Claudia Rammelt, *Ibas von Edessa: Rekonstruktion einer Biographie und dogmatischen Position zwischen den Fronten,* Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 106 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008). Pp. x + 344; €125.95.

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Hiba – the original Syriac form of the name Ibas – was a Mesopotamian bishop who tried (according to Rammelt) to safeguard the unity of the Christian Church in a period when others were pulling it apart. During his lifetime, we read, he was the victim of calumny and injustice and long after his death his writings – particularly his *Letter to Mari the Persian* – were wilfully distorted. In her rather perfunctory introduction (Chapter 1), Rammelt deals with the sources for Hiba's life and dogma in under three pages and devotes a mere eight lines to the only other book with the name of Hiba in its title, Robert Doran's *Stewards of the Poor: The Man of God, Rabbula, and Hiba in fifth-century Edessa* (Kalamazoo 2006). Instead of a chapter on Christ in the Syriac tradition up to Hiba, which this reviewer misses (see below), she surveys the history of Edessa (Chapter 2), without making it clear how this is necessary to a deep understanding of Hiba's life (Chapter 3). She pays special attention to the *Letter to Mari* (Chapter 4), showing that the Syriac version in the *Acts of Ephesus 449* hardly differs from the Greek translation.[1] She reveals the full complexity of the process which brought about the deposition of Hiba by explaining how the Roman legal system worked in his case. This (Chapter 5) is perhaps the most successful part of her enterprise. She also considers how Hiba was received by posterity (Chapter 6), missing the opportunity to evaluate the *Chronicle of Edessa* as a voice from the established Church of the Roman Empire raised in Hiba's favour before the condemnation of 553 (see below). The summing-up at the end (Chapter 7) collects, without alteration or addition, the helpful summaries scattered throughout the book. Rammelt's monograph is welcome and she deserves praise for making the *Chronicle of*

[1] Hoffmann's note on p. 49, line 14, of the Syriac *Acts* of Ephesus 449 (ed. Flemming, p. 172f.) argues that the letter has been translated back into Syriac from the Greek, because it is incomplete, just as the Greek is incomplete; but the relevant excerpt might have been taken from the Syriac original. Rammelt assumes the original was lost; but she does not prove it.

Edessa's approval of Hiba comprehensible (as J. B. Segal signally fails to do); but there is enough to criticise in the execution and especially in the presentation of this excellent project.

To begin with, the author has not been well served by her copy-editor. Here are some corrigenda, of which this reviewer has found over seventy, many of them trivial, yet nevertheless annoying, especially in a luxury volume with a price which invites complaint:

> p. 2, a passive participle is needed after the word 'Parteien'; p. 12, for ὐβασίλευτον, read ἀ-; p. 15, for 'Orientem', read 'Oriens' and for '*civitates vectigales*', read '*civitas vectigalis*'; p. 17, for ܒܢܘܗܝ, read ܘܒܢܘܗܝ; p. 23, for ܫܠܝܚܐ, read the plural; p. 39, for 'syrische Übersetzung', read 'persische Übersetzung', and for ܝܗܘܒ, read ܝܗܝܒ; p. 40, *īhībīšō*' means 'Jesus is given', not 'given by Jesus'; pp. 63 and 75, for ἑρμενεία, read ἑρμηνεία; p. 72, for γίνομαι and ἀνατίθεμαι, read γίγνομαι and ἀνατίθεναι; p. 76, n. 54, the preposition ܠ is good Syriac for 'to' in the address of a letter (*cf.* Ezra 5.7 and the *Doctrina Addai*); p. 84, a word (Anstoß?) is missing after the name Sergius; p. 90, for ὕιω, read υἱῷ; p. 104, for 'war' (n. 166), read 'was'; p. 105, for κάπωθεν, read κάτωθεν; p. 127, for *redivivius*, read *redivivus*; p. 129, for 'reliorum', read 'reliquorum' and for 'proucinciae', read 'prouinciae'; p. 141, for 'Armenien', read 'Armeniern'; p. 187, for 'Bericht einen', read 'einen Bericht'; p. 193, for ܗܘܪܠܡ, read ܣܘܪܠܡ; and for 'die Konsuln Protogenes', read 'die Konsuln und Protogenes'; p. 204, for 'Mari der lohnt', read 'Mari lohnt'; p. 206, for 'Martialus', read 'Martialis'; p. 216, for 'Valentian', read 'Valentinian'. In addition, it would be better to refer to Barṣaumā as an influential ascetic from the mountains between Samosata and Melitene (p. 172); the famous mountain-top Monastery of Mor Barṣaumā, of which 'Basmul' is a modern deformation, had not yet been founded.

Rammelt roundly blames the 'Monophysites' for the separation of the Churches (Chapter 5). She says that the second synod of Ephesus in 449 was not interested in coming to an objective judgement (p. 216). She calls it 'the Robber Council,' an emotive term coined by Pope Leo which ought at least to have been placed

between quotation-marks. Rammelt is far from being the only historian of the Church to use this judgmental term, but in her case it is particularly unfortunate, as it lays her open to the charge of taking the part of Hiba against his opponents. On p. 218 she expresses her dismay that the bishops should have shouted out: "Kill Hiba!" Yet the Council of Chalcedon, where equally savage words were shouted at Hiba's opponents, fails to shock her. Instead, she writes: 'With Chalcedon the situation changed. Forces ready to mediate in the conflict asserted themselves. Hiba was rehabilitated and was allowed to return to his office as bishop' (p. 229). G. E. M. de Ste Croix, *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom and Orthodoxy* (Oxford 2006) no doubt appeared too late for Rammelt to assimilate; but the author, who died in 2000, had long argued that Chalcedon was tightly controlled by the emperor and his agents and that its main decision was divisive. Both Rammelt's disqualification of Ephesus II and her approval of Chalcedon suggest that, in spite of her own warning against eurocentric ecclesiastical history (p. 8), she has not yet escaped the gravitational pull of traditional European opinion, based ultimately on the judgment of Rome.

The *Chronicle of Edessa* does indeed contain 'important data' (p. 4), so why is it mistakenly classified with the writers of the Church of the East (p. 260)? Rammelt draws upon the individual entries in this source (for example with reference to Hiba's building of churches), but without discussing their context, or the intention of the chronicler; nor does she discuss Hallier's interpretation of the Syriac original. This review will show that more can be squeezed out of it by doing these things.

> A.G. 746 [A.D. 435] Rabbula, the bishop of Edessa, departed from the world on 8 August (according to the *Vita*, 7 August – he was buried on 8 August) and was succeeded by the Teacher[2] Hiba (ܪܒܝܐ ܗܝܒܐ; Hallier, p. 110: 'der erhabene Hîbâ'; ܗܝܒܐ arguably requires translation as a noun here). This man built the new church which today [*sc.* A.D. 540] is called the House of the Apostles.

[2] With the implication – based on the use of this word to designate the teacher in a master-disciple relationship – that Hiba could be trusted implicitly in matters of religion and theology. See Robert Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus* (Oxford 1879–1901), col. 3784. (The *Thesaurus* is not cited among the lexica used by Rammelt on p. 339.)

A.G. 749 [A.D. 437/8], during the reign of the irreproachable Hiba (ܗܝܒܐ ܙܟܝܐ; Hallier, p. 111: 'des trefflichen Hîbâ'),[3] Senator brought a great silver altar weighing 720 pounds and it was placed in the ancient church of Edessa.

A.G. 753 [A.D. 441/2] the general Anatolius made a silver shrine in honour of the bones of the holy apostle Thomas.

A.G. 756 [A.D. 444/5] Dioscorus became bishop of the patriarchal see of Alexandria (lit. 'Alexandria the great').

And (August A.D. 449) a second synod assembled at Ephesus. This synod excommunicated the Teacher Flavian (ܦܠܒܝܢܘܣ ܪܒܝ; Hallier, p. 112: 'den erhabenen Flavian', though, here again, ܪܒܝ requires translation as a noun), the bishop of Constantinople, Domnus of Antioch, Irenaeus of Tyre, Hiba of Edessa, Eusebius of Dorylaeum, Daniel of Ḥarran, Sophronius of Tella and Theodoret of Cyrrhus.

A.G. 759 [A.D. 448] Bishop Hiba departed from Edessa on 1 January and on 21 July Nonnus entered to succeed him (these two events should be redated to A.D. 450) and remained for two years (*i.e.* until 452) and built the holy of holies in the church.

A.G. 760 [A.D. 448/9] Leo became bishop of Rome (actually A.D. 440).

A.G. 762 [A.D. 450/1] a synod assembled in the city of Chalcedon (A.G. 763).

A.G. 763 [A.D. 451/2] Mar Isaac, the archimandrite, acquired fame as an author.

A.G. 769 [A.D. 457] Hiba, the bishop of Edessa, went to his (blessed) rest (ܫܟܒ; Hallier, p. 114: 'entschlief') on 28 October.

The chronicle from which this excerpt is taken was probably written shortly after 540, the year in which the city bought off an invading army from Persia, as the chronicler (probably Bishop Addai of Edessa) tells. If he does not go on to tell of Edessa's

[3] The morality of Hiba (ܙܟܝܐ is cognate with ܙܟܘܬܐ, 'virtues') is emphasized by placing the adjective before his name; see Theodor Nöldeke, *Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik*, 2nd edition with appendix (Darmstadt 1977), §211.

successful resistance in 544, this may be because that siege had not yet taken place. The chronicle must, in any case, antedate the council of 553, at which Hiba's *Letter to Mari* was condemned, for the chronicler – a demonstratively loyal subject of the emperor Justinian, whom he calls 'glorious' and 'god-loving' – was still sympathetic to Hiba. Indeed, he may have hoped to dissuade Justinian from sacrificing Hiba's reputation to the Severans.[4] For there is much to be said for the idea that this chronicle was meant to reach the emperor's ears in a Greek translation.[5]

Rammelt alleges that the compiler of the *Chronicle of Edessa* 'leans towards Nestorianism' (p. 260). This idea, derived from Hallier, is based entirely on the chronicler's approval of Hiba, whose enemies called him a Nestorian. But Rammelt herself shows that Hiba had no qualms about anathematizing Nestorius (p. 175) and calling Mary the *Theotokos* (p. 98), so she ought to be the last to see approval of Hiba as a symptom of Nestorianism. The positive description of Hiba stands out all the more for the habitual restraint of the *Chronicle of Edessa*, in which there is neither praise for Theodore, nor blame for Eutyches. It shows that the reputation of Hiba was already threatened in 540, but that it was still possible, at that date, for an admiring subject of Justinian to call Hiba *Rabbā* – 'teacher'. Hiba and Flavian are the only two people who are given this title in the *Chronicle of Edessa*, but the chronicler also singles out Ephraim for praise, calling him ܡܪܝ ܐܦܪܝܡ ܕܡܫܟܠܘܬܗ "My lord Ephraim, known for the wisdom and sophistication of his writings." If he thought Hiba, too, a good teacher, he may have considered him a writer in the tradition of Ephraim.

In the *Letter to Mari* Hiba sums up what he says the Church Fathers have taught 'since the beginning', that Christ, though a single person with a single 'force' – or perhaps 'meaning' (ܚܝܠܐ δύναμις) – had 'two natures'. Like Ephraim (*Diatessaron Commentary*, ed. Leloir, Chester Beatty Monographs 8, 250f.; *Madrāshē on Faith*,

[4] S. Brock, "The conversations with the Syrian Orthodox under Justinian (532)," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 47 (1981), 116 (7), referred to by Rammelt on p. 252.

[5] A. Palmer, "Procopius and Edessa," *Antiquité tardive* 8 (2000): 127–136.

ed. Beck, CSCO 154, 87:13),[6] Hiba considers it a mistake to say, as Cyril did, 'that God, the Word, himself became a human being' (*Acts of Ephesus 449*, ed. Flemming, 48, line 24). Unlike Hiba, Ephraim never uses the word *ḳyānā* ('nature') of Christ's body, though he speaks of Christ as twice born, the first womb being that of God the Father, which brought forth the eternal Word, the second, that of Mary, who brought forth the 'pearl' – or, to use Jesus' own image – the 'temple' (John 2:21)[7] – of his body. The Semitic way of speaking in images, though it is vulnerable in the 'cut and thrust' of the Greek philosophical arena, has strengths of its own which are more akin to the language of Jesus himself. Hiba was one of those who promoted the translation of Theodore's Greek writings into Syriac, so that they could be studied alongside those of Ephraim. While Rammelt is surely right to see Hiba's christology as Theodoran, the influence of the Syriac tradition can also be discerned; this reviewer would welcome a supplementary article in which Rammelt might work out the specific relevance of what she herself states, in general terms, on p. 115: 'Ephraim's writings and his thought had deep roots at the School of the Persians, as in Edessa generally.'

[6] The editors agree in expanding this to '(only) a human being' in translation; but both interpret the texts in the light of their belief that Ephraim would not have wished to contradict an article of Catholic belief.

[7] Not referred to by Rammelt, who begins her commentary on the image of the temple with Paul (p. 90).