

Sebastian Brock and Brian Fitzgerald, eds. and trans., *Two Early Lives of Severos, Patriarch of Antioch*. Translated Texts for Historians 59 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013). Pp. 224; £16.99.

**PAULINE ALLEN, AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY AND
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

The 1500th anniversary of the consecration of Severos as patriarch of Antioch in 2012 has inspired a number of panels, conferences, and articles. Now, in the book under review, we have translations of two of Severos' earliest biographies, one by the patriarch's friend Zacharias (variously called 'scholastikos', 'rhetor', or 'bishop') and another anonymous account traditionally attributed to John of Beth Aphthonia. The Syriac texts of both these works were edited with a French translation in *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. 2, by the Belgian scholar Marc-Antoine Kugener at the beginning of the twentieth century.

It is the great merit of the two twenty-first century translators, Brock and Fitzgerald, to have rendered these biographies into readable English with helpful notes and other scholarly aids. A concise introduction, comprising an outline of Severos' life, the main theological issues of his day, a list of biographical materials for his life, and a consideration and analysis of each work, will introduce the unfamiliar reader to the life and times of the patriarch, and satisfy initiates who have long been in need of a close analysis of the two biographies. Especially important is the comparison of Zacharias' work, designated by the translators as apology or polemic, with that of the anonymous biographer, who instead followed the rubrics of the hagiographical genre. This comparison allows the reader to see beyond doubt that the purpose of Zacharias' 'biography', which deals with Severos' life before his patriarchate, was to exonerate the bishop from accusations of having pagan parentage. The anonymous hagiography, on the other hand, covers the patriarch's entire life, and the reader will be grateful for the discussion of the history of the authorship of this text and the reasons behind its attribution to John of Beth Aphthonia.

The book contains two maps, of Palestine and Syria, and Anatolia, a chronological table, glossary, an appendix of the bishops of the five main sees from the mid-fifth to the mid-sixth centuries, and another appendix on Severos' *Cathedral Homilies*. There is also

an index of names, a select index of Greek words, and a biblical index.

This volume is a compendious, user-friendly, scholarly tool which will be much appreciated by those engaged in Syriac studies, history, theology, hagiography, and the post-Chalcedonian period, and it will be a welcome addition to the Liverpool series. These two early biographies of the pivotal late-antique patriarch Severos are indeed essential translated texts for historians (and others).