



**Tract No. 90: An Ecumenical Opportunity from the ‘Anglican’  
Newman**

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**ABSTRACT**

Newman remains an ecumenical figure held in high esteem by Roman Catholics and Anglicans. His ecumenical hermeneutics is observable in Tract No. 90. This Tract is a re-reading of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion ratified in 1571 as the fundamentals of the Anglican faith. This tract is the product of the Oxford Movement that returned to the Antiquity in view of resolving the Anglican faith crises epitomized by erastianism. This return to the Fathers of the Church had a lot of implications for the Anglican faith. Influenced by Antiquity, Newman rediscovered the common grounds between the Anglican faith and the church Catholic that inheres in the Roman Church. Thus, Tract No. 90 demonstrated that more things united the Nineteenth Anglicans and the Roman Catholics than what separated them.

**Keywords:** Newman; Tract No. 90; Roman Catholics; Anglicans.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Modern and contemporary discourse on faith and the church will always make reference to John Henry Newman (1801-1890). This is because Newman was capable of interpreting the signs of time as regards the faith crises of Victorian England and this hermeneutics was programmatic concerning the changes that were to place in modern Anglicanism. He arrived at this thanks to his historical consciousness: openness to learn from Antiquity (the teachings of the Fathers of the Church and ecclesial traditions), sincerity in re-receiving religious truths from patristic depositories, and careful dialogue with the religious truths and ideas promoted during his time. Consequently, Newman is considered an ecumenical figure celebrated within the Anglican and Roman Catholic ecclesial communities. The thrust of this work is to examine the ecumenical spirit in Newman’s *Tract No. 90* and its implication for contemporary inter-ecclesial communion. The treatment which follows is tripartite in structure: the first looks into historico-

doctrinal relevance of Tractarianism; the second part treats Newman's critical analyses of *Tract No. 90*; and the third assesses the ecumenical value of *Tract No. 90*.

### **Tractarianism within the Oxford Movement**

The Oxford Movement was more than a response to series of crises within nineteenth century Anglicanism. This is because its protagonists "represented a far-reaching programme not only to change the basis of relationship between the Church and the State but also to change the very nature of the National Church itself" (Herring 2002: 45). Furthermore, its renewal programme: cultural, spiritual and intellectual, "would involve the effective abandonment of one historical authority, the Reformation, and its wholesale replacement by antiquity, with all that that implied for the beliefs and practices of the Church" (Herring 2002: 45). This task of giving a new vision to Anglicanism led to constant modification of its ecclesiologies and doctrines as the Tractarians came to a fresh understanding of Catholic ecclesial traditions through their study of the Fathers. The appellation 'Tractarianism' is associated with the Oxford Movement because the tracts published by its key figures constituted the vital means of disseminating their thoughts. This intellectual powerhouse of the Oxford Movement evolved with time as its luminaries rediscover the riches of the Fathers and how these helped them to deal with the Anglican crises. The developmental character of the Tractarian theology can be seen in the changes in the thought of Pusey, Keble, and Newman (Herring 2002: 24). Herring expatiates:

Tractarianism as a belief system emerges as a dynamic rather than a static phenomenon. It changed and evolved over time, and different individual leaders came to personify different aspects of it.... Tractarianism, as it evolved over time, certainly had a different ethos as was increasingly perceived by other churchmen. In a host of beliefs and attitudes the Oxford Movement represented a fundamental break with the Anglican past (Herring 2002: 43-44).

Consequently, the fruits of this break with the (Reformation) past were disseminated through *the Tracts for the Times* that made a clarion call for a deeper appreciation of Christian doctrine and active participation in the sacramental life of the Church. With the support of many volunteers, *the Tracts for the Times* were circulated beyond the confines of Oxford city and many clergy from the rank of the High Churchmen introduced to their parishioners the pastoral initiatives of the Tractarians.

It was not all rosy for the Tractarian clergy who tried to implement the 'new programme' in their parishes. Often times they were suspected of 'Romanizing' the Church of England (Bernard 1980: 94). Nigel Yates points out that when pastors were transferred to new parishes; it was irksome for some parishioners to switch from the Tractarian religious attitude to another or vice-versa (Yates 1975: 2-9). This notwithstanding, the number of Tractarian clergy grew steadily but this growth did not change its status as a numerically small element in the Church of England.

Owen Chadwick also mentions that members of the Oxford Movement reacted to the manner by which the Evangelicals (the Low Churchmen) "set forth the Bible without reference to historic community of Christians, to whom the Scriptures had been given"; the reason being that this approach "was to breed error and individualism" (Herring 2016; 76). The Tractarians set out to correct this wrong use of the sacred scriptures by proposing scripture and ecclesial traditions as the two lungs that supply the Church its doctrinal 'oxygen'.

The volumes, that is the tracts, published during the first phase of Oxford Movement demonstrate another important element of this endeavour: its intellectual prowess that was meant "to recall men to ancient truths that had for too long been overlooked or had ceased, in an

age of indifference, to stir the pulse of faith” (Reardon, 1981; 92). Nevertheless, it is important to state that the Tractarians were not monolithic in their opinions concerning how Anglicanism should mirror the primitive Church. Paul Avis suggests that there were three areas of ecclesiological differences that stratified this movement, namely: (i) those who distorted the High Churchman Anglican tradition, denigrating it and claiming that they had maintained the apostolic faith; (ii) Tractarians who moved away gradually from the reformed traditions in Anglicanism, seeking to remove its protestant identity, and disenfranchise the Romanists and High Churchmen, and (iii) those who were Rome bound in their ecclesiologies, liturgy, and interpretation of ecclesial traditions (Avis 2010; 208). Richard Froude, Edward Manning, John Henry Newman belonged to the third area of ecclesiological difference.

Some Tractarians were also at pains at justifying the ecclesiological position of the great Anglican divines, namely, the *Via Media*. This position states that between the ‘corrupted’ Roman religion and the ‘extremism’ in Protestantism, the Anglican system remained a religious system that had a strong resemblance of the early Church because of its faithfulness to dogma, sacramental system, and anti-Romanism (Newman 2005: 45). However, after careful study of the Fathers of the Church, Newman critically observed: “Even if the *Via Media* were ever so positive a religious system, it was not as yet objective and real; it had no original anywhere of which it was the representative. It was at present a paper religion” (Newman 2005: 45). Newman’s doubts on this ecclesiological position did not diminish; hence he devoted more time to studying the Fathers of the Church on this matter. Chadwick suggests that Newman’s doubts later led him to have a second look at the liturgical books of the Roman Church especially the breviary which he treated positively in Tract No. 75. His devotion to the Liturgy of the Hours was decisive. It was this entry into the religious world of the Roman Church and other experiences that influenced the more Newman’s movement towards Rome (Chadwick 1990: 43).

On another note, Thomas Norris writes that Newman, being inspired by the model of ecclesiology dominant among the Fathers of the Church, speaks of hierarchical principle as cognate of the sacramental principle. This indicates that God who has revealed himself to humankind through Christ in his Church also willed that an ecclesial institution should preserve the revealed truth from corruption and also guide its salvific mission on earth. For this reason, Christ chose the apostles to carry on his work; they represented him as those who maintained order as regards sacred things. Within this frame work of hierarchical principle, the bishops are the successors of the apostles and as such building blocks for inter/intra ecclesial fellowship. What is more, by divine providence their authority through institutional Church is always in service of the entire ecclesial community and guarantee of the apostolic faith. Norris writes,

Finally, in the hierarchical principle he saw the truth that the bishops of the church were the successors to the apostles, and, as such guarantee of apostolic credentials of the Christian community. The church was a visible, as well as an invisible, reality set up by the Lord and not simply reducible to actual number of its members. When the Oxford Movement began in 1833, however, he wanted a ‘second reformation’ for the existing Anglican Church so that it might emulate the church of the Fathers and be its worthy modern successor (Norris 2010: 14).

In *Tract No. 90*, Newman tried to emulate the faith of the Fathers by re-reading *the Thirty-nine Articles of the Anglican Church* from their ecclesiologies of the one undivided Church, the Church Catholic. This tract published in 1841 was very controversial: many Anglican bishops and traditional High Churchmen who were hitherto favourably inclined to Tractarianism held it in suspicion or opposed their renewal program. Thus the criticisms and indignations against *Tract No. 90* marked the end of the publication of the Tracts (Herring 2016: 65). Four years of turbulence defined a lot in Newman’s life and later led to his reception into the Catholic Church

in 1845. This marked the end of the first phase of Oxford Movement and its Tractarian character.

The second phase of the Oxford Movement began after Newman's conversion to Catholicism and lasted from 1845 to 1890. It was Pusey who led the movement during this phase. The complaints of some bishops and High Churchmen over *Tract No. 90* together with the loss of some prominent churchmen to Rome made the Puseyites, the Anglo-Catholic reformers led by Pusey, refrain from emphasizing the basic doctrinal teaching of the Oxford Movement – the doctrine of apostolic succession (Griffin 1980: 71). This was expected because of the exodus of Anglicans to the Catholic Church. Perhaps the contents and arguments of *Tract No. 90*, meant to be reconciliatory, inadvertently evoked doubts over certain Anglican claims and because of this numerable Tractarians became Roman Catholics (Matthew 1981: 101). It is unlikely that Newman's goal for writing *Tract No. 90* was a call for ecumenism of return. However, this was partly an unintended consequence of this tract.

The achievements of the Oxford Movement are nicely summarised by Chadwick along these lines:

The Oxford Movement changed the external face, and the internal spirit, of the English religious life. But these changes were primarily religious, and only afterwards theological. They succeeded, far beyond the expectations of many, in transforming the atmosphere of English worship, in deepening the content of English prayer, in lifting English eyes, not only to their own insular tradition, but to the treasures of the Catholic centuries, whether ancient or modern (Chadwick 1990: 41).

It was mentioned above that Tractarians explored common theological themes in a dynamic way according to the concerns of the movement's main protagonists. This dynamism or variety was itself a characteristic feature of the movement as well as a hurdle to be surmounted for the sake of arriving at a holistic understanding of the Tractarian theology. *The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion* (1571) under consideration is derived from *the Forty-two Articles* of the Anglican faith (1563) remotely influenced by Thomas Cranmer who provided inspirational guidance to defining texts of Anglicanism (Avis 2010: 206).

### **Newman's Critical Analyses of *Tract No. 90* from the Lens of Antiquity**

In the Introduction to *Tract No. 90* entitled: *Remarks on Certain Passages in the Thirty-Nine Articles*, Newman states his primary aim for writing this tract.

It is often urged, and sometimes felt and granted, that there are in *the Articles* propositions or terms inconsistent with the Catholic faith; or, at least, when persons do not go so far as to feel the objection as of force, they are perplexed how best to reply to it, or how most simply to explain the passages on which it is made to rest. The following Tract is drawn up with the view of showing how groundless the objection is, and further of approximating towards the argumentative answer to it, of which most men have an implicit apprehension, though they may have nothing more (Newman 1841: 2).

As noted above, Newman's concern in *Tract No. 90* is to show that certain sections of *the Thirty-nine Articles*, the Declaration of Anglican faith, adjudged anti-Catholic, were not. Hence, they are consistent with the faith professed by the Church Catholic – that is the undivided Church. This was an important ecumenical task on the part of Newman especially when anti-Roman polemics in the Church of England was at its apogee. In this tract, Newman emphasizes what unites, *not* divides the Anglican Church with/from the Church Catholic. *Tract No. 90* was also an ecumenical opportunity from Newman; a chance that was too challenging for Anglican identity. In line with the scope of this article, the investigations on *Tract No. 90* will be limited

to the following topics: (i) Holy Scripture and the Authority of the Church, the Visible Church and the General Councils, (ii) the Sacraments, Transubstantiation and Masses, (iii) the Bishop of Rome, and (iv) Concluding Remarks on *Tract No. 90*.

### **1. Holy Scripture and the Authority of the Church, the Visible Church and the General Councils**

In *the Thirty-nine Articles*, Anglican declaration of faith on the Holy Scripture and the authority of the Church are treated in Articles 6 and 20, the Visible Church in Article 19, and the General Councils in Article 21; whereas in *Tract No. 90*, these ecclesiological issues are discussed in Paragraphs 1, 4, and 5 respectively.

First, in Paragraph One of *Tract No. 90*, Newman examines Articles 6 and 20 that deal with Scripture and the authority of the Church. Here, he reflects on the catholic interpretation of the meaning of the Holy Scripture, the meaning of the Church and their respective roles in the teaching of the revealed truths of the Christian faith as presented in *the Articles*.

Articles vi. [6] & xx [20]. – “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation ... The Church hath [power to decree (*statuendi*) rites and ceremonies, and] authority in controversies of faith; and yet it is not lawful for the Church to [ordain (*instituire*) anything that is contrary to God’s word written, neither may it] so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, yet [as it ought not to decree (*decernere*) anything against the same, so] besides the same, ought it not to enforce (*obtrudere*) anything to be believed for necessity of salvation” (Newman 1841: 5).

The above *Articles* indicate that Scripture is the depository of all the revealed truths necessary for salvation and that the Church is the sole custodian of the truths found there-in or derived from them. Concerning sacred texts that constitute the Holy Scriptures, Newman observes that *the Articles* consider them to be sacred writings whose authority was never doubted in the Church. However, he points out that even though historical facts show that the authority of the sacred writings – such as the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Apocalypse – had been a bone of contention in the Western and Eastern Churches; *the Articles* state in a strong and definite way that “there has been no doubt about them in the Church Catholic, that is, at the very first time that the Catholic or whole Church had the opportunity of forming a judgment on the subject, it pronounced in favour of the Canonical Books” (Newman 1841: 6). Here, Newman underscores the catholicity of the Anglican doctrine on the sacred writings – an important item in ecumenical dialogue and encounters.

As for what *the Articles* say regarding the authority of the Church in relation to Scriptures, Newman explains:

It is laid down that, 1. Scripture contains all necessary articles of the faith; 2. either in its text, or by inference; 3. The Church is the keeper of Scripture; 4. and a witness of it; 5. and has authority in controversies of faith; 6. but may not expound one passage of Scripture to contradict another; 7. nor enforce as an article of faith any point not contained in Scripture (Newman 1841: 7).

From the above itemization, it is evident that the authority of the Church is in the service of Scripture, especially in resolving doctrinal controversies. This ecclesial authority as regards Scripture also makes the Church the sole witness to the revealed truth. It also ensures that the articles of faith drawn from Scripture neither contradict themselves nor say that which cannot be

directly or indirectly justified by the sacred text. At the ecumenical level, when controversies arise on matters concerning the scriptures and doctrines, it is an ecumenical council that is saddled with the ecclesial responsibilities of rapprochement.

On another note, Newman observes that *the Articles* assert that Scripture is the rule of Anglican faith, yet they are silent on method of interpreting the Bible. He cautions that this silence on the part of the framers of *the Articles* does not mean an approval of the Protestant teaching that the Bible interprets itself. In addition, this silence is not a license to private and subjective explanation of the Bible as well as making same the ultimate standard for biblical hermeneutics because this will render unanimity in doctrinal issues difficult or impossible to reach. Nevertheless, Newman notes that some Anglican divines attempted to break this silence by appealing to the Rule of Faith as measure of authentic interpretation of the Bible ((Newman 1841: 8). After a detailed examination of the writings of important Anglican divines on the issue, he concludes:

These extracts show not only what the Anglican doctrine is, but, in particular, that the phrase ‘Rule of Faith’ is no symbolical expression with us, appropriated to some one sense; certainly not as a definition or attribute of Holy Scripture. And it is important to insist upon this, from the very great misconceptions to which the phrase gives rise. Perhaps its use had better be avoided altogether. In the sense in which it is commonly understood at this day, Scripture, it is plain, is *not*, on Anglican principles, the Rule of Faith (Newman 1841:11).

*Secondly*, in Paragraph Four of *Tract No. 90*, Newman investigates Article 19 that deals with the description of the Visible Church. He cites a portion of this *Article* as follows: “Art. Xix [19]. – The visible Church of CHRIST is a congregation of faithful men (*cœtus fidelium*), in which the pure Word of GOD is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered, according to CHRIST’S ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same” (Newman 1841:17). He intimates that this description of the Church explains the nature of the One Holy Catholic Church spread throughout the world. Newman supports this argument with elaborate references to the writings of Antiquity and that of Anglican divines: from Origen (c.184-253) to Pius II (1458-1464) and from the Confession of Augsburg (1530) to the Saxon Confession (1551) – a Protestant Confession of Faith that was drawn up for the Council of Trent (Newman 1841: 17-18).

For Newman, the Anglican description of the Church demonstrates that the ministration of the Word and sacraments indicate where a true ecclesial community is found. However, this description does not specify in detail if the question of episcopal succession or fellowship between the churches is necessary for being a perfect Church (Newman 1841: 18). He regrets that *the Articles* are not clear concerning episcopal succession or what fellowship with other branches of the Church Catholic entails. “As to the question of its limits, whether episcopal succession or whether intercommunion with the whole be necessary to each part of it, – these are questions, most important indeed, but of detail, and are not expressly treated of in *the Articles*” (Newman 1841: 18). Nevertheless, he concludes by maintaining that the Article asserts that the Church is visible community, a universal congregation, and fellowship of God’s faithful (Newman 1841: 20).

*Thirdly*, in Paragraph Five of *Tract No. 90*, Newman turns to the teaching authority of the Church Catholic by appealing to the convocations of General Councils of the Church as indicated in Article 21 of *the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England* which states that:

General councils may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of princes. And when they be gathered together, forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the SPIRIT and Word of GOD, they may err, and sometimes have erred, in things pertaining to GOD. Wherefore things ordained by them as

necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they are taken out of Holy Scripture (Newman 1841: 21).

As if he had in mind the Augustinian dictum related to the catholicity of ecclesial teaching office: *securus judicat orbis terrarum*, Newman differs from the above declaration in Article 21. He rather argues that when the Church gathers in the name of Christ and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is preserved from making mistakes on matters related to faith and doctrine. This position gives an indication towards what would be later called indefectibility of the church Universal pertaining matters of faith and morals.

That bodies of men, deficient in this respect, may err, is a self-evident truth, – unless, indeed, they be favoured with some divine superintendence, which has to be proved, before it can be admitted. General Councils then may err, *as such*; – may err, *unless* in any case it is promised, as a matter of express supernatural privilege, that they shall *not* err; a case which lies beyond the scope of this Article, or at any rate beside its determination...Such a promise, however, *does* exist, in cases when general councils are not only gathered together according to “the commandment and will of princes”, but *in the Name of CHRIST*, according to our LORD’S promise. The Article merely contemplates the human prince, not the King of Saints. While Councils are a thing of earth, their infallibility of course is not guaranteed; when they are a thing of heaven, their deliberations are overruled, and their decrees authoritative (Newman 1841: 21).

Newman states that besides the catholicity of the General Council, and the fact that it must be gathered in the name of Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; some catholic thinkers suggest that for acceptability of the teachings of General Councils, other conditions must be met. These conditions are: (i) the receptivity of its decrees by the Church Universal and (ii) the ratification of these decrees by the Pope (Newman 1841: 22).

## 2. The Sacraments, Transubstantiation, and Masses

In the *Thirty-nine Articles*, the Anglican declaration of faith concerning the sacraments, transubstantiation, and Masses are explained in Articles 25, 27, and 31; Newman explores the undivided Church’s understanding of these Articles in Paragraphs 7, 8, and 9 of *Tract No. 90*.

First, Newman begins his examination of the catholic sense of Article 25 which deals with the sacrament by citing the paragraph below.

Art. Xxv [25]– Those five, commonly called Sacraments, that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown, partly of the corrupt following (*pravâ imitatione*) of the Apostles, partly from states of life allowed in the Scriptures; but yet have not like nature of sacraments, (*sacramentorum eandem rationem,*) with Baptism and the LORD’S Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of GOD (Newman 1841: 43).

He infers that the above declaration does not necessarily say that confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction are not sacraments. Therefore, in as much as they are visible signs of invisible grace, they might be called sacraments. However, given that baptism and the Lord’s Supper are precisely sacraments of the Gospel, that is, outward signs ordained by Christ; the other five may be considered sacraments though not in the same sense as the two indicated in the Gospel. Thus, Newman asserts that Anglicanism has two senses of the sacrament: the wider and the stricter. The wider sense applies to the five sacraments and the

stricter sense concerns baptism and the Lord's Supper. Based on the above reasons, he avers that both definitions are acceptable within the Anglican Communion (Newman 1841: 43-44). From the preceding arguments, Newman seems to adduce that there are seven sacraments in Anglicanism. Nevertheless, he remarks,

The Roman Catholic considers that there are seven [sacraments]; we do not strictly determine the number. We define the word generally to be an 'outward sign of an inward grace', without saying to how many ordinances this applies. However, what we do determine is, that CHRIST has ordained two special sacraments, as *generally necessary to salvation*. This, then, is the characteristic mark of those two, separating them from all other whatever; and this is nothing else but saying in other words that they are the only *justifying* rites, or instruments of communicating the Atonement, which is the one thing necessary to us. Ordination, for instance, gives *power*, yet without making the soul *acceptable* to GOD; Confirmation gives *light and strength*, yet is the mere *completion* of Baptism; and Absolution may be viewed as a negative ordinance removing the *barrier* which sin has raised between us and that grace, which by inheritance is ours. But the two sacraments 'of the Gospel', as they may be emphatically styled, are the instruments of inward *life*, according to our LORD'S declaration, that Baptism is a new *birth*, and that in the Eucharist we eat the *living* bread (Newman 1841: 46).

The above explanation supports the stricter meaning of the sacraments without refuting the wider sense of sacraments that Newman considers acceptable in Anglicanism.

Secondly, concerning transubstantiation, Article 28 says: "Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine, in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions" (Newman 1841: 47). Newman states that *the Article* in question does not refer to technical expressions concerned with the doctrine of transubstantiation, for example: substance and substantial change, rather it refutes popular superstitious beliefs that were associated with this doctrine. Thus, he argues that *the Article*

opposes itself to a certain plain and unambiguous statement, not of this or that Council, but one generally received or taught both in the schools and in the multitude, that the material elements are changed into an earthly, fleshly, and organized body, extended in size, distinct in its parts, which is there where the outward appearances of bread and wine are, and only does not meet the senses, nor even withdrawn from the senses always (Newman 1841: 51).

How then did Anglican divines express (in sacramental language) the belief that there is a kind of divine presence in the Eucharist? Newman explains.

In the note at the end of the Communion Service, it is argued, that a body cannot be in two places at once; and that therefore the Body of CHRIST is not *locally* present, in the sense in which we speak of the bread as being locally present. On the other hand, in the Communion Service itself, Catechism, Articles, and Homilies, it is plainly declared, that the Body of CHRIST is in a mysterious way, if not locally, yet really present, so that we are able after some ineffable manner to receive It. Whereas, then, the objection stands, 'CHRIST is not really here, because He is not locally here', our formularies answer, 'He is really here, yet not locally...' (Newman 1841: 54).

He continues,

Such seems to be the mystery attending our LORD and SAVIOUR; He has a *body*, and that *spiritual*...The Body and Blood of CHRIST may be really, literally present in the holy Eucharist, yet not having become present by local passage, may still literally and really be on GOD'S right hand; so that, though they be present in deed and truth, it may be impossible, it may be untrue to say, that they are literally in the elements, or about them, or



in the soul of the receiver. These may be useful modes of speech according to the occasion; but the true determination of all such questions may be this, that CHRIST'S Body and Blood are locally at GOD'S right hand, yet really present here, – present here, but not here in place, – because they are spirit (Newman 1841: 55).

Based on the confirmations mentioned above, Newman means that *the Article* on Transubstantiation disapproves of superstitious beliefs concerning the manner of divine presence in the Eucharist, but acknowledges that the consecrated bread is the Body of Christ (Newman 1841:55). Nevertheless, Anglicanism affirms the doctrine of Real Presence in the Eucharist; but the divergence lies in the mode of presence.

Thirdly, Newman examines Article 30 that tackles misconceptions concerning the celebration of Masses for the dead. The said Article reads: “The sacrifice (*sacrificia*) of Masses, in which it was commonly said, that the priests did offer CHRIST for the sick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits (*perniciosæ imposturæ*)” (Newman 1841: 59). He argues that Article 30 does not say anything against the celebration of Mass for the dead by the Roman Church; rather it disavows fables and erroneous opinions on how Christ was being offered at the Eucharistic sacrifice in favour of departed souls.

That the “blasphemous fable” is the teaching that masses are sacrifices for sin distinct from the sacrifice of CHRIST'S death, is plain from the first sentence of the Article. “The offering of CHRIST *once made*, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for *all* the sins of the *whole world, both original and actual*. And *there is none other* satisfaction for sin, but *that alone....*” (Newman 1841: 60).

The truth is that the redemptive work of Christ is the only perfect remedy for sin. Thus, *the Article* infers that the only satisfaction for sin is Christ rather than the Masses offered for the dead because of the abuses that were associated with this Roman Catholic practice. The following remark illustrates some of the erroneous practices that the Article criticizes.

What dens of thieves the Churches of England have been made by the blasphemous *buying and selling the most precious body and blood of CHRIST in the Mass*, as the world was made to believe, at dirges, at months minds, at rentals, in abbeys and chantries, besides other horrible abuses, (GOD'S holy name be blessed forever), which we now see and understand (Newman 1841: 61).

Furthermore, Newman maintains that *the Article* in question does not repudiate the Mass *per se* and its expiatory value in favour of the dead. But it disapproves of opinions that presented the Mass, on the one hand, “as independent of or distinct from the Sacrifice on the Cross, which is blasphemy; and, on the other, its being directed to the emolument of those to whom it pertains to celebrate it, which is imposture in addition” (Newman 1841: 63). In the light of Newman's re-reading of *the Article* on the doctrine of Transubstantiation as well as his arguments in favour of the Mass, it becomes evident that he would assent to the practice of offering Masses as a way of praying for the faithful departed. This is because the same Christ who is the only satisfaction for sins is the One offered by the Church at Mass for departed souls (Gilley 1982: 252).

### 3. The Bishop of Rome

In the first place, Newman affirms that whoever considers himself or herself an Anglican, must profess the 37th Article of the Anglican faith declaration which states that: “The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England”. This is because apart from the Anglican branch theory of the Church, papal power and authority were not recognized in England as a Sovereign State. On the other hand, from doctrinal perspective, the Anglicans argue that papal supremacy is not directly derived from revelation as documented in Scripture. For them, the papacy is rather an event which took place in a certain historical context of the Church within the ambit of divine providence. And that it does not add any grace to the Christian life (Newman 1841: 90, 77).

Secondly, Newman attempts to situate the role of the pope within Anglican ecclesiology. Anglican ecclesiology holds that each Church headed by its bishop is an independent, complete, and perfect ecclesial body. From this argument, Newman infers that intercommunion among the Churches does not consist in visible unity or mutual understanding but in what they share in common: (i) apostolic faith, (ii) the sacraments, (iii) apostolic succession, and (iv) episcopacy. Newman confirms his thought on intercommunion by making reference to one of the Anglican views in this manner.

The Anglican view of the Church has ever been this: that its portions need not otherwise have been united together for their essential completeness, than as being descended from one original. They are like a number of colonies sent out from a mother-country.... Each Church is independent of all the rest, and is to act on the principle of what may be called Episcopal independence, except, indeed, so far as the civil power unites any number of them together ... Each diocese is a perfect independent Church, is sufficient for itself; and the communion of Christians one with another, and the unity of them altogether, lie, not in a mutual understanding, intercourse, and combination, not in what they do in common, but in what they are and have in common, in their possession of the Succession, their Episcopal form, their Apostolical faith, and the use of the Sacraments.... Mutual intercourse is but an *accident* of the Church, not of its essence.... Intercommunion is a duty, as other duties, but is not the tenure of instrument of the communion between the unseen world and this (Newman 1841: 90, 78).

Furthermore, Newman maintains that Anglicanism teaches that all bishops have equal power by virtue of apostolic succession, though they differ only in rank, that is, one bishop being superior to the another; perhaps because of his years of service or the See he supervises. It is on the grounds of this difference in rank that Newman accords to the Bishop of Rome and the head of the Roman Catholic Church the primacy of order or rank. Nevertheless, he insists that this primacy of order does not make the pope the center of unity for the entire Church.

And much more the confederacy of Sees and churches, the metropolitan, patriarchal, and papal systems, are matters of expedience or of natural duty from long custom, or of propriety from gratitude and reverence, or of necessity from voluntary oaths and engagements, or of ecclesiastical force from the canons of Councils, but not necessary in order to the conveyance of grace, or for fulfilment of the ceremonial law, as it may be called, of unity. Bishop is superior to bishop only in rank, not in real power; and the Bishop of Rome, the head of the Catholic world, is not the centre of unity, except as having a primacy of order. Accordingly, even granting, for argument's sake, that the English Church violated a duty in the 16th century, in releasing itself from the Roman supremacy, still it did not thereby commit that special sin, which cuts off from it the fountains of grace, and is called schism. It was essentially complete without Rome, and naturally independent of it; it had, in the course of years, whether by usurpation or not, come under the supremacy of

Rome; and now, whether by rebellion or not, it is free from it: and as it did not enter into the Church invisible by joining Rome, so it was not cast out of it by breaking from Rome. These were accidents in its history, involving, indeed, sin in individuals, but not affecting the Church as a Church (Newman 1841: 78-79).

Finally, from the above reference, Newman affirms that intercommunion among the Churches is only a duty but not an instrument of fellowship or communion between the visible Church and the unseen world (invisible Church). For this reason, he remarks that the Church of England *only* failed in its duty of intercommunion by separating from the Roman supremacy; and it cannot be accused of schism because it still remains part of the one Church. More so, he infers that the Anglican Church remains complete and independent after cutting off from Rome because it entered into the one Body of Christ rather than the Church of Rome, thus, it continues to be a branch of the one Church after separating from Rome.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks on Tract No. 90

In the Concluding Remarks to *Tract No. 90*, Newman presents a seven-point justification for his Catholic interpretation of *the Thirty-nine Articles* of the Church of England.

*Firstly*, that his catholic interpretation of *the Articles* is a duty he owes the church Catholic and its Anglican branch since making reference to doctrinal sources of the primitive Church is not contrary to the principles of the undivided Church. In addition, it is a salutary task for the Anglican Church given that *the Articles* had undergone various revisions from several Convocations – even revisions that deviate from their original meaning. Hence, re-awakening its catholic sense is worthwhile.

*Secondly*, since the Book of Common Prayer is imbued with a catholic sense as regards liturgy and worship, the catholic interpretation of *the Articles* is meant to bring harmony between belief and prayer.

*Thirdly*, given that *the Articles* were first promulgated when the leading men of the Church of England were noted for their fervent catholic views about religion and also because their views are being appealed to in *Tract No. 90*, the presentation of the catholic sense of *the Articles* is justifiable.

*Fourthly*, because *Tract No. 90* draws a lot from the writings of Philippe Melancthon (1497-1560), a German Reformer, noted for his catholic orientation and from whose thought the declaration of *the Thirty-nine Articles* was principally drawn, the catholic reading of *the Articles* for a reformed Church of England is in the right direction ((Newman 1841: 47).

*Fifthly*, since the formulations of *the Articles* left opened questions on which the controversies with Rome rested, they give room for filling in the missing facts. More so, their broad manner in stating revealed truths and silence on certain issues gives room for possible amendments and enrichment suggested in *Tract No. 90*.

*Sixthly*, Article 35 on *Homilies*, makes a lot of references to the Fathers of the Church and Catholic Antiquity and *Tract No. 90* appeals to the same authority, hence its Catholic interpretation of *the Articles* is in line with the Anglican spirit.

*Seventhly*, the framers of *the Articles* – who were moderate reformers – had in mind those who were not adherents to that extreme Protestant views which characterized popular Protestantism of the Victorian era; hence their true heirs, successors and representative are the Anglo-Catholics. Therefore, a catholic reading of *the Articles* of faith they framed means following their footsteps (Newman 1841: 80-85).

Newman's attempt to show that *the Thirty-nine Articles* were compatible with the doctrines of the church Catholic as articulated in teachings of the primitive Church and the teachings of

the Council of Trent was condemned by the Anglican bishops, the professors, and the divines in Oxford University. Consequently, he resigned from the pulpit at St. Mary's Church as well as his Oriel College fellowship. There was a widespread disaffection with *Tract No. 90* and, because of this, the Anglican authorities condemned it and banned its circulation as well as any further publication of the *Tracts for the Times* (Allitt 1997: 53)

After the publication of *Tract No. 90* and the controversies and the tensions it generated, Newman left to settle at Littlemore. The months preceding his conversion to the Roman Church were moments of great trials and personal afflictions as regards his core ecclesial beliefs. The Editors of the print media were focused on Newman and the *Tract No. 90* controversy. He noted his weariness of the situation in his *Apologia*.

The Bishops still go on charging against me, though I have quite given up: it is that secret misgiving of heart which tells me that they do well, for I have neither lost nor part with them: this it is what weighs me down. I cannot walk into or out of my house, but curious eyes are upon me. Why will you not let me die in peace?... Let me alone, I shall not trouble you long (Newman 2005: 112).

From the foregoing, Newman shows that the catholic interpretation of the Bible and its relationship with the Church as the custodian of faith is crucial for every authentic ecclesial community. Thus, in view of avoiding discrepancies in the interpretation of the Bible and the explication of Christian doctrine, he maintains that it is not the duty of the individual to make his or her private and subjective interpretation of the sacred texts and ecclesial doctrines. Rather each member of the Church under the pastoral care of one's bishop has to assent to what the entire Church holds and believes as witnessed in the Apostolic Creed, and express his/her views within the ambit of the ecclesial understanding of the faith.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this article looks at the ecumenical value of *Tract No.90*. The socio-religious context of nineteenth century England and intricacies of the Oxford Movement together with antagonism faced by Tractarianism bring out the ecumenical mind of the 'Anglican' Newman as knitted together on the pages of *Tract No. 90*. The approach of Newman to Roman Catholic Church through the lens of Antiquity (the teachings of the undivided Church) shows how humble openness to the truth can sustain a reconciliatory dialogue that is very crucial to ecumenical spirit.

In the first instance, Newman appeals to *generous hermeneutics* as regards faith, doctrine, and ecclesial traditions. Concerning the interpretation of the ecclesial faith, he argues that the essentials of the faith should be the common departure for Christian belief. Here, he avers that the Creed remains a heritage of the Church Catholic wherein the sacred scriptures bear witness to the articulations of ecclesial faith. Contemporary landmarks in ecumenical dialogue also take seriously the Apostles' Creed or Nicene-Constantinople Creed.

In relation to the sacraments, this generous hermeneutics is evident in Newman's assessment of Anglican sacramentology. He arrived at this by making case for a dual sense of Anglican doctrines on the sacraments: the stricter and the wider one. The former tilted towards 'Protestant' understanding of the Lord's ordinances in the Bible and the latter embraced the traditional belief of the primitive Church. In stating that Anglicanism has two views on the sacraments, Newman conciliated view speaks volumes for intercommunion among ecclesial communities. Without succumbing to compromise, a wider and stricter sense interpretation is a promising ecumenical resource.

Secondly, this generous hermeneutics is replicated in Newman's understanding of ecclesial unity a duty for all the baptized. The intercommunion that exists between Anglicans and Roman Catholics is consequent on the premise that both are being grafted into the Body of Christ through the sacrament of baptism. Hence, Newman considers the nurturing of this intercommunion as a duty. Based on this, Newman admits that the Anglican Church of the sixteenth century failed in its duty of preserving the intercommunion that should exist between churches. Technically, he argues that by the very fact of baptism, Anglicans are members of the one church of Christ; and this is true. But it broke intercommunion with the ecclesial body that evangelized her through the mission of St. Augustine.

Finally, the prayer of Jesus that his Body may remain one (Cf. Jn. 17:21) could be translated into a *duty* towards intercommunion whenever and wherever there is disunity among Christians. This duty demands patience, prayer, careful journeying together, and openness to the truth. When ecclesial communities see intercommunion as a gradual task anticipated by the prayer of Jesus Christ for ecclesial unity, more ecumenical fruits will be harvested from this sense of duty. Newman did just this in *Tract No. 90*.

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