Syllabus of an Estimate of the Doctrines of Jesus compared with those of others.

In a comparative view of the Ethics of the enlightened nations of antiquity, of the Jews, and of Jesus, no notice should be taken of the corruption of reason among the antients, to wit, the idolatry and superstition of their vulgar, nor of the corruptions of Christianity by the new learned among its professors. Let us first be taken of the Moral principles inculcated by the most esteemed of the ancients, of their individuals, particularly Pythagoras, Socrates, Epicurus, and Epictetus, Jesus, Antiquium.

I. Philosophers. 1. Their precepts related chiefly to ourselves & the government of these passions, which uncontrolled would disturb our tranquility of mind. In this branch of philosophy they were really great.

2. In developing our duties to others they were short and defective. They embraced indeed the circles of endeavors, & invaded the sphere of public in the aggregate, as a primary obligation. But in the minds of the ancients they taught justice, but scarcely viewed them as within the circle of benevolence.

II. Jews. 1. Their system was Deism, that is, the belief in one only god, but their ideas of him and of his attributes were degrading and injurious.

2. Their Ethics were not only imperfect, but often irreconcilable with the sound dictates of reason & morality, as they respect intercourse with those around us.

III. Jesus. 1. His precepts were observable, his condition poor, his education null; his natural endowments great.

His life correct & innocent, he was meek, patient, firm, disinterested, & the sublime eloquence of his discourses under which his doctrines appear are remarkable.

1. Like Socrates & Epictetus he wrote nothing himself.

2. But he had not, like them, a Xenophon or Arrian to write for him.

3. On the contrary, all the learned of his country, embittered in its power & riches were opposed to him. His labors should undermine their advantages: if he committed to writing his life & doctrines fell on the most unlettered & ignorant of men, who wrote to them, memory, I doubt long after the transactions had passed.

3. According to the ordinary fate of those who attempt to enlighten & form mankind, he fell an early victim to the jealousy & combination of the altar & throne, at about 39 years of age, his reason having not yet attained the maximum of its energy, nor the course of his preaching which was but of about three years, presented occasions for developing a complex system of moral duties.

*To explain I will exhibit the heads of Seneca's & Cicero's philosophical works, the most extensive of any we have received from the antients. Of 11 heads in Seneca, 7 relate to ourselves, to wit, de in consolato, de tranquilitate, de constantia sapiens, de vita beatæ, de beneficiis, etc. 2 relate to others, de Clementia, de beneficiis, and 1 relates to the government of the world, de providentia.

Of 11 tracts of Cicero, 5 respect ourselves, viz., de jurebus, Tusculanae, Academica, Paradoxa, de Serenitate. 1. de officiis, partly to ourselves, partly to others, 1 de amicitia, relates to others, and 4 are on different subjects, to wit, de natura deorum, de divinatione, de fato, and Somnium Scipionis.
...hence the doctrines which he really delivered were defective as a whole.

4. He corrected the Daism of the Jews, confirming them in their belief of one only God, and giving them juster notions of his attributes and government.

2. His moral doctrine relating to kindred & friends was more pure & perfect than those of the naturalist, the philosopher, and greatly more so than those of the Jews.

and they went far beyond both in inculcating universal philanthropy, not only to kindred & friends, to neighbours & country men, but to all mankind, gathering all into one family under the banners of love, charity, peace, 

-man wants and common aids, a development of the head will evoke the peace

 forests superiority of the system of Jesus over all others.

3. The precepts of philosophy, & of the Hebrew code, laid hold of actions only.

he pushed his sympathies into the heart of man; erected his tribunal in the region of his thoughts, and purify the waters at the fountain head.

1. He taught emphatically the doctrine of a future state,

which was neither doubted or disbeliefed by the Jews,

and wielded it with efficacy as an important incentive, supplementary to the other mo-

tives to moral conduct.