

NEWMAN U MALTA

Qabel ma jibda jaqra, wiehed ghandu jżomm quddiem għajnejh li J. H. Newman kien għadu Protestant meta għadda xi erbat ijiem hawn Malta: iżda ma kienx daqshekk rasu marbuta bħal bosta minn hutu. Lanqas m'ghandu wiehed jistenna li nuru u nsewwu hawnhekk xi żbalji ta' Newman dwar ir-religjon, l-istorja, il-politika.

Hija haġa minn awl id-dinja, mija fil-mija fin-natura tal-bniedem, li jiftahar b'rixu. Din il-ġibda narawha tmexxi 'l-bniedem meta dan isemmi bl-akbar gost kif u kemm kellu x'jaqsam ma' nies magħrufa. Naħseb li dan kien li għagħalna nitkixxfu fuq il-qagħda ta' Newman fi gżiritna. Iżda nafu li Newman kien rebħa kbira għall-Knisja Kattolka fl-Ingilterra. U meta niftakru kemm kien sinċier Newman, u kif iż-żajjar tiegħu lill-artijiet Kattoliċi llimawlu bil-mod il-mod il-preġudizzji li kienu jxekklu 'l mohħu, għandna niżzu hajr 'l Alla li Malta wkoll kienet fit-triq imdawla li minnha Newman lemaħ id-dawl hanin jixref quddiemu.

Bejn 1-1832 u 1-1833, Newman, flimkien ma' Mr. R. H. Froude u ibnu, għamel safra madwar l-artijiet tal-Mediterran. Din is-safra kien haseb għaliha Mr. Froude, li kellu wisq għal qalbu s-saħħa ta' ibnu; Newman kien imħajjar għal dawra bħal dik u laqa' l-istedina. Il-hbieb tagħna kienu jistennew li jaslu Malta lejlet il-Milied tal-1833 filgħodu; u għalkemm il-baħar haqarhom bl-ikrah u r-riħ marrad sa nofs il-bahrin, waslu Malta kif kienu hasbu. Newman kien wiehed mill-aktar li bata, għalkemm ma tantx kien jaghti każ tat-taqlib li għablu l-baħar, u għalhekk meta waslu, Newman hassu jisteqjer għall-aħħar. Minn meta halla l-Ingilterra (7 ta' Diċ.) ma raqadx lejl shiħ hlief meta daħlu għal ftit Ġibiltà: kien għajjen mejjet, iżda qatt ma dendel il-geddum; u meta kollox madwaru, l-aktar fi-aħħar granet tal-vjaġġ, kien jiċċaqlaq, idur u jinqaleb, it-tbissima ta' dari kienet tibqa' titliegħeb fuq xofftejh. Tistgħu taħsbu jekk qalx għall-erwieh darba meta sab ruħu Malta.

Iżda Newman ma daħalx Malta biex joqghod. Wasal it-Tnejn u l-Erbgħa kellu jitlaq għal Korfu. Malta kellu jaraha mill-gdid xi sitt ijiem wara. Jum il-Milied ta' dik is-sena Newman għaddieh fuq il-bastiment tiegħu sorgut biswit Lazzarett. Dak il-

Milied kien wiehed mill-agħar li għadda. U sogħobbih qatigh li dak in-nhar htigilhom tabilfors iġhabbu l-faħam.

Huwa u ġej Malta l-ewwel darba, Newman iġhid li ra 'l Għawdex u 'l Kemmnuna, ra wkoll San Pawl il-Baħar, Feraħ mhux ftit meta sar jaf li t-temp kien għadu kemm qaleb u sata' jitgħaxxaq bi granet sbieh bħal ta' Lulju. Fil-port kellhom għajnejn l-għassies tal-kwarantina fuqhom biex ma jħalli 'l hadd jitla' abbord jew jinżel l-art: iżda kienu jistgħu jduru mal-port bid-dgħajjes. Newman ma hebiex juri li l-kwarantina dejqitu. Iżda kien jifhimha kemm il-Gvern kien jehtieġli jishaq dwar it-tħaris tal-kwarantina: Malta hija l-bieb tal-kontinent, u fuq kolloxx, Newman induna li l-Lazzarett tagħna kien wiehed mill-aktar komdi.

Xi ftit mill-ewwel impressjonijiet:

Fancy being rowed in an open boat without a greatcoat on a December evening, and not feeling cold. The sun went down gloriously and the sky was of an indescribable gold colour. ...The bells are beautiful here, as at Gibraltar and Cadiz, deep and sonorous, and they have been going all the morning...(1)

Iżda Newman ma kienx imdorri jismagħhom, u ddejjaq b'dawk il-moti tal-Milied. Dak in-nhar stess, wara nofs in-nhar għażel xi kmamar għalih għal meta jerga' lura mill-gzejjer tal-Greċja: għax il-kwarantina x'imkien trid tagħmilha. Sab jikri biċċtejn għamara mill-aħjar u bi ftit flus. Kera wkoll vjolin. Xtaq jis-sokta jitgħallem it-Taljan u qabbad surmast biex iharrġu. Lil Newman għogbuh l-imtiehen tar-riħ tagħna. Minn qrib il-Lazzarett kien jilmah l-imtiehen li dak iż-żmien kienu jzejnu s-swar qrib Putirjal, u l-ittra li semmejna jagħlaqha b'deskrizzjoni ta' wahda minnhom.

F1-10 ta' Jannar, 1833, Newman kien diehel mill-ġdid fil-port tagħna. Għedna kif Newman kien ga ħaseb biex iġhaddiha taj-jeb. Għaddielu minn mohhu l-ħsieb li jikteb xi poeziji. U hawn Malta sata' jtemm il-gabra ta' poeziji magħrufa bħala 'Patriarchal Sonnets' (26 ta' Jan. 1833). Hawn ser iṅġib wahda li laqtitni — gawhra żgħira:

(1) Letters and Correspondence of J. H. Newman, during his life in the English Church, ed. at his request by Anne Mozley, 2 vols.; Longmans, Green & Co., London 1891. 'L oħtu, Harriet, 25-12-1832.

If e'er I fell beneath Thy rod,
 As through life's snares I go,
 Save me from David's lot, o God!
 And choose Thyself the woe.

How should I face Thy plagues? which scare
 And haunt, and stun, until
 The heart or sinks in mute despair
 Or names a random ill.

If else — then guide in David's path,
 Who chose the holier pain;
 Satan and man are tools of wrath —
 An angel's scourge is gain. (2)

Għaxart ijiem wara, fl-20 ta' Jannar, bħallikieku f'estasi ta' hena liema bħalu, hekk fisser il-ħsus li kienu jbaqbqu f'qalbu:

...Only imagine my pleasure at being in these places! I was in silent wonder; and everything so grand and beautiful, and the mode of conveyance such that I could look on without stop and without fatigue. I had Homer's *Odyssey*, Virgil and Thucydides with me, and seemed transported back to their times, for everything looks now just as it did then. Mountains cannot change...

...Well did Homer in the beginning of the *Odyssey* speak of it (Mt. Atlas) as supporting the heavens (as having *makràs kionas 'uranū*). It has just that effect if you take the Mediterranean as the great centre of the earth, and the sky stretched over it as a curtain. (3).

F'wahda mill-ittri ta' Newman insibu deskrizzjoni, meghjuna xi drabi b'xi tpingija, tal-kmamar li kellu fil-Lazzarett. Iżda nahseb li lilna aktar jolqotna li nkunu nafu kif Newman kien jahsibha dwar grajjiet niesna u r-relazzjonijiet bejn il-Knisja u l-Istat fi gżiritna:

Yesterday we met at the parlatorio Sir John Stoddart, Chief Justice to whom both Froude and I had letters. He gave us a good deal of curious information about the state of the Catholic Church in Malta.

(2) Ibid. 'l oħtu Harriet, qrib Malta 10-1-1833 (David Numbering the People).

(3) Ibid. lil J.-W. Bowden Esq., Lazzarett, Malta, 20-1-1833.

It seems Malta was not taken, but capitulated to us; and one of the provisions was that the laws and the religion should be inviolate. Now, the clergy here were independent altogether of the state in such a way as hardly in any other Catholic country at present. Till 1813 nothing was done, for the Government thought the island might be ceded at the peace; but, after Bonaparte's defeat in Russia, they resolved on keeping it. A Commissioner was sent out to adjust the legal and ecclesiastical system. Sir J. Richardson went on with it — when here in 1826 — and Sir J. Stoddart is going on with it now. He is introducing trial by jury, which at first sight is a problematical improvement. As to the clergy, they were tried in courts of their own (as in Becket's time), and irresponsible to the civil power. How was this to be altered? For a Catholic to violate the rights of the Church is a mortal sin, from which not even the Bishop—no one but the Pope can release him. Supposing, then, the King to make it law that the clergy should be subjected to the State courts, the execution of such a measure would, of course, rest with native magistrates; let them then enforce it against a priest, and then go to their confessor. The priest cannot absolve them; he has not the power: he can do nothing without the Pope's assent. This exemplifies the admirable system of the Papacy as an instrument of power. Accordingly, representations were made to the Pope — at that time Leo XII — and, though he was considered strict in his adherence to the privileges of the Church, the Government managed to gain a continual dispensation for the Catholic magistrates here; and that thus the clergy are virtually subject to the State courts. This system of dispensation is in force in Austria. (4).

Fl-istess ittra Newman isemmi wkoll il-kwistjoni ta' l-għażla ta' l-Isqof. Dak iż-żmien Malta kienet għadha seda suffraganea ta' Palermu; għalhekk, u wkoll għax baqa' jżomm is-sovranità fuq dil-gżira, ir-Re ta' Napli kien irid jaħtru hu. Izda sa dak iż-żmien ma kienx inqala' taħwid.

Newman jagħlaq l-ittra li semmejna b'paragrafu li jiġbor fih hafna tagħrif importanti; wahda mill-problemi li kienu jhawdu l-Gvern hi l-emigrazzjoni, għax in-nies kienet qed toktor wisq:

The Maltese are a very industrious race — a contrast to the Ionians. The most industrious servants at Corfu are Maltese.

(4) 'l oħtu Jemina, Lazzarett, Malta, 15-1-1833.

There was a plan some time since to relieve the place of its abundant population by sending them there; but, whether from the difference of religion or other cause, it did not answer. Malta increases by a thousand souls a year. It has the largest population on the smallest territory of any place in the world — above 100,000. Sir J. Stoddart said he had a plan for colonising them to Negropont. I suppose it would not do. (5).

Fit-23 ta' Jannar Newman temm iż-żmien tal-kwarantina. Iżda mal-lejl kien għadu kemm kellu xi żjajjar misterjużi. Hu u shabu lkoll semgħu xi passi. Iżda dawk il-ħsejjes kienu semgħuhom darbtejn ohra qabel. Madankollu ma tantx ta każ. Tassew li hemm l-erwieh il-ħżiena jigġerrew madwarna, iżda mbagħad hemm l-erwieh il-tajba li jħarsuna. Newman aktar sogħob bih għax meta qam jitkixxef ha rih li harbatlu l-pjanijiet kollha. Ir-rih kien tant qawwi li baqa' jiftakru hajtu kollha.

Iżda għalkemm hu ma setax jara wisq minn Malta, il-Kon-Kattidral ta' S. Gwann kien minn ta' l-ewwel li ra:

I have seen St. John's Church, and most magnificent it is. It is in the same style as St. Peter's; in richness and exactness, minuteness and completeness, far exceeding anything I have ever seen. I shall go to it once or twice more to get some more accurate notion of it. ... It is covered throughout with the most costly marbles and with gilding; a multitude of pictures — some very fine — some statuary, splendid tapestries, and silver lamps and candles of course. In the Chapel of the Communion are the famous silver rails which were saved from the clutches of Bonaparte by being painted to look like wood; he took away the gold rails. By this and similar acts the French have made themselves hated here. (6).

Iżda aktar 'il quddiem jissokta jfisser l-opinjoni tiegħu dwar dak li ra:

I have hitherto seen little of the Greek and Latin churches, but what I have seen fires me 'with great admiration'. I do not perceive that my opinion has in any respect changed about them; but it is fearful to have before one's eyes the perversion of all

(5) Ibid.; dal-proġett ta' emigrazzjoni jfakkarni f'wieħed tal-Gvernatur Straubensee, li fl-1872 ried jibgħat il-Maltin il-Jamaica.

(6) Ibid.; 'l ommu, 26-1-1833.

the best, the holiest, the most exalted feelings of human nature. Everything in St. John's Church is admirable, if it did not go too far; it is a beautiful flower run to seed. I am impressed with a sad presentiment, as if the gift of truth when once lost was lost for ever. (7).

Jitkellem ukoll fuq l-imġieba tal-Maltin ma' ġnus oħra. Ma għandniex ninsew li dak iż-żmien l-Ingilterra, Franza, Napli, ir-Russja, l-Ordni ta' S. Ġwann kollha kellihom l-ambizzjonijiet tagħhom dwar dil-gżira.

I was speaking just now of the Maltese disliking the French. They are said to like the Russians, as the Greeks do; but there is so much contradictory testimony. All agree that they are a very industrious race, being an exception to the general Mediterranean character; I suppose they are Arabs or Moors in great measure. Paul was Grand Master of the Order, and I suppose the Russians narrowly missing getting the island, instead of us, their troops, which were to have co-operated with the English, being suddenly called off to act together with the French against us, they appointed wealthy men as commanders of their vessels in these parts, with orders to spend a good deal of money among the Maltese population. About five years ago they quite enriched the place. At present there is extreme poverty. We are told that, if any other people were so distressed, there would be a mob of 400 or 500 starving men every morning at the Governor's palace. (8).

Newman, kif ġietu, ma satax jiġri wisq ma' Malta. Darba, meta r-rih kien tista' tghid hallieh għal kollox, mar sa S. Pawl il-Baħar bid-dgħajsa. Sata' wkoll idur xi ffit mat-toroq tal-Belt tagħna. Laqtuh id-djar ta' l-ibliet tagħna.

The houses are superb. They are great places. The Knights spent their money in houses and fortifications. The houses in Messina, Palermo and here (Naples) are very splendid, but they are inhabited in floors; whereas in Malta one man has the whole house, with its square court within, galleries, etc. (9).

(7) Ibid.

(8) Ibid. Dwar il-partitarji tar-Russja f'dawn l-ibhra, ftakar fil-Kaptan Guliermu Lorenzi fir-rumanz 'Nazju Ellul' ta' Ġ. Muscat Azzopardi.

(9) Ibid., 'l oħtu Harriet, Napli, 16-2-1833.

Fl-istess ittra, huwa jtkellem ukoll fuq it-'Town Planning' tal-belt Valletta u fuq is-swar:

The streets are straight, and at right angles to each other; the fortifications prodigious in point of size and extent, but not worth much in a military point of view, each Grand Master adding to his predecessor's work without unity of plan or use for modern purposes. (10).

Ta' bniedem sinċier li kien, Newman ma qaghadx jinheba wara sebghu, iżda stqarr b'wiċċu minn quddiem u qalilna x'feherlu mill-imġieba tal-Maltin ma' l-Ingliżi:

I forget what opinion I gave about the attachment of the Maltese to the English; our final and confirmed opinion was that they do not like us. England has laid a heavy corn tax on them, which galls them much; £120,000 is thus raised, which is profusely laid out in quasi-sinecures, and, after all, a balance is transmitted to England. Few Maltese are put into any posts of importance. It is urged, on the other hand, that responsible men, Englishmen of wealth, must be put into places which yet it is confessed none but Maltese deputies can execute. (11).

Newman halla 'l Malta ghal Sqallija fis-7 ta' Frar. Il-passiġġieri kienu bejn is-70 u t-80, ilkoll turisti, regghin lura minn Malta.

There was Prince Galitzin, and the wife of the Governor of Wallachia and Moldavia, and counts and princes numberless, who spat about deck and cabin without any concern, Poles, Russians, Germans, French. The only gentlemenlike men were the princes of Rohan, Carlists, who prosecuted Madame de Zeuchères last year. (12).

Wahda mill-ittri li Newman kiteb minn hawn Malta aktar 'il quddiem hija ta' interess partikolari ghalina. Fiha jtkellem fuq l-Ilsien Malti. Ma ninsewx li Newman kiteb aktar minn mitt sena ilu, u matul dan iż-żmien il-Malti ssokta jixrob fih bosta elementi godda:

Maltese itself is entirely or almost entirely Arabic; the mixture of Italian is for the most part confined to the city. It is cur-

(10) Ibid.

(11) Ibid.

(12) Ibid.,

ious to trace the consequent connection between it and Hebrew. I have seen tables of their correspondence and nearly all the common words in both languages (i.e. the necessities of life, etc.) are the same. The number of such agreements is very great. (13).

Iltqajt ma' xi nies hawn Malta li jghidu li Newman kiteb il-poezija tiegħu 'Lead kindly light' meta kien fuq il-baħar bejn Malta u Sqallija. Izda fil-ktieb li semmejna aktar 'il quddiem, u li kien publikat fuq talba ta' Newman, insibu li huwa kitibha fl-istrett ta' Bonifacio, meta kien riega' lura lejn l-Ingilterra. Il-hidna tal-grazzja t'Alla hija moħbija u siekta bħal taż-żerriegħa midfuna ġol-hamrija; il-konverżjoni ta' Newman ġrat f'Ottubru ta' l-1845.

(3). Ibid, lil Rev. Thomas Mozley, Ruma, 9-3-1833.

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