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The Body as God's Temple

Compare the thoughts of Paul the apostle with those of Epictetus (55–135 CE), a Greek Stoic philosopher:

Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians	Epictetus, <i>Discourses</i>, VIII, "On the Nature of God"¹
<p>Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple (3:16–17).</p> <p>Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body. (6:18–20)</p>	<p>You are a principal work, a fragment of God Himself, you have in yourself a part of Him. Why then are you ignorant of your high birth? Why do you not know whence you have come? Will you not remember, when you eat, who you are that eat, and whom you are feeding, and the same in your relations with women? When you take part in society, or training, or conversation, do you not know that it is God you are nourishing and training? You bear God about with you, poor wretch, and know it not. Do you think I speak of some external god of silver or gold? No, you bear Him about within you and are unaware that you are defiling Him with unclean thoughts and foul actions. If an image of God were present, you would not dare to do any of the things you do; yet when God Himself is present within you and sees and hears all things, you are not ashamed of thinking and acting thus: O slow to understand your nature, and estranged from God!</p>

1. Epictetus, *Discourses*, VIII, "On the Nature of God," trans. P. E. Matheson, 1916.

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