***Blessed John Henry Newman’s Father and Brothers***

**Noel Fitzpatrick**

At recent meetings of the Newman Society of Ireland we have heard discussed people in Newman’s life and at the last meeting we have had an excellent presentation on Newman’s sisters. Today I would like to talk briefly about John Henry Newman’s father and about his brothers, Francis William and Charles Robert.

**John Newman**

It is interesting to note that both the great English convert Catholic, 19th century, cardinals, Newman and Manning, had failed bankers as fathers. John Henry’s father, John, was with the bank *Ramsbottom, Newman and Company,* which crashed in 1816, and subsequently he unsuccessfully became a brewery manager. John was a Freemason and a graduate of Cambridge, interested in music and in a scheme to plant trees throughout England. He died (1824) disappointed in life, shortly after John Henry became a Fellow of Oriel College (1822) and before Francis William’s appointment as a Fellow of Balliol (1826).

**Francis William**

Both John Henry (!801 – 1890) and his younger brother Francis William (1805 -1897) lived long lives and were at one time close and similar in religious views, being Evangelicals while at school, but they grew apart. Like his older brother John Henry, Francis was educated at Ealing, Oxford and became an Oxford Fellow. But Francis William got a Double First and was elected a Fellow of Balliol, while John Henry got a Third and became a Fellow of Oriel.

In 1827 Francis William went to Delgany, Co Wicklow, as a tutor, and was influenced there by the Plymouth Brethren. Due to conscientious scruples he resigned his Fellowship In 1830 and went to Baghdad as a missionary, but in 1833 he returned to England and got a job teaching in Bristol and in 1840 he became Classics Professor at Manchester New College. In 1846 Francis became Professor of Latin at University College, London, where he remainined until his retirement in 1869.

Before his retirement he published relatively little and spent long hours in study, but he did write about his change from Evangelical Calvinism to Unitarian theism. In later life he was essentially an Arian, rejecting the divinity of Jesus Christ, but remaining a believer in God. Perhaps he reflected John Henry’s observation that "To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.” Both brothers started similarly as Evangelicals and both changed very much during their lives, while remaining religious.

He has been referred to, perhaps unfairly, as Cardinal Newman’s “smarter, younger brother”, who wrote on logic, political economy, English reforms, Austrian politics, Roman history, diet (being at one time President of the Vegetarian Society), grammar, advanced mathematics, and Arabic. His metrical translation of the Iliad was criticized by Matthew Arnold, but unfortunately his last book *Contributions chiefly to the Early History of Cardinal Newman* (1891) attracted much greater criticism and was generally condemned as lacking family feelings and loyalty towards his older brother.

**Charles Robert**

 The third brother, Charles Robert, who was a professed atheist, or perhaps agnostic, and a recluse, died in 1884. Before he was out of his teens he decided his brothers and sisters were too religious for him, since both his older brothers were ordained as were his two brothers-in-law. He did not want to be considered a Newman and in spite of his family he chose a life of loneliness and isolation. John Henry supported his two brothers very much, helping Francis get established in his academic career, and through the father of his best friend in Trinity College Oxford, J. W. Bowden, got Charles a job as a clerk in the Bank of England, which did not last long. After this Charles got a job teaching, but this ended when he bit a pupil claiming it was in self-defence.

His brothers, though disliking each other, united in trying to help him, even to the extent of paying for him to go to Bonn to get a degree. But in 1845 he claimed he was driven out of Bonn for not paying debts and returned to England without a degree. From 1858 until his death he lived in Tenby, Wales, supported almost entirely by the generosity of Frank.

Charles has been described as “the closest representation of an ancient cynic philosopher this nineteenth century can offer.”

Martin Svaglic has written an article “Charles Newman and His Brothers” in the *Transactions and Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America* (Vol 71, 1956, 370-385), where it is noted that:

“Few, however, seem aware that there was a third Newman brother named Charles Robert, one year younger than John, the story of whose eccentric life has come to be known in any detail only since 1948, thanks to the researches of Maisie Ward and of Sean O’Faolain (sic.)”.

The article concludes with:

“Charles Robert Newman died in his eighty-third year on 22 March 1884 and was buried in the Anglican cemetery in Tenby. It was John who paid for the funeral and chose the inscription for his tombstone:

Domine Misericordia Tua in Saeculum

Opera Manuum Tuarum Ne Despicias

‘Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever: O despise not the works of thy hands’”.