CONCLUSION

The novels of Alan Paton have a distinctive quality which evoke poignant pity and sympathy at the human tragedies they depict but which are never depressive. Hope and faith are somehow kept alive in the characters through the author's own optimism. The world he describes in the novels are shadows of a real world: a world he is familiar with and one he loves. The narrative is so vivid that at times it is difficult to differentiate between the shadow and the reality. But Paton's novels for all their realism are not simply a social record nor are they didactic. In his own words, Paton says,

"above all I tried to make a story, not a denunciation or a sermon or a lesson... If your story also expounds some moral truth because of the kind of person you are, that is acceptable
so long as it is the writer and not the preacher or teacher who tells the story. If the preacher or teacher intrudes, that will mean the end of the story. He has been successful in adhering to this principle and the resultant objectivity constitutes his strength as a novelist. In Cry, The Beloved Country, the omniscient narrator gives a reliable account of the story of South Africa. He is reliable because he is not a participant but an observer. Neither is he a moralist nor a teacher. The characters are allowed to enact their drama without intrusion from Paton the man. The open ending is another indication of its objectivity. Just as Kumalo does not find the answers to his manifold questions, so also is the narrator content to accept the fact that when that dawn of emancipation will come is a secret. It is Paton's greatness as a writer that, committed as he is to his country, he does not intrude in his story to theorise or moralise. The narrative is carried on in a manner of detached objectivity. The characters are enact their dramas and tell their tales without disruption from their author.

Another important aspect of Alan Paton's novels is the impact of the Authorised Version of the English Bible, on the novels especially in Cry, The Beloved Country. The Biblical style adds to the power of the book as it captures not only the mind but also the emotion of the reader. For
instance when the young White man vents his anger and frustration on Kumalo, the old man is hurt and bewildered and cannot bring himself to climb into the car with him. The young man, smitten with remorse at this outburst comes to Kumalo’s lodging to make amends. Still fresh from the pain of their encounter, Kumalo shrinks from him which goes not unnoticed by the young man. He searches for humble and pleading words, but none comes to him. He looks at the floor while the young man, looking angrier than ever makes his apology and suggests that they get a lawyer for Absalom. Kumalo struggles within himself ‘for it is thus with a black man, who has learnt to be humble and who yet desires to be something that is himself’.

Another highly emotive scene is the unexpected meeting of James Jarvis and Stephen Kumalo in Johannesburg when Kumalo had gone to the house of Barbara Smith to enquire about a native servant. Kumalo recognises Jarvis immediately and the intensity of his emotion shakes his old frame. He sits down on the steps to steady himself and when he tries to rise up again with the help of his stick, the stick falls from his hands clattering on the stones. Jarvis, who all this time is patiently waiting for him to regain his self-control picks it up for him. When Kumalo finally looks up, Jarvis finds his face full of suffering that is caused neither by illness nor hunger. Jarvis is torn between compassion and irritation and when Kumalo is
finally able to reveal the cause of his suffering, Jarvis with heroic fortitude tells him that there is no anger in him. In instances such as these, Paton inspires in the reader sympathy for the old Black parson, a liking for the young White man and respect for the old White man. It is Paton's greatness as a novelist that the narrative, however intense or emotive, is never allowed to degenerate into mere sentimentality. Perhaps it is the inner strength or self-respect of characters like Stephen Kumalo, James Jarvis, Simelane and Enoch Maarman, to mention a few, which lends strength and nobility of stature to his works. The archaism serves to give a realistic effect to the narrative. It suggests that symbolic quality of the Zulu language and also the way in which Black people use the English language. It also serves to enlighten the reader on the thought process of the Africans. Since the Bible is one book they are familiar with, as in the case of Kumalo, it is natural that its style should influence their speeches. The short simple sentences have a curious rhythm which is not unlike poetry. The use of a preliminary dash to indicate conversation instead of the usual inverted comma is a style which Paton learnt from John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. He uses this style in all his three novels.

Besides the style, the spirit of the book is itself Biblical. From the very first page when the author exhorts
the reader to stand unshod upon the ground that is holy, the mood is set for the rest of the narrative. In the Old Testament, when the Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses and to Joshua, they were ordered to unshod their feet for the grounds that they stood upon were Holy grounds.  

The names of Stephen Kumalo and his son Absalom are suggestive. In the New Testament, Stephen was one of the seven deacons chosen to minister to the believers. He was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. Absalom was one of King David's sons who rebelled against his father and was later killed. David's lament for his son is echoed by Kumalo when his son too is to be killed "O my son Absalom, my son my son...". Throughout his ordeal, the flame of Kumalo's faith is never wholly extinguished, even though at times it is blown by winds of doubt and desolation. Perhaps it is the constant invocation of God, the Protector and the Comforter that lends the book its deep spirituality. Although it is a story of South Africa, *Cry, The Beloved Country* can be classified as a Christian literature. In fact, Reinhold Neihburh, while talking to the New York Times Book Review in May 1948 said, "...The book (*Cry, The Beloved Country*) has a genuine religious Christian content and has a nobly tragic element in it".

Too Late The Phalarope is a planned novel quite different from *Cry, The Beloved Country*. In its own way it bears the impact of the Holy Bible. The Psalm of David
after his adultery with Bathsheba is strongly alluded throughout the novel. The author seems to challenge the Church for usurping God's right to punish sinners. God has said 'Vengeance is mine'. Yet the people have taken upon themselves to punish a wrongdoer. He also subtly suggests that church laws and doctrines can be vastly different from the teachings of Christ. In their quest for racial purity, the Afrikaners have forgotten the words Jesus spoke about the woman caught in adultery, "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her". The narrator Sophie often alludes to Biblical verses. One such recurring example is, 'I should have cried out there not ceasing' which corresponds to Paul's exhortation 'Pray without ceasing'. Moreover, she draws a parallel between herself for writing her story and John at Patmos for writing the Revelation. The Bible is the most important book in the van Vlaanderen household. The Old Testament with its stern and rigid laws have more attraction for Jakob while Sophie thinks more of forgiveness and mercy through Christ. The book has a religious overtone although the subject is not religious. But it lacks the deep spirituality of Cry, The Beloved Country. This is not because the protagonist is a policeman while the other is a parson. There are dominees even in Too Late The Phalarope just as there are priests in Cry, The Beloved Country. It is also not because White Christianity is less profound than Black Christianity. The reason could be the simple
faith of the Old Black priest who evinces a sincerity and trustfulness of a child. He is always aware of God either to give thanks or pray for protection. He does not doubt that his prayers are not heard. Even in the short time he lost his faith in Johannesburg, he obeys Father Vincent's command to pray and give thanks. In fact, his prayers for the restoration of Ndotsheni is answered in a wonderful way. He is able to hear a voice from heaven cry "Comfort ye Comfort ye, my people, these things will I do unto you, and not forsake you\(^\text{10}\).

In the case of Pieter van Vlaanderen he too prays for mercy constantly and there is no doubt that his prayers come from the depth of his being. But he does not have the faith of Kumalo. Moments after his first offence, he prays to God but before each prayer he says 'If I may pray, if I may pray'. He doubts if his prayers are heard. "For he had a vision that a trumpet had been blown in Heaven, and that the Lord Most High had ordered the closing of the doors, that no prayer might enter in from such a man, who knowing the laws and the commandments, had of his own choice and will, defied them\(^\text{11}\). The writer of Hebrews in the New Testament says it is impossible to please God without faith\(^\text{12}\). Pieter has no faith that his prayers would reach God. The comforting presence of God is absent in the novel."
The last novel, *Ah, But Your Land is Beautiful*, has no Biblical impact as such. It bears little resemblance to either *Cry, The Beloved Country* or *Too Late The Phalarope*. It is largely a political history that traces the growth of apartheid in South Africa up to the becoming of Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd as the Prime Minister. It is also a record of the endeavours of the Black and Coloured races to shake the unshakable foundation of apartheid with the help of a few White men and women. Wilberforce Nhlapo aptly says 'We are a defeated race but not so defeated as that'. Till today, White Pretoria still holds the reigns of power and the Blacks are still struggling against it. As such, Paton's writing is still relevant. The dilemma of South Africa which he first introduced in the essays of Arthur Jarvis in *Cry, The Beloved Country* is not yet resolved. It pervades different races at various levels. It is faced by individuals and families either in the home or in their place of work and even in their inter-action with the other races. Hearts are broken and lives are lost while racial discrimination remains not only intact but strong and powerful. The struggle against apartheid has little or no result and men are left frustrated and dissatisfied. In our own time, President F.W. de Klerk has made commendable effort to dismantle apartheid. On 2nd February 1991, he asked Parliament to scrap the Group Areas Act 1950; the Land Acts 1913 and 1936 and the Population Registration Act 1950. But it will take more than mere Acts of Parliament
to uproot the age old tradition of racial separation and inequalities. A colleague of Albert Lutuli once said to him that Afrikaner children are "brought up to dislike and look down on natives". In a way these people are victims of their own past and Lutuli claims that this particular confession has given him an insight into the dilemma of the Afrikaners. The Afrikan National Congress leader Nelson Mandela who was released on 2nd February 1990 after twenty-seven years imprisonment says that the euphoria about apartheid being on its way out is 'misplaced'. In a forward to a book South Africa: One Year After Mandela's Release by journalist commentator Hari Sharan Chhabra, Nelson Mandela has said that, "Apartheid remains intact, while South Africans are still in full and total control of all power - political, economic and social". At the end of Cry, The Beloved Country, Paton writes these lines: "But when that dawn will come, of our emancipation, from the fear of bondage, and the bondage of fear, why, that is a secret". Till today it seems to continue to be a secret. Paton, in the same novel makes Msimangu speak these lines: "I see only one hope for our country, and that is when white men and black men, desiring neither power nor money, but desiring only the good of their country, come together to work for it". Yet Ah, But Your Land is Beautiful, ends with the poem -

"Black man, we are going to shut you off,
We are going to set you apart,
We mean nothing evil towards you..."
The dilemma of South Africa remains a paradox and will no doubt continue to be so. Once again I quote Professor Eddie from *Ah, But Your Land is Beautiful* "...How does one explain these riddles of human nature? But the most difficult of all are the riddles of White South African nature". As the White and Black non-Nationalists did when Dr. Hendrik became Prime Minister, one may as well adopt a policy of wait and see. The repeal of the obnoxious racial laws has resulted in the lifting of economic sanctions against South Africa and her re-admission to the International Olympic Committee and the International Cricket Committee in 1991. But South Africa is not yet a democracy with one person, one vote. Almost everyday, newspapers carry reports of violence and massacre in South Africa. The Nationalist Party has allegedly funded the Inkatha to fight the African National Congress which proves again that politicians are not what South Africa needs in order to resolve her dilemma. John Kumalo in *Cry, The Beloved Country* could not emancipate his people. Neither Lutuli nor Dr. Hendrik with his infamous theory of separate development in *Ah, But Your Land is Beautiful* could resolve the dilemma. What South Africa needs today are the Arthur Jarvisis, the Napoleon Letsitsis and the Judge Oliviers, who would dedicate themselves for service to Africa and her people. Her dilemma can be resolved only when 'white men and black men, desiring neither power nor money, but desiring only the good of
their country, come together\textsuperscript{19} and work for the beloved country.
END NOTES

2. Ibid., p.269.
3. Exodus 3:5, Joshua 5:15, KJV All quotations are from the King James Version.
4. Acts 6:5 KJV.
5. *Towards the Mountain*, p.300.
6. Psalm 51.
15. Ibid., pp.39-40.
18. Ibid., p.119.