The question of human liberation or destiny is inextricably bound up with that of man's moral nature. This thesis is the result of my research at the Dr Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras under the supervision of Dr R. Balasubramanian (Former Director of the Institute) and Chairman, Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi and Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy, Pondicherry University, Pondicherry. An attempt is made to study the moral nature of man relating to love and compassion and his liberation with special reference to Saint Paul, Śāṅkara and Rāmacūra.

According to Christianity man is made in the image of God. Ultimate reality is conceived as the personal creator God. Man is essentially divine and is made so for fellowship with God and his fellowmen. The virtues of love and compassion rank high among all
moral virtues. Consequently, the concept of forgiveness plays a vital role. Christ is our loving Heavenly Father, who knows each of his human children so that the very hairs of our heads are numbered. The concept of forgiveness is best brought out in the parable of the prodigal son. God is our loving father who seeks for each like a shepherd seeking a lost sheep or a needy widow searching for a lost coin.

Saint Paul in his teachings clearly brings out these ethical ideas of love and compassion. The value of unity is emphasised. The ideal he sets before himself is union with Christ. He says, 'The life I now live is not my life but the life which Christ lives in me'.

Saint Paul was a Jew who in circumstances well known to readers of the New Testament was led to recognize in Jesus of Nazareth who had been crucified, the Messiah of the race, who was risen and resurrected again. Saint Paul yielded himself to Him as the unseen Master of his
soul, and for thirty years afterwards lived a life of religious fellowship with Him. The ideal which he set himself to realize was a society of men in whom the age-long purpose of God was being fulfilled. It was a society of men who having been redeemed, reconciled consecrated, found perfect self expression and perfect satisfaction in doing the will of God.

In Hinduism, the true self or Ātman is unborn, eternal, permanent and primeval. Indian thought is basically and essentially Vedic thought, meaning it is being based upon the Veda-s, the concluding portions of which are the Upaniṣad-s, representing the central teachings of the Veda-s. Vedānta means the end of the Veda (Veda+anta). The emphasis is upon the Absolute in relation to man and the world. Śaṅkara belongs to the school of Advaita and Rāmānuja belongs to the school of Viśiṣṭādvaita, in Vedāntic thought.

The central teaching of the Advaita Vedānta is that the self or Ātman is Brahman. Reality is non-dual and
it is of the nature of consciousness. This is Śaṅkara's view. Rāmānuja belonging to the school of Viśiṣṭadvaita hold that the liberated soul becomes like Brahman and the self retains its individuality. It does not merge with Brahman.

Hinduism which is both philosophy and religion accords the central place to man in the universe. The basic philosophical work of every school in Vedāntic thought is claimed to be a mokṣaśāstra (an authoritative treatise) on the liberation of man. It means that the purpose of philosophy is to help man gain the vision of truth and attain liberation from the bondage of empirical existence. The supreme goal of life is liberation.

The Upaniṣad-s seek to convey to us the nature of Brahman through such expressions as sat (existence), cit (consciousness) and ānanda (bliss) and through such texts as tat tvam āsi (that thou art). The problem for all the Vedāntic teachers is how to reconcile the two
views of Brahmā;

(1) Nirguna Brahmā (Brahman without characteristics).

This however does not mean that Brahmā is a blank.

(2) Saguna Brahmā (Brahman endowed with qualities).

For solving this problem, Sāṅkara postulated two stand-points, the absolute (pāramārtika) and the empirical (vyāvahārīka). From the absolute stand-point Brahmā is the supreme truth. It is non-dual and the only reality. From the relative empirical stand-point, Brahmā appears as God, the cause of the world. The world is but an illusory appearance in Brahmā, and this doctrine is known as Vivartavāda. The principle that makes for this phenomenal appearance is māyā, jñāna or wisdom to overcome avidyā or ignorance and realize that the self is real and identical with Brahmā is for Sāṅkara the direct means to release. To Rāmānuja, bhakti or love plays the most important role in release.

With this background of these three thinkers Saint Paul, Sāṅkara and Rāmānuja, the thesis divides itself into Four Chapters.
CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION:

This deals with the statement of the problem of enquiry, objectives, assumptions and limitations. It sets forth the basic ideas of the three thinkers regarding the Moral Nature Of Man Relating to Love and Compassion and his Liberation.

CHAPTER II - MORAL FOUNDATIONS:

A. The Virtuous Life:  B. The Law of Karma
(The moral element).

Saint Paul is as great an ethical teacher as he is a theologian. The great virtues of love and forgiveness can be brought out clearly only by man living in a community. The ultimate goal for Saint Paul is identification with Christ and living a Christ like life. The conception of the natural and moral law has been an important element in Christian thinking, ever since the days of Saint Paul and the Fathers of the early Church.
The corresponding law in Hinduism is Dharma. Dharma and Karma have been derived from Ṛta of the Ṛg-Veda. This is the operative universal law of nature which has been equated with the moral law. In connection with this the four Purusarthas or human values (dharma, artha, kama and mokṣa) are explained. The stages in life, brahmaśrama, gaṇeṣṭha, vaṇapraṣṭha and saṃyasa are brought out clearly. The four different castes along with their duties are also mentioned. The castes are Brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaśya and śudra. The virtuous life as advocated by Śaṅkara and Rāmacūrṇa are dealt with in Section A.

Section B deals with the moral aspect of the law of Karma that whatever a man sows he will reap. Indian philosophers, all through the ages, to whichever school they belong (with the exception of the Cārvāka) have believed in the law of Karma. Ideas of this law are present in the writings of Saint Paul also. In Hinduism, a necessary corollary of the law is rebirth or reincar-
nation. In Christian thought, purgatory or a stage of purification before eternity seems the most intelligible. The Catholic doctrine of purgatory and Hindu ideas of reincarnation are brought out clearly in this chapter and compared.

CHAPTER III - LIBERATION OR SALVATION:

This chapter deals with the problem of liberation or salvation. Man's moral aspirations and experience seem consistent by the conviction that character, moral life and ethical values are eternal. Both in Christianity and Hinduism concern for others has been of no lesser value than renunciation. Love and compassion can be built up by undergoing a spiritual transformation. The quest for moral perfection is far more than a quest for private excellence. It involves the attainment of right relationships with God and fellowmen. To Śāṅkara and Rāmānuja as for Christ and Saint Paul, the end is an eternal liberation. In the Vedānta philosophy, liberation is of two kinds: the jīvanmukti and the videhamukti. The jīvanmukta lives in the world but he is not of it.
Videhamukti is a final liberation after death. Sankara admits both, Ramanuja accepts only Videhamukti.

CHAPTER IV - REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS:

This chapter is a reflection on all the foregoing ideas. Concluding remarks are stated with convictions. Some suggestions as to the psycho-physical complex of man and the nature of the surviving entity are stated, as they have to be mentioned in a study like this. Aristotle, comes nearer to current trends of thinking than Plato. To Aristotle the soul is the form of the body. Plato speaks of the soul being imprisoned in the body like an Oyster in the shell. The 'resurrected body', the 'subtle body' etc., have something in common with Aristotle's view.

Indian tradition is profoundly religious and recognizes the value of religion. In the defence of human rights, and in the service of humanity, Christianity and Hinduism can find immense areas of mutual understanding.
and collaboration. Life at the Supreme level is not a matter of "being" but of "doing", a life of love in action. This is the true spiritual life over which sin or evil, or the power of avidya or ignorance can have no effect.

The story is told of a mother whose small son had died, coming in despair to the Buddha to beg him miraculously to restore the child to life. He told her to go around the town collecting mustard seeds, but only from houses in which no one had died. In house after house she found that there had been sometime or other death. When she came back she had no mustard seeds, but the realisation of a situation of death and separation.

All the great religious of the world have believed in some sort of an eternal life. Though it is not within the limits of this thesis to prove eternity or immortality this ultimate end or final destiny is what imparts meaning
and significance to the ethical endeavour of man. Morality has a reference to something beyond itself.

This thesis strikes its concluding note in the claim that Saint Paul, Sankara and Ramanuja have all taught the importance of a virtuous life. Liberation or salvation is the orienting goal of the teachings of all these three thinkers chosen for our study.