

Lionel Groulx's Synthesis of the "Universal" and the "Particular"

Norman F. Cornett

"C'est d'ailleurs cet ultramontanisme qui marqua l'axe essentiel de sa pensée qui assurait sans cesse la médiation entre des principes universels et leur application dans un milieu particulier, le Canada français."¹ So Yvan Lamonde summarizes the thought of Louis-Adolphe Pâquet. Yet, how to relate rightly the catholic, i.e., "universal" premise of Roman Catholicism with the "particularist" principle of French-Canadian nationalism, was a dilemma which no theologically informed clerical nationalist could avoid. All the more so because Western society in the first half of the twentieth century was dominated by virulent nationalism, which was in fundamental opposition to the ethos of Christianity, to say nothing of Christian ethics and the doctrine of the Church.

As a militant French-Canadian nationalist, and at the same time an ordained priest with earned doctorates in theology and philosophy, Groulx too was obliged to reconcile Roman Catholic "universalism" and French-Canadian "particularism." His schema of the "universal" and the "particular" was akin to the somewhat radical nationalism of latter nineteenth-century, French-Canadian ultramontanists; epitomized in Mgr. Louis-François Richer Laflèche (1818-1898) and Jules-Paul Tardivel (1851-1905). His rationale for the "universal" and the "particular" went beyond their mediation à la Pâquet, to the assimilation of the "universal" by the "particular."

Ultramontanism was the doctrinal antecedent of his concept of the "universal" and the "particular." The expression "pour la Patrie et Dieu" and its variants, was a leitmotif of young Groulx's thought. Huot and Bergeron

observe, "De plus en plus, Groulx utilisera cette expression dans son journal pour exprimer les deux pôles de son idéal, pôles d'ailleurs inextricablement liés dans la pensée nationaliste de l'époque, en particulier la pensée ultramontaine."² This scheme readily equated the nation with the "particular," and the Church, vicariously on God's behalf, with the "universal." The fundamentalist nationalism of Laflèche, Tardivel, Pâquet, et. al., amply provided the precedent for such an ecclesiastico-nationalist interpretation of the "universal" and the "particular." Laflèche left his mark on Groulx, as is obvious in his journal:

Aujourd'hui encore, nous avons au milieu de nous le vénérable évêque de Trois-Rivières, Monseigneur Laflèche, qui venait nous visiter juste au lendemain de ses quatre-vingts ans . . . Qu'on doit être heureux de pouvoir montrer ses cheveux blancs, et de dire comme faisait un grand orateur: Messieurs voyez ce qu'a fait le service de la patrie! . . . C'est une histoire vivante il a connu toutes les phases difficiles par lesquelles nous sommes passés dans le cours du siècle . . . L'avenir du peuple canadien voilà ce qui le préoccupe; ah! Si l'on savait ce qu'il peut y avoir de vrai patriotisme dans le coeur d'un prêtre, comme plusieurs des détracteurs de l'église se verraient désarmés.³

These reflections betray the motive for Groulx's nationalist apologetic for Roman Catholicism, i.e., the Church's precariousness in Québec. He was, on the one hand, acutely aware of nationalism's militant, two-edged character in French-Canadian society. It could be the Church's cutting edge therein. On the other hand, it could provoke the Church's excision therefrom on the facile supposition of Roman Catholicism's inherent antagonism to it. True to the Christian apologist's challenge, he attempted to harness French-Canadian nationalism for the

Church. However, to do so he ran the risk of compromising Christianity's "universalism," a temptation all too alluring to a militant nationalist such as Groulx.

Nevertheless, the animus of his apologetic was unmistakably ultramontanist. His concern was to demonstrate the Church's solution to Québec's problems. In this way its popularity and pre-eminence therein could be secured. His August 28, 1929 letter to Mgr. Georges-Alexandre Courchesne (1880-1950) attests to the polarization of Church and State, which characterized the ultramontanist social model:

Je suis content de voir M. Perron chargé de nos intérêts agricoles — Son programme est une pièce magistrale — C'est la première fois en notre histoire, à mon avis, qu'un homme politique ose se tailler une pareille besogne de géant. Mais aussi, je suis effrayé pour le prestige de notre clergé. Le nouveau ministre l'a déclaré: il veut s'appuyer sur des organismes agricoles — Ces organismes où les trouvera-t-il? L'Union catholique est-elle en état de les lui fournir assez rapidement? Le clergé est-il préparé à donner un grand effort en faveur de l'Union? Si des organismes indépendants, suscités par le clergé, ne surgissent point, le ministre qui a du Mussolini dans la volonté, ne va-t-il pas créer des organismes administratifs? Pour moi, c'est une course entre l'État et l'Église — Si celle-ci rattrape le temps perdu, elle peut encore persuader le peuple qu'elle demeure sa grande auxiliaire — Sinon, notre peuple se détourne du clergé pour ne plus compter que sur l'État.⁴

In the ultramontane construct of Church and nation the reconciliation of the "universal" and the "particular" was effected through the premise of French Canada's providential mission. By implication, therefore,

the Church and the nation had basic affinities. Foremost among these were their common origin, i.e., Providence; raison d'être, i.e., mission; and final end (*telos*), i.e., the kingdom of God. Their predicated proximity inevitably promoted the telescoping of the Church into the nation. John Hare traces the thought of Laflèche, Tardivel, Pâquet, Groulx, et. al., in this regard:

Toute la pensée politique de Tardivel s'alimente à sa croyance ferme dans la mission providentielle de l'Église . . . Thomas Chapais et Lionel Groulx continuèrent au XXe siècle la tradition providentialiste en histoire.

À la suite des historiens, des chefs de file se penchèrent sur l'avenir du Canada français, évoquant la mission providentielle des Canadiens français. Le premier exposé important de cette idée se trouve dans l'oeuvre de Monseigneur Laflèche. *Quelques considérations sur les rapports de la société civile avec la religion et la famille* (Trois Rivières 1866, 37-62). Selon Monseigneur Laflèche, les Canadiens français constituent une nation et la vallée du Saint-Laurent est leur patrie. Cependant, leur mission est essentiellement religieuse; celle de l'établissement du royaume de Dieu en Amérique du Nord . . .

. . . Enfin il faut souligner le sermon de Monseigneur Pâquet, *Sermon sur la vocation de la race française en Amérique* (1902) . . . Tardivel demeure ainsi le premier à relier directement la mission providentielle des Canadiens français à la création d'un état catholique au Québec . . .

Par la suite, Groulx modifiera quelque peu sa pensée, mais n'en prolongera pas moins l'influence de Tardivel jusqu'à nos jours.⁵

The obvious corollary of this rationale for the congruity of the Church and the nation, was the tendency to telescope the "universal" into the "particular." It is at this juncture that Groulx went beyond the ultramontane-nationalist argument and developed his own construct of the "universal" vis-à-vis the "particular." In his scheme the "particular" obviated the "universal" by "incarnating" it. While the mediation of the "universal" and the "particular" distinguished Pâquet's schema, in contrast, the "particular" assimilated the "universal" according to Groulx's paradigm. Indeed, he went the length and, in effect, posited that the "particular" is the "universal" — on the model of the "Incarnation." The implications of this premise were both profound and myriad in his thought.

In *Mes Mémoires* he professed that he had sought throughout his life to reconcile the "universal" and the "particular," alias the national. In the arts, for example, he asserted "On me le pardonnera, sans doute, pour la méritoire conciliation que je tente, après tant de fois, entre le nationalisme littéraire et le culte de l'universel."⁶ Likewise, he considered it an axiom of the faith that Christianity requires the fundamental resolution of the "universal" and the "particular" because of its "incarnate" nature. Supposedly by virtue of the latter, Christianity centrifugally gravitates to both these poles, yet all the while maintains its essential monism. He observed, "Pour concilier les deux tendances apparemment divergentes de l'universalisme et de l'incarnation de la foi catholique, il aimait répéter: «Tout l'univers dans les yeux, mais les pieds quelque part.»"⁷ Significantly, Groulx associated the "particular" pole of Roman Catholicism with the principle of the "incarnation" of the faith. This was a crucial equation because the "universal" is a *sine qua non* of the "incarnation." Therefore his conception of the "particular" actually encompassed the "universal."

While he acknowledged the "universal" and the "particular" as the twin loci of epistemology, the "particu-

lar" was, nevertheless, effectively the prime referent of his rationale. He believed it to be both the origin of the "universal" and the sole means to attain the latter. It is the *modus operandi* of the "universal."

His logic, therefore, proceeded by induction from the "particular" in order to ascertain the "universal." In this respect his rationale was distinctly Aristotelian. It attests the influence of the strong modern revival of "Thomism" on Groulx's thought. He challenged,

En quoi donc nos responsabilités intellectuelles pourraient-elles gêner notre vie littéraire? Je le cherche vainement. Combinée avec les soucis légitimes du nationalisme littéraire, il apparaît plutôt que la préoccupation de l'universel, loin d'affaiblir ou d'atténuer la personnalité de l'artiste ou de l'écrivain, ne fait que la dilater et la fortifier. Pour un peuple comme pour un individu, il n'est qu'une façon d'être original, c'est d'être soi-même. Nous faire distincts de tous, rester le plus possible de notre terre, de notre race, mais aussi de notre foi, n'est-ce pas le plus sûr moyen, pour nous, d'atteindre à la puissante originalité?⁸

A corollary of this epistemological perspective was his conviction that historical methodology must proceed from the "particular," specifically the historian's *Sitz im Leben*. He rejected outright the notion of the historian abstracted from his/her milieu in order to gain objectivity. In his acceptance speech of the *Prix Champlain*, May 24, 1958, Groulx professed,

Je ne me dissimule pas davantage les lacunes ou les infirmités de mon oeuvre d'histoire . . . Je ne me suis jamais cru, un citoyen du monde avant d'être un citoyen de mon pays et d'abord de mon petit pays. N'en concluez pas pour autant que

j'aie tenté de faire Canadien français et catholique. Mais il se trouve que, par naissance et par une longue suite d'ancêtres . . . je suis de nationalité canadienne-française; et il est arrivé que mon baptême m'a valu le transcendant privilège d'appartenir à la foi catholique . . . Tout simplement j'ai travaillé comme j'ai respiré, dans l'air de mon pays, de mon temps, de ma foi; j'ai obéi aux penchants, aux lois intimes de mon être, laissant aux grands esprits de courir après la chimère de l'universel, pour n'atteindre trop souvent que la grisaille, l'anonymat et la médocrité.⁹

Interestingly, he noted that this specific part of his speech was, "À retenir surtout p. 3, 4, 5 *défense de ma manière* [italics his] *en histoire.*"¹⁰ He was often the object of his apologetic, especially his writing of history.

"Particularism" was the bench mark of historiography for Groulx. In a speech, January 10, 1965, he trenchantly affirmed that history is necessarily "particularist." His statement is all the more revealing since he concluded with a declaration that "particularism" is the cornerstone of French Canada's "distinct society." Consequently, it is the requisite ideological lever to attain Québec's nationalist ends in federal-provincial relations. He was a shrewd pragmatist of the political uses of culture in general and history in particular:

La conception de l'histoire, de sa rédaction et de son enseignement, tels que proposés récemment par une certaine commission que je n'ai pas besoin de désigner, aurait de quoi nous gravement inquiéter . . . Il n'existe pas d'histoire passe-partout. Si l'on prenait à la lettre la recommandation dont je parlais tout à l'heure, il ne serait pas excessif d'y voir l'offensive la plus astucieuse jamais conçue pour dénationaliser les Canadiens

français . . . On aura beau faire: l'histoire du Québec ne sera jamais l'histoire de la Colombie britannique ni vice versa . . .

Mes amis, veillez bien sur nos caractéristiques les plus originales. Nous ne pouvons tout de même, pour obtenir d'Ottawa une autonomie sans cesse croissante, invoquer, notre état de province "pas comme les autres," différente, et en même temps, nous acharner chez nous à l'abolition de toutes nos différences.¹¹

In Groulx's schema, Christianity's "transcendence" is the liaison between the "universal" and the "particular." As a result, it bridges Roman Catholicism and the nation. This was a clever interpretation. It turned the tables on the contemporary protest that nationalism subverted Christianity by using it for temporal ends. Groulx riposted that it was precisely because of its "transcendence" that Roman Catholicism could become the animus of the nation and thereby spiritualize it. Theoretically at least, this was his conception of its "transcendence" vis-à-vis nationalism. He admonished,

Petit peuple, l'un des plus petits des Amériques, chargés pourtant d'une mission qui ferait plier un géant, attachons-nous à notre foi, non par simple pragmatisme, comme feraient des sociologues ou des historiens agnostiques, n'y voyant qu'une force sociale, une tradition nationale entre bien d'autres, d'une essence supérieure tout ou plus, mais trop emmêlée à notre vie pour l'en arracher sans grave dérangement inférieur; attachons-nous à notre catholicisme pour ce qu'il est, pour sa transcendance, comme à la loi intérieure des meilleures civilisations, comme au levain par quoi les petits peuples deviennent grands.¹²

Although "transcendence" achieves the rapprochement of the "universal" and the "particular," "incarnation" nevertheless effects their integration. This archetype was the catalyst of Groulx's thought. The reciprocity of these antithetical ideals emanated concentrically from this conceptual epicentre: the divine and the human, the "universal" and the "particular," the "transcendent" and the "immanent," the "spiritual" and the "temporal," the Church and the nation. Most importantly, by virtue of an "incarnate" ecclesiology, he equated the "particular" with the "universal," since the "universal" Church is inexorably "incarnate" in the "particular." He insisted on the "immanence" of Roman Catholicism. Ironically, he argued for the "particularism" of the "universal" Church. In reference to the 1940-1950 generation of *L'Action catholique*, Groulx bitterly remarked:

Ces jeunes gens ne parleront que d'Église universelle, comme si leur Église ne faisait point partie de l'Église universelle; cette Église, ils oublieront même qu'il fallait d'abord la servir, la défendre, se vouer à son épanouissement en leur pays. À un groupe d'entre eux je dirai un jour: «Sans doute, catholiques, nous appartenons, de par tout notre être, à l'Église universelle. Et il faut toujours prier, travailler, ayant dans l'esprit la grande Institution sans pourtant jamais oublier que cette Église universelle s'incarne partout, même en Italie, même à Rome, en un pays, en un peuple, en une culture particularistes . . .»¹³

However, the nation is not the Church. How then could the "universal" be "incarnate" in the national? More to the point, how did Groulx establish the synonymy of the "universal" and the "particular" in the nation? He attempted to resolve this dilemma by arguing tendentiously for the Roman Catholic "particularism" of French Canada. This assured the national conjunction of the

"universal" and the "particular." His rationale was unequivocal in this regard, albeit theologically tenuous and suspect in the extreme: "Regardons en nous et autour de nous. Notre foi constitue notre plus forte part d'originalité. Rien ne nous marque au Canada et en Amérique, rien ne nous distingue — et dans tous les sens du mot — autant que notre catholicisme . . ."14

While the nation is not the Church, Groulx none the less believed it to be an appropriate vessel for Roman Catholicism. He understood the nation to be, like the Church, a "spiritual," collective entity. "Spirituality," whether that of the Church or of the nation, is naturally associated with the "universal." However, he conceived the "spiritual" as equally "incarnate" by nature. Consequently, he considered the "particular" to be the "incarnation" of the "spiritual." Furthermore, on the analogy of the "Incarnation," he reasoned that the nation like the Church, realizes the "universal" through the "particular." Therefore, on the premise of national "particularism" as the *quid pro quo* of "spirituality," Groulx equated the "particular" with the "universal" in the nation. He argued,

L'aptitude à la culture supposerait donc, dans la vie d'une nation, un long affinement, de lentes et progressives ascensions, une certaine altitude spirituelle. Pourquoi ne pas préciser tout de suite que le culturel, c'est le fond spirituel d'une national porté, si l'on veut, à un certain point d'excellence. A proprement parler, c'est l'essence même de la nation . . . Vivre, pour une collectivité humaine, c'est bien autre chose que vivre physiquement. Nulle part l'on ne tient un peuple pour vivant, ou prenant rang parmi les nations, s'il n'incarne un type humain, une civilisation particulière.¹⁵

Thus he conceived culture as the "incarnation" of the "spiritual" in the nation; civilization as the consummate manifestation of national "spirituality" or "particularism"; and *la survivance* as the national enculturation of the "spiritual."

While Groulx understood the nation to be a "spiritual" entity, he likewise conceived it as a "particular" reality. Indeed he considered "particularism" the axis of the nation since it established the parameters that define a nation. French Canada's religion, language, race, culture, mores, traditions and customs were the sinews of its "particularism." He insisted, therefore, on their preservation and practice in daily life, as well as their cultivation in the arts and letters by the intelligentsia. Historiography especially strengthened national "particularism" by defining it through the study of a people's collective past. So, he stressed the historically "distinct society" of French Canada as the foundation of its national reality.

By the same token, "particularism" was the basis of his critique of Confederation (1867). The latter was never meant to be more than a means to insure its dichotomized "particularisms." It was a *mondus vivendi* for heterogeneous Canada. It had no inherent "particularism," therefore it was not a nation. Its assumption of nationality was the usurpation of "particularism." In effect, the means of maintaining "particularism" had become an end unto itself. In the aftermath of the 1917 conscription crisis Groulx warned:

Hélas! pourquoi faut-il qu' . . . nous ayons passé notre temps depuis un demi-siècle à hésiter entre notre particularisme et le grand tout canadien . . . Surtout quand . . . l'on n'a voulu opérer la naissance et le développement de l'âme canadienne que par la suppression ou à tout le moins par l'abdication progressive de notre particularisme?¹⁶

For Groulx, Confederation was obviously a ploy to obviate French Canada's "particularism." Worse, it was a tool of imperialism — the antithesis of "particularism." Indeed, he interpreted Canadian history in terms of WASP imperialism versus "particularism." In 1948 he asserted, "l'idéologie anglo-canadienne . . . vise à la suppression, au Canada — comme toujours depuis 1760 — de tout particularisme: particularisme politique, ethnique, social, linguistique, culturel? Et ce au profit de l'idéologie protestante et de l'idéologie impérialiste."¹⁷

Groulx believed human rights to be a concomitant of "particularism." "Particularisms" demonstrate the gamut of the human condition, and thereby define freedom. However, democracy invariably constricts them by indiscriminately insisting on human sameness. He reasoned that since it is majority rule, democracy is inherently at variance with "particularisms," i.e., minorities in its midst. As such, it parallels imperialism. Not surprisingly, he then equated *la survivance* and nationalism with the cause of freedom. In the wake of World War II and the attendant notion of a "global community," he cynically queried:

Le monde s'en va-t-il vers la suprême concentration internationale? Va-t-il tenter la chimère d'une abolition générale des frontières et des nationalistés? Il semble bien, en tout cas, que les démocraties, en plein déclin dans toutes les parties du monde, ne sont déjà plus que des États autoritaires mal camouflés. Les petits États, les nationalités devront pourtant survivre pour sauver le monde de l'abominable conformisme et préserver quelques restes de liberté humaine. Mais, pour survivre, les nationalités auront besoin de réinventer leur avoir culturel . . . En cet inventaire l'on aperçoit la collaboration considérable qu'il faudra demander à l'Histoire.¹⁸

It is noteworthy that Groulx considered history essential to the cause of human rights. This partially explains why he perceived it as an ethical concern, and why he moralized it.

More importantly, his logic above implied that national "particularism" is the origin of the State. Indeed, the latter is contingent on the former. "Particularism" therefore defines the body politic. So Groulx postulated a strictly circumscribed government which must not surpass the parameters of its national "particularism." Consequently, he envisaged numerous small nations corresponding rigorously to their respective "particularisms." In effect then, he scaled down the State in his nationalist construct. This coincided with ultramontanism's minimal view of the State. Likewise, it was consonant with French-Canadian nationalist reaction to British imperialism at the turn of the last century, especially as enunciated by Henri Bourassa (1868-1952) whom Groulx greatly admired.

Equally significant is his distinctly pejorative perspective of internationalism. He believed the latter to be a fabrication of imperialism — whether economic, political, ideological, cultural or religious. It is an artifice to eviscerate "particularisms" in order to exploit their constituents. It saps national "particularisms" and so undermines the nation's foundation. As such he considered it a threat. Outside the Church there was no internationalism for Groulx. Since Roman Catholicism was the only "universal" he acknowledged, it was the sole international movement he recognized. This partly accounts for the unprecedented significance of "mission" in his agenda. He believed it to be the uniquely valid expression of internationalism. Likewise, the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church was the single international organization whose validity he admitted. As a result, he seldom discussed internationalism and/on the "universal" except to deprecate these notions, unless they were within the framework of Roman Catholicism.

However, he invariably referred to the "particular" in the most favorable terms. Nevertheless, there was one notable exception to this rule of thumb, i.e., religious "particularism." His conception of the latter vis-à-vis Roman Catholicism, reveals his basically ecclesiastical understanding of the "universal," and nationalist comprehension of the "particular." Most importantly, it betrays the contradiction in his rationale for their reconciliation.

In his lecture *Nos Responsabilités Intellectuelles*, February 9, 1928, Groulx made a rare pejorative inference concerning "particularism." Significantly, this was in the context of contemporary Protestant ecumenical efforts. In reference to the first conference of the "Faith and Order" movement, held at Lausanne, as well as the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work which met in Stockholm, he concluded:

Les protestants canadiens échappent-ils totalement aux aspirations vers l'unité qui, en Europe et en Amérique, travaillent à l'heure actuelle les églises séparées? En ces milieux, la nostalgie devient chaque jour plus vive de la vieille unité chrétienne. La confusion babélique introduite par la Réforme dans l'Église une et universelle du Christ, leur donne à réfléchir sur leur particularisme. Le Congrès de Stockholm en 1925, la Conférence chrétienne de Lausanne en 1927 restent d'impressionnantes manifestations de ces inquiétudes religieuses.¹⁹

The reasons for Groulx's rejection of religious "particularism" were both practical and philosophical. In the immediate, his above statement came almost exactly one month after Pius XI's encyclical *Mortalium Animos*, January 6, 1928, which forbade Roman Catholic involvement in the ecumenical movement. Moreover, Pius XI (1857-1930) had condemned the Paris *Action française* in December 1926. Groulx was painfully aware of this. He

was so apprehensive that its Montreal namesake would eventually be condemned that he resigned as its editor in 1928. In this precarious ecclesiastical ambience he was most anxious to vindicate himself. To do so, he attempted to shift the current suspicion of "nationalism" from the political to the strictly religious plane. This provided the requisite common ground for him to make a timely display of his orthodoxy.

Philosophically, he could not reconcile the "universal" and the "particular" if he admitted religious "particularism." It was axiomatic for him that Roman Catholicism could not be "particularist." Rather, it is the "universal" religion for the redemption of humanity. If it were otherwise, Christianity would not be "catholic." This was, of course, inconceivable in the contemporary world-view of a French-Canadian priest. Moreover, this ran counter to the Scholastic epistemological postulate that Roman Catholicism is comprehensive. Since he premised Roman Catholicism's exclusive "universality," he posited it alone as "transcendent." This effectively devitalized religious "particularism," unless the latter were an "incarnation," i.e., a "particularization" of Roman Catholicism.

Groulx's conception of mission and ecumenism reveals a dichotomy in his thought between national and religious "particularism." On the one hand, he affirmed the validity of national "particularism" in mission. Indeed he demonstrated missiological common sense when he warned, "*Comment espérer des conversions au catholicisme qui paraissait exiger une sorte d'apostasie nationale?*"²⁰ The expression "apostasie nationale" is telling. The notion of apostasy is naturally associated with religion, especially by a clergyman such as Groulx. Yet he metaphorically applied it to nationalism. This indicates his apologetic concern to integrate nationalism in mission.

On the other hand, in ecumenism he circumscribed religious "particularism." It must come to terms with the Papacy and its magisterium. He cautioned, ". . . les missionnaires du Québec trouveront même devant eux des

sectes canadiennes. Problème délicat entre tous, dans la perspective du mouvement oecuménique d'aujourd'hui . . . Comment se comporter avec ceux-là, tout en maintenant la Vérité du Credo catholique et le lien irréfragable avec Rome?"²¹ So while Groulx accorded latitude to national "particularism," inversely, he made no concessions to religious "particularism." This obscured his ecumenical outlook. In fact, he perceived ecumenism as a religious corollary of socio-political internationalism. Thus his criticism of the latter applied likewise to the former. The common denominator of these movements was their abstraction of "particular" realities. Significantly therefore, he equated ecumenism with utopianism. Groulx protested,

Je crois apercevoir d'où provient cette conception: d'une pensée oecuméniste qui ne se garde pas d'exagération, à moins qu'il n'y faille voir aussi un relent du vieux *bonne-ententisme*. Moi aussi, je suis oecuméniste. Mais que voulez-vous? . . . La société universelle, niveleuse de toutes les nations et de toutes les frontières, n'est pas pour demain . . .²²

In line with his apologetic approach, he proposed to integrate the sundry ethos of cultures into Roman Catholicism. However, because of his teleo-ecclesiastical world-view, he presumed their ultimate assimilation to the Church:

Les missionnaires auraient connu cette autre erreur de repousser trop en bloc la spiritualité orientale, comme si la foi au Christ présupposait un dépouillement total de l'âme infidèle . . . Pourquoi les missionnaires oublieraient-ils que l'Église peut assumer toutes les cultures, toutes les civilisations, parce qu'elle peut les épurer, leur

donner une destination saine, leur vraie destinée?²³

At this point in Groulx's "incarnation" construct the dynamic tension between the "universal" and the "particular" breaks down. This is because of its ecclesiastical impetus. In keeping with ultramontanism, he sought to bring the entire scope of human society within the pale of the Roman Catholic Church. In this attempt he inevitably overrode "particularisms." Foremost were religions, since they entail the admission of pluralism. This precludes the Church's monopoly of the "spiritual." Inasmuch as this is the cornerstone of its "universality," Groulx posited the Church's imperium vis-à-vis religious "particularism." This justifies "catholicizing" culture as it relates to the "spiritual." Therefore, he effectively equated the Church's "universality" with its cultural primacy. So he insisted French-Canadian culture express Roman Catholic traditions, themes, and values. His own literary work, including *Les Rapailages* and *L'Appel de la race*, exemplifies this.

However, Groulx's reasoning here violates the integrity of religious and cultural "particularism" by exposing the fundamental fallacy in his integration of the "universal" and the "particular" à la "Incarnation." It was contingent on the "Catholicity" of the "particular." In Thomist fashion he begged the question, since he could not accommodate the two unless he presupposed their common essence. Although arbitrary, and inconsistent with his "incarnate" principle of synthesis, it was imperative to demarcate national from religious "particularism." This provided the requisite caveat to defend the orthodoxy of nationalism, namely Québec's. By the same token he was compelled to argue, albeit speciously, for the inherence of French Canada's Roman Catholicism.

Ultimately then, Groulx did not reconcile the "universal" and the "particular." He instead equated their incongruity with religious "particularism." The Scholastic

reductionism of his logic justified this transposition. Since he conceived Roman Catholicism as the "universal," other religions were the only "particularisms" irreducibly inconsistent with it. Meanwhile, his insistence on the "incarnate" nature of the "universal" involved concretizing it into an inexorable, ecclesiastical "particularism." This truncated, exclusive interpretation of the "universal" as the Church, is the Achilles' heel of his apologetic. He thereby forfeited its requisite latitude and mobility. The "Incarnation" so construed, is a static rather than a dynamic archetype. This was inevitable because of the ecclesiastical tendentiousness of his scheme. After all, Groulx employed the "Incarnation" because it is the precedent par excellence for the "spiritual" to appropriate the "secular."

Groulx's militant Roman Catholicism and French-Canadian nationalism made him intellectually myopic. Consequently, he was blind to the fact that Christianity itself is an occidental "particularism." Likewise, he lost sight of the "Incarnation" as an affirmation of religious "particularism" and pluralism, in the face of a monolithic, ecclesiastical imperium. For example, through a creative hermeneutic, the "Incarnation" could readily support the thesis of Groulx's contemporary, Walter Bauer (1877-1960), that the original norm of Christianity was diversity rather than centralization. Equally shortsighted was the theological *non sequitur* that Roman Catholicism is native to French-Canadians. His artless, historico-cultural argument for the latter, invites charges of mythologizing, bigotry and racism.

Furthermore, his superficial distinction between national and religious "particularism" effectively removed Québec nationalism from the pale of the "spiritual." Thereby he unwittingly advanced its secularization. In fact, his defense of French-Canadian nationalism's legitimacy eclipsed his Roman Catholic apology. The "particularist" twist of his rationale insured this outcome. The "Incarnation" so interpreted, easily becomes the tool

of nationalist doctrinairism. Indeed, the Scholastic élan of his thought compelled Groulx to sanctify nationalism. Moreover, in the naive attempt to reconcile them, he indiscriminately imposed the religious motif of the "Incarnation" on all dissimilar realities. These blind spots vitiated his synthesis of the "universal" and the "particular." Nevertheless, Groulx thereby renewed a nationalist vision which Québécois separatism still appreciates.

Notes

1. Yvan Lamonde, ed., *Louis-Adolphe Paquet* (Montréal: Fides, 1972), p. 8.
2. Giselle Huot and Réjean Bergeron, eds., *Journal 1895-1911 Lionel Groulx*, 2 vols. ((Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1984): 1: 319, fn. 143.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 339-340.
4. Lionel Groulx, letter to Mgr. Georges Courchesne, August 20, 1929, Fonds Lionel Groulx, Centre de Recherches Lionel Groulx.
5. John Hare, ed., *Pour La Patrie* (Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 1976), pp. 17-19.
6. Lionel Groulx, *Mes Mémoires*, 4 vols. (Montréal: Fides, 1974), 2: 339.
7. Groulx, *Mes Mémoires*, 1: 291.
8. Lionel Groulx, *Nos Responsabilités intellectuelles* (Montréal: Secrétariat Général de L'A.C.J.C., 1928), p. 37.

9. Lionel Groulx, Discours prononcé lors de la remise du Prix Champlain, Québec, 24 mai 1958 (MA-428), Centre de Recherches Lionel Groulx, pp. 2-4.
10. Lionel Groulx, Spicilèges 1958 (MA-428), Centre de Recherches Lionel Groulx, Montréal, p. 57.
11. Lionel Groulx, Allocution prononcée à la réception de Nouvel an de la Société St. Jean Baptiste de Montréal, 10 janvier 1965 (MA-603), Centre de Recherches Lionel Groulx, Montréal, pp. 1-2.
12. Lionel Groulx, *Constantes De Vie* (Montréal: Fides, 1967), p. 81.
13. Groulx, *Mes Mémoires*, 4: 14-15.
14. Groulx, *Constantes De Vie*, p. 80.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
16. Lionel Groulx, "Notre Histoire," *L'Action française* II (1918): 340.
17. Maurice Filion ed., *Hommage à Lionel Groulx* (Ottawa: Leméac, 1978), p. 208.
18. Lionel Groulx, "Chronique de L'Institut," *Revue d'Histoire de l'Amérique française* VI, No. 1 (Juin 1952): 156.
19. Lionel Groulx, *Orientations* (Montréal: Les Éditions du Zodiaque, 1935), p. 28.
20. Lionel Groulx, *Le Canada français missionnaire* (Montréal: Fides, 1962), p. 85.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 342.

22. Groulx, Allocution prononcée à la réception de
Nouvel an de la Société St. Jean Baptiste de Montréal,
pp. 1-2.
23. Groulx, *Le Canada français missionnaire*, pp. 85-86.