Hannah Hunt, *Clothed in the Body: Asceticism, the Body and the Spiritual in the Late Antique Era*, Ashgate Studies in Philosophy and Theology in Late Antiquity (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012). Pp. xii + 237; $149.95.

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In *Clothed in the Body: Asceticism, the Body and the Spiritual in the Late Antique Era*, Hannah Hunt presents a survey of early Christian asceticism. She focuses on desert and Syriac literature up to the early seventh century, covering a great diversity of cultural and theological contexts. Hunt's central question addresses the interface between religious anthropology and Christology: "How was it that only a complete, holistic humanity was accepted in Christ while in His human counterpart a division between body and soul appeared not only desirable but perhaps the only way to achieve *theosis*?" (1). She covers the whole spectrum between "dualist" and "dialectic" interpretations of the human person—comprised of "material" and "non-material" aspects, but devotes most attention to dialectic or "holistic" anthropologies.

The book is encyclopedic rather than systematic. Hunt offers numerous entry points for deeper investigation of the often conflicting theological anthropologies represented in early eastern Christian literature. Given the breadth of the study, not all research is presented or interpreted from direct engagement with the primary literature; this would have required several volumes. A better balance between the expansiveness of the work and the rationale for its organization might have been struck, however. We are given a lot of information with very little interpretive or organizational structure.

Between introductory and concluding chapters, Hunt's work may be divided into four sections: chapters two and three address philosophical and biblical backgrounds; chapters four to six survey desert literature; chapters seven to ten focus on Syriac literature; and heterodox and orthodox developments are featured in chapters eleven and twelve. This review presents key points from each section in light of Hunt's research question. Some further assessments of Hunt's study are offered in conclusion.

In chapters two to four, Hunt presents the Greek terms *sōma* and *psychē*, translated "body" and "soul," which consistently stand for the material and non-material aspects of the human person, respectively. She shows a development in Plato's anthropology

beyond a Cartesian dualism often read anachronistically into Plato's works, noting Aristotle understood the relationship between body and soul to be even more integrated. Hunt suggests it was Stoics, in their positive valuation of material creation, who "perhaps...leave the biggest footprint" in early Christian anthropology (28). From the biblical corpus, Hunt draws mostly on Pauline literature, which she presents as essentially Semitic in anthropology. Paul's notion of *sarx* "denotes mortality and the potential for corruption; it is not inherently corrupt" (42). Nor was his view of the body negative, proven by his belief in a physical resurrection (1 Cor. 15).

The desert literature covered in chapters four to six reveals a diversity of views on the integration of the material and non-material aspects of the human person. Evagrius is representative of a moderate view. His anthropology presents the human person as a psychosomatic unity: "the body of the ascetic is very much part of his [or her] whole self; when under discipline and correctly controlled through purity of heart, it is the icon of God's grace" (51). An entire chapter is devoted to Climacus, who is presented as the prime exemplar of desert literature. He uses Evagrian terminology to describe the spiritual ascent, which begins with a departure from physical and emotional attachments, continues with mastery over physical temptations, and culminates in "*hesychia*, *apatheia*, and love" (85). Like Evagrius, he is moderate in his teaching on the physical body. For Climacus, the human body at creation was in a state of "original perfection" but has become corrupt (86). The implication is that the body needs to be reintegrated with the soul "in a synergic process" (85) for the human person to achieve virtue.

Interestingly, in these chapters Hunt addresses the "gendering of the spiritual" (68). She points out the faulty understandings of human physiology of this period (female fetuses were seen as less developed males; women's changing states through puberty and menopause represented chaos). In terms of Greek moral philosophy, virtue was seen as a "male quality" (67). Yet female gender could be subverted through cross-dressing and choosing a celibate lifestyle. Women could thus free themselves from the social expectations to remain in the household domain and to rear children, opening the opportunity for social mobility and spiritual virtue. In addition, some Christian writers believed that sexual differentiation was introduced as a result of the fall. Thus, "By

relinquishing sexual activity," women's "souls became unified and in imitation of the unsullied spiritual status of the first Adam" (73).

In chapters seven to ten, Hunt shifts from desert spirituality to Syriac Christianity. The large geographical and cultural span of Syriac Christianity is matched by an equally broad spectrum of ascetical beliefs and practices—from body-denying feats in the stylites, extreme encratism, to more moderate views of the body's role in salvation. Hunt focuses on writers who present a holistic theological anthropology, including Aphrahat, Simeon, Philoxenus, Isaac, John of Apamea, and especially Ephrem. In this section, Hunt also devotes a chapter to a single author, Pseudo-Macarius. This figure was held suspect by his contemporaries for "a quasi-Gnostic over-validation of the spiritual side of the human person" (128). Yet Hunt shows how integral the body was in Pseudo-Macarius' anthropology. Body and soul were for him mutually dependent on each another, so much so that they could exchange attributes with one another (*synaesthesia*). Her literary overview is, from the standpoint of anthropology, broader in scope, including the *Diatessaron*, *Acts of Thomas*, *Hymn of the Pearl*, *Odes of Solomon*, and the *Liber Graduum*.

Hunt's tenth chapter, "'Clothed in the Body' as a Metaphor for Incarnation," turns to the book's title and shows the centrality of the body for much of Syriac theology, often illustrated by clothing imagery. Following Sebastian Brock, Hunt demonstrates that in early Syriac theology, every stage of salvation can be described through clothing imagery. Christ, "clothed in the body" in the Incarnation (149), restores the garment of glory Adam lost at the fall. Those who follow Christ into baptismal waters are clothed in that glory, symbolized in the baptismal garments, the same garments that will be worn at the eschatological wedding banquet.

Chapters eleven and twelve form the final section, devoted to heterodox and orthodox Christologies. Hunt summarizes the beliefs of various "Heresiarchs," including Marcion, Valentinus, Basilides, Saturnius, Eunomius, and especially Apollinarius, whose beliefs came very close to orthodox doctrinal formulations, and whose "intellectual powers challenged" those of the "orthodox Fathers" (181). Hunt highlights the classic Christological formulations by Tertullian, Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Gregory of Nazianzus, who all subscribed to a Christology that assumes a full

humanity in Christ, which they deemed necessary for the full redemption of the human person.

At the outset of the book, Hunt acknowledges that Christology and religious anthropology are "uneasily yoked threads" in her academic research (1). While the book moves forward in bringing these aspects of her work into dialogue, several tensions remain. Hunt's initial research question, which was quoted in the introduction to this review, concerns a comparison between Christ's humanity in the Incarnation with that of other human persons. This aspect of the relationship between Christology and anthropology—with greater emphasis on the latter—is consistently presented throughout her work. Yet the implications of her overviews are almost entirely left for the reader to discern, outside of the presumed agreeability of a holistic view of what constitutes a human person—i.e., a view that regards the human body as good and essential. A second concern Hunt presents as central is not well distinguished from the first, however. She states: "this text explores the simultaneous insistence on the unity of the two natures in Christ (increasingly the focus of ecumenical councils in the period) and the tension between dualistic and dialectic interpretations of the integrity of the human person" (2). This second concern seeks to draw a comparison between the unity of divine and human natures in Christ with the disunity/unity of the material and non-material aspects of the human person.

It may have been helpful if Hunt had explained this second concern in relation to early Christian Christologies. For instance, is one to understand the comparison between the unity of divine and human in Christ with the unity of soul and body in another human person to approximate a logical equivalency? If so, the comparison would make sense only from the standpoint of a non-Chalcedonian Christology—not an Antiochene *logos-anthropos* Christology, but an Alexandrian *logos-sarx* Christology, a Christology that holds that the divinity of Christ replaces some part of what is authentically part of the human person, e.g., the human rational soul, or mind. Or, is the comparison rather an analogy? Maybe this is more likely, as Hunt points out in the conclusion: "As we have seen, some Patristic writers draw parallels between the unity of two natures in Christ and the integrity of the human person" (203). In any case, Hunt concludes: "how the integrity of body, soul, mind and spirit within the human person is linked to or reflects Christ's unity of opposite

natures remains unresolved because of the contradictions and inconsistencies in the late antique sources" (204). This lack of resolution is reflected in the inconsistent interchange throughout the book between the Christological designations of "two natures," "dual nature," and, somewhat confusingly, "dual natures" (83, 181), as well as in the inconsistent designations of what constitutes a human being—most often two aspects are noted (e.g., soul and body; spiritual and physical), but sometimes more aspects are given, as in the citation above.

Hunt does present a potential framework for reconciling the tension between anthropology and Christology in this book, one stated in the introduction, and repeated in the conclusion, but not one developed or argued throughout. Hunt writes, "Prior to the Council of Nicaea's concern with the full humanity of Christ, discussion of the problems posed by the human body focused on that of man, not Christ. The introduction of public debate about the dual nature forced the discussion out of the relative seclusion of the desert, and combined religious discourse with secular philosophical teachings in a rhetorical, frequently polemical, mode of address. It was no longer a priority to agonize about how to control one's own body and its urges when the Church establishment needed to vilify and exclude from the fold those who misunderstood or misrepresented the body of Christ" (3). The suggested movement between the discourse on early Christian desert anthropology and the doctrinal formulations at the Christological councils remains unconvincing.

Hunt's work will be a useful resource for students of early Christian theology, spirituality, and literature. Her inclusion in a single volume of such a breadth of material will be hard to match. Students of early Christian theology in particular will benefit from so many eastern Christian texts gathered together and given voice regarding the central theological topics of anthropology and Christology, topics so wrestled with and passionately debated in the early centuries of Christianity. Those long tired of doctrinal approaches to early Christian theology may find her book refreshing. Hunt's presentation allows for an appreciation of a great variety of views, particularly of the human body, far beyond what came to be included in orthodox belief.

Students of Syriac Christianity will find here a good introduction to some of the basic literature, both primary and secondary,

and will encounter the vast scope of this tradition that may well tease one into further research. Methodologically, Hunt shows the tension in this relatively young field between literary, historical, and theological approaches to the literature.

Her work challenges us to consider the criteria we might use to do as the series editors suggest: "to estimate the value" of early Christian writings for today.