leaving an estate of less than £450.<sup>58</sup> At the time of his death he was living in a more humble neighbourhood than that in which he was resident in 1851. By the time of the 1861 census the family no longer kept a domestic servant,<sup>59</sup> and we know from the circumstances of his death reported at the inquest that the heavy domestic work in the family was undertaken by a char woman. A number of prominent nonconformists in the city raised a sum of money which was presented to Mrs Pratt as a testimony of their regard for her husband's ministry. The treasurers were Henry Overton Wills (1800–71), the tobacco merchant and prominent Congregational layman, and W.P. Sibree.<sup>60</sup> Between £500 and £600 was collected, and the Sunday school children of the city raised a further £100 to erect a monument in Arno's Vale to his life and ministry. This still stands and shows him in bas-relief teaching a group of Sunday school children.<sup>61</sup> The monument was, for many years after his death, one of three mentioned to visitors as being worth seeing.<sup>62</sup> A memorial tablet was also erected to his memory in Kingsland chapel.<sup>63</sup>

At least one of the deacons of Kingsland chapel however, who attended the funeral, did not share the general enthusiasm for Pratt's ministry. Following Pratt's death, John Knox, 'an able preacher', was called by the congregation as his successor. Thomas Buller Mitchell records that one Sunday this deacon commented to him, 'Yes, we have been having the skim milk, now we have got the cream'. Mitchell's indignation and anger can be felt even now. 'Tommy did not like that slur on our loving minister who had worked for fifteen years and built up a good Church. If he was not the best of preachers he was the best of livers, for he lived for Christ and taught His love to the people, both by work and example'.<sup>64</sup> What greater testimony could there be of a man's worth than this? It is more enduring than the marble tablet erected in Pratt's memory in Kingsland chapel, with what was no doubt a pious and worthy encomium carved in stone, which has now perished. The Revd Ignatius Jones is silent about Knox's ministry, which extended from May 1867 until March 1873, but from Mitchell's account it was a disaster for the chapel and he, together with many members of the congregation and Bible class, left for other places of worship.

Ruth Pratt, remained a widow until her death more than forty years later. She died on 22 February 1909, when she was over 90 years of age, and was laid to rest with her husband and elder son in Arno's Vale.<sup>65</sup>

57. *Bristol Mercury*, 12 Jan. 1867. Dr Williams's Library, London, The Sermon Card Index. Wood was born at Spalding 28 December 1817 and died on 1 October 1901; he was educated at Highbury, obtained a BA from London, and was minister of Zion, Bedminster, between 1843 and 1885: *Congregational Yearbook* (1903), p. 208.

58. Will of John Adey Pratt, dated 20 August 1861, proved 2 February 1867.

59. TNA, RG 9/1734, f. 79, p. 8.

60. *Bristol Mercury*, 12 Jan. 1867. Sibree was an active member of the Bristol Missionary Society, like the Revds H.I. Roper and G. Wood: see Wicks, *Bristol Missionary Society 1812–1912*, p. 39.

61. *Congregational Yearbook* (1868), pp. 292–4.

62. See *Arrowsmith's Dictionary of Bristol* (1st edn. 1884), pp. 30, 172; (2nd edn. 1906), p. 43. The others were the monuments to Robert Hall and Rajah Rammohun Roy.

63. Jones, *Bristol Congregationalism*, p. 77.

64. Bishop, *Stories from St. Phillip's*, pp. 162–7.

65. GA, GE 84.

Kingsland chapel has gone,<sup>66</sup> and with it the monument erected by the congregation to Pratt's memory. What remains is Thomas Buller Mitchell's autobiographical *Tommy's Book*, written in 1906, almost forty years after Pratt's death, which records his respect, reverence, and affection, and his feelings of gratitude towards his friend and pastor. His account allows us to appreciate the personal appeal of a dedicated minister who laboured in one of the poorest and most populous parts of the city, while the recent discovery of a *carte de visite* allows us to see the man who was the means of bringing practical assistance and spiritual comfort to those amongst whom he lived and worked.

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66. The chapel was closed in or just after 1949, and subsequently became a warehouse. I am grateful to Mrs J.D. Morris for this information. The building was demolished between 1977 and 1980: *Avon Past* 3 (Autumn 1980), p. 27. The only records of the chapel preserved in Bristol Record Office are two marriage registers, for 1899–1913 and for 1914–1949.