

MEMORIAL FOR PAUL-HUBERT POIRIER

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Paul-Hubert Poirier (1948–2024) On May 15th, 2024, Professor Paul-Hubert Poirier suddenly passed away, leaving the Syriac studies community in Canada and around the world in mourning. Born in Saint-Siméon-de-Bonaventure in 1948, Paul-Hubert Poirier completed a bachelor's degree (1971) and a master's degree (1972) in theology at Université Laval (Quebec), as well as a doctorate in the history of religions (1980) at the Université des sciences humaines of Strasbourg (France). The Syriac language was at the heart of his doctoral dissertation on the Hymn of the Pearl from the Acts of Thomas. He held multiple degrees from the École des Langues Orientales Anciennes, attached to the Institut Catholique de Paris: Syriac (1976), Pharaonic Egyptian (1976), Coptic (1977), Ethiopian (Geze) (1978), Armenian (1987) and Georgian (1987). Paul-Hubert Poirier began his prolific career as a professor of patristics and church history at Université Laval's Faculty of Theology in 1979. From 1981 until his retirement in 2019, he regularly taught Syriac, contributing to the training of more than a generation of scholars in the field. Generous with his time and knowledge, Paul-Hubert Poirier was known for his structured courses and clear, precise, nuanced teaching. Outside the classroom, he distinguished himself by his human qualities and his dedication to students of all levels and colleagues, who benefited from his encyclopedic knowledge and polyglot talents. Internationally renowned for his work in the fields of early Christianity, Gnosticism and Manichaeism, as well as for his mastery of ancient languages, Paul-Hubert Poirier directed (1981–1998) and then co-directed (1998–2024), at Université Laval, the Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi project. Paul-Hubert Poirier was also known for his numerous works on Syriac texts, most notably the Hymn of the Pearl and the Acts of Thomas, the Candelabra of the Sanctuary of Bar Hebraeus, the Against the Manichaeans of Titus of Bostra and the Book of the Laws of Countries, attributed to the "school" of Bardaisan. Over the years, without losing any of his modesty, Paul-Hubert Poirier also distinguished himself nationally and internationally, earning honors and recognition: he was awarded the prestigious Killam Fellowship from the Canada Council for the Arts in 1988, the Prix André-Laurendeau from

the Association canadienne française pour l'avancement de la science in 1990, and the Pierre Chauveau Medal from the Royal Society of Canada in 2002, in recognition of his exceptional contribution to the humanities. Named Knight of the National Order of Quebec in 2006, he was, the same year, elected Foreign Correspondent, and then Foreign Associate of the Institut de France (Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres) in 2015, becoming the first Canadian to be awarded this honour. In 2021, the Canadian Corporation for the Studies of Religion established an annual conference in his honor. In the spring of 2024, just before his death, Université Laval made him the recipient of the Grand diplômé de l'Université Laval award. Retired from teaching in 2019, professor emeritus in 2020, Paul-Hubert Poirier had not put an end to his academic commitments, continuing to carry out numerous projects, for which he had several publications in press. This sudden and unexpected departure will leave a significant void in the field of Syriac studies in Canada, and internationally.