Statement about the book *Le Phénomène des Églises parallèles*
by Bernard Vignot (Le Cerf, Paris, 2010)

Our Christian Catholic Rite of Community Churches (CCRCC) and I are related in this book,\(^1\) to “parallel/marginal” churches marked by *syncretism away from Christianity, inward-looking, private and mysterious revelations (Marian apparitions and messages …)*, and whose leaders, most of them without culture or theology, are likely to engage for *profit in exorcism, healing prayers and/or sale of objects of piety.*\(^2\) This reveals the face of all these church groups, says Roman Catholic bishop Michel Santier of Creteil (France) in the preface.\(^3\)

My clergy and I have nothing to do with the type of church leaders described by Bernard Vignot, and our community is a constituency of the International Council of Community Churches (ICCC),\(^4\) a fellowship of some 200,000 members,\(^5\) of which I am General Superintendent for Canada. The ICCC is part of the World Council of Churches (WCC),\(^6\) the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCUSA),\(^7\) Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC)\(^8\) and Christian Churches Together.\(^9\)

As can be read on the websites of the WCC, the NCCUSA and CUIC, ICCC churches are characterized, not by inward-looking, but by active promotion of Christian unity at all levels. The ICCC is *directly linked to the communities where its churches are located and encourages them to play an active role in all ecumenical affairs that take place. It encourages them to share their faith with other Christians and with people of other religions. Its vision is to represent ecumenical Christianity in the local community. Together with other religious bodies, it seeks to shine the light of the Christian faith on all aspects of society: political, social, cultural.*\(^10\) This is not achieved through syncretism and private revelations (Marian or other), but based on the theological consensus reached with our ecumenical partners\(^11\) and presented in *Churches in*

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1. P. 104.
2. Characteristics mentioned at the back of the book and in the preface (p. 10), and developed in pages 13-18, 39-45, and 76 ff.
3. P. 11.
7. [http://nccusa.org](http://nccusa.org)
9. [http://christianchurchestogether.org](http://christianchurchestogether.org)
10. [http://cuicinfo.org](http://cuicinfo.org)
11. Our ecumenical partners are: the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, the Episcopal Church USA, the Presbyterian Church USA, the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church. [http://cuicinfo.org](http://cuicinfo.org), [http://christianchurchestogether.org](http://christianchurchestogether.org)
Covenant Communion (COCU, 1989) and Mutual Recognition and Mutual Reconciliation of Ministries (CUIC, 2005).  

Our churches are not to be defined as situated at the margins of Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, the Church of Utrecht or Old Catholicism as does Vignot. The CCRC

The first Community Churches have emerged in the 1800s in the United States, in response to the following needs: elimination of overchurching, especially in rural America, with its economic and staff problems, also restrictive denominational machinery that fed the desire for self-determination, lay activism, women's concerns and the hunger for a relevant and unifying religion. This is far from the strange world described by Vignot: bleeding communion wafers, the Blessed Virgin Mary announced to believers but failing to appear, a prelate doing mysterious (magical) ceremonies, managing on his own a profitable trade of medals and images associated with pseudo-apparitions, a healer wearing episcopal garments, and claiming powers maximized by consecration in apostolic succession, and who sells Masses celebrated in his garage.

Vignot should not have listed our church rite among these “parallel/marginal” churches. There is literature about us which is available and that he could have used to prevent such a mistake, including the Oxford Concise Dictionary of the Christian Church (2006).

12 In 1990, the ICCC has adopted as marks of its unity the following elements of the consensus: Faith in one God who through the Word and in the Spirit creates, redeems and sanctifies; Commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and as the incarnate and risen Lord; Obedience to the Holy Scripture which testifies to Tradition and to which Tradition testifies, as containing all things necessary for our salvation as well as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith; Commitment to faithful participation in the sacraments ordained by Jesus Christ; Commitment to the evangelical and prophetic mission of God and to God’s reign of justice and peace; and Grateful acceptance of the ministry which the Holy Spirit has given to the churches. http://cuicinfo.org

13 There have been close rapportps with the Old Catholics in Europe in 1885-1890 and in 1978-1988, through union with the Anglicans, but this did not last because of restrictions and annoyances created by their denominational machineries that made our rite prefer the self-determination cherished in the Community Church movement. More on this in my book Msgr. Rene Vilatte, Community Organizer of Religion, p. 66 ff, 93-94, 107-111, and Msgr. Dominique M. Varlet, Originator of the Old Catholic Episcopal Succession, Apocryphile Press, Berkeley, 2010, p. 223-224, 258-259.


17 A radical democratic impulse, wrote former Executive Director Jeffrey R. Newhall in Introducing the International Council of Community Churches, ICCC Publications, 1994, p. 5. It was the case at the origin of our rite as demonstrated in a series of articles I have published in Credo (United Church of Canada November 1999, p. 3-10, 12), for the centennial of the passing of the Canadian Reformer Chiniquy, and in my book Msgr. Rene Vilatte, op. cit., p. 52-69, 100, 106.


20 Idem, p. 19.

21 Idem, p. 38-43.

22 There is my book Msgr. Vilatte, Community Organizer of Religion. Also the site of our rite and of the ICCC (http://ccrcc.ca, http://icccusa.com) which provide abundant information.
In a statement dated October 4, 2010 posted on the website of France catholique, Vignot insists that he has nothing to do with these parallel/marginal churches, being a priest of a recognised religious body, namely the International Catholic Union of Utrecht which is in full communion with the Anglican Church and a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Like him, we have nothing to do with the strange world presented in his book. Like him, we are members of a recognized church communion (the ICCC) which is in the membership of the WCC and other valued American ecumenical bodies.

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cc. Rev. Herman Harmelink, Ecumenical Officer, ICCC
Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary, NCCCUSA
Msgr. Patrick Powers, General Secretary, Canadian Conference of R. Catholic Bishops
Msgr. Michel Santier, Roman Catholic Bishop of Créteil, France
Father Nicolas-Jean Sed, O.P., Director of Éditions du Cerf

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23 Community Churches and the ICCC are defined on page 137. Msgr. Vilatte, elected and consecrated first bishop of our rite, is on page 260.

24 http://www.france-catholique.fr/Le-phenomene-des-Eglises