8.1.1. This study brings out the fact that each individual reconstruction of Jesus is a mirror reflecting one aspect of the many-sided personality of Jesus. To get a full picture of Him the reader should study it against the background of the earliest reconstructions: the Biblical and the historical. The literary survey, which gathers Jesus reconstructions from the Biblical reconstructions of the first century AD to the post-modern deconstructive reconstructions, clearly shows how the figure of Jesus undergoes dynamic changes in the hands of different authors/reconstructors through the ages. Biblical reconstruction is approached mainly from two angles. one based on St. Paul and the other on the Evangelists. According to St. Paul Jesus is the incarnated Son of God, the Saviour of humanity. He states. "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal. 4.4-5). In spite of the apparent discrepancies and divergences in the exposition of events in them, the four Gospels of the Evangelists give a synchronised view of the personality of Jesus, His life-events and His message. The Gospels project Jesus as the Son of God who underwent supreme suffering and Kenosis on Calvary to redeem the world. Developing on this ideology, Christian theology propagates Jesus as the eternal Son of God who became man to
sanctify humanity by taking the responsibility of the sins of the world upon him.

8.1.2. The Holy Bible shows Jesus as a multidimensional super-personality. He is the Son of God, He is the Son of David and He is the Son of man. He is delineated as a person with three-dimensional powers based on these three levels. As the Son of God he has power over evil: sin, sickness, nature death and evil spirits. Various miracles described in the Holy Bible are the proof of this power. As the Son of David he leads humanity from bondage to the freedom of the children of God in the Kingdom of God. The Hosanna event and Jesus’ glorious entry into Jerusalem signifies this power. He, being the Son of Man, gives meaning to the struggle and suffering of humanity. Jesus’ Passion, Death and Resurrection certify this power. The Gospels highlight three basic characteristics in connection to these titles. As the Son of God He leads a mission-oriented life. His mission is to fulfil the Father’s will. At the age of twelve He says to His mother, “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2.49) During His public life He often says to the public, “The Son can do nothing of His on accord, but only what he sees the Father doing” (John 5.19). And He dies on the cross uttering, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23.46). As the Son of David He proclaims the kingdom of God. He begins His public ministry announcing, “The Kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1.14). He sacrifices himself for the mission and the message, fulfilling the role of the Son of Man.
8.1.3. Jesus has left his marks in the field of secular history too. Ancient historians like Flavius Josephus, Seutonius and Pliny the younger mention his name in their writings. The Babylonian Talmud records Jesus’ crucifixion. Modern historian, Will Durant recapitulates all the ancient historical records on Jesus. Modern archaeology has brought out enough findings to attest the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. History delineates Him as the founder of Christianity who was condemned to death on the cross by Pontius Pilate. The survey brings out the realisation that innumerable reconstructions of Jesus has occurred during these two millenniums that followed Jesus of Nazareth’s earthly life in various literary fields like poetry, drama and fiction. As fiction provides the largest variety of Jesus reconstructions it deserves a special focus in any academic study on Jesus reconstruction.

8.2.1. From a serious study of the various definitions attributed to the popular term ‘reconstruction’ fictional reconstruction of Jesus Christ has been perceived as a fictional re-presentation of the artist-creator’s understanding of the Biblical Jesus story. The creative process adopted in the fictional reconstructions of Jesus Christ is equal to the process of realising a ‘fabula’ into a particular ‘sjuzet’. The Gospel story is seen as the ‘fabula’ or the factual base and the reconstruction as the fictional product. In other words a fictional reconstruction is an interpretation or reading of the gospel story. The basic frame, the skeleton or the format of the reconstruction is always the Gospel Jesus Himself. Various theories related to reading and interpretation, like the reader-response theory, hermeneutics, and literary theories of interpretation provide a viable work-set based on
Bakhtin’s theory of interpretation. Bakhtin acknowledges that meaning is not fixed and stable, and that there can be no single, final and true interpretation. Different social group may produce different ‘ideological themes’ or meanings from the same utterance due to the shift in their ‘evaluative accents’. He relates this ‘multiplicity of meaning’ to what he calls ‘multi - accentuality’, that is, its openness to different evaluative orientations. Bakhtin advances the term *unfinalizability (nezavershennost)* to justify freedom of expression. To explain the meaning of this term he paraphrases an idea of Dostoevsky. He states in *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, “Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future” (106). Bakhtin proposes three types of interpretation: enclosure within the epoch, modernisation and distortion and creative understanding Fictional reconstructions of Jesus also can be fitted into this general structure.

8.2.2. The theories of reading, understanding and interpretation also bring out the various elements that played significant roles in the formulation of a particular Jesus reconstruction. Reader response theory offers full freedom to the reader to concretise the subject of his reading by filling up gaps in it. The reader’s imagination, knowledge and reason can contribute to the understanding of the subject of his/her reading. Historicism theory of pluralism views human understanding/interpretation as conditioned by finitude, situatedness and mutability. Theory of relativity suggests race, milieu and moment as the decisive factors behind any creative production. Hermeneutic theory of psychological interpretation,
which is centred on the thought that emerges from the totality of an author's life regards a creative reproduction as an expression of the reader himself/herself. J. Hillis Miller's book, *The Ethics of Reading*, shifts the burden of decision from the text to the reader with the argument that since the meaning of a text in itself is radically undecidable, every act of reading will have to proceed by deciding the meaning of the text. The existential-ontological theory of interpretation proposed by Heidegger deems understanding as a fore-structured phenomena with the three elements: fore-having (*Vorhaben*), foresight (*Vorsicht*) and fore-conception (*Vorgriß*).

### 8.2.3. The discussion of these theories leads to the conclusion that

the Biblical Jesus story can be dis-embedded and re-embedded in alternative discursive formations by readers who are limited by finitude, situatedness and mutability. So in fiction each age and each individual author develop their own individual Jesus figures. The fore-structures of the understanding of the reader: fore-having (*Vorhaben*), foresight (*Vorsicht*) and fore-conception (*Vorgriß*) and his/her race, milieu and moment exert powerful impact in the reconstruction process. This results in the production of different types of interpretation/reconstruction. Hermeneutics attributes a four-fold sense to the Gospel story: literal, allegorical, tropological and analogic. The six works chosen for the present study reflects six different character tinges of Jesus Christ.

### 8.3.1.1. Robert Graves has done immense historical research to reproduce Jesus Christ in a biographical enclosure within the epoch in his novel *King Jesus*. All the earthly facts related to Jesus of Nazareth are
verified and proved with the help of Babylonian astrology, the Talmud, Liturgy of the Ethiopian Church, the homilies of Clement of Alexandria, writings of Plutarch, popular myths of the Hebrews and their neighbours, the Cannanites, their histories and modern archaeology. In this process he goes to the other extreme and ignores Jesus' divinity and Godhood. The miraculous birth of John the Baptist at the old age of Zachariah and Elizabeth is provided with a logical explanation acceptable to the Jew of the first century AD Palestine. The Biblical suggestion of Divine intervention is discarded, as it is acceptable only to the faithful of the later centuries. Within the Jewish milieu the Messiah is the Son of David and hence Graves constitutes proofs to certify Jesus' legal right to the royal throne. Mary is made the daughter of Michal and she is secretly married to the legal heir to the throne and Joseph is utilised as a cover up. Jesus' birth at Bethlehem of Judaea, the visit of the shepherds and the wisemen, the massacre and the escape into Egypt are supported with historical reliability. Jesus' three days stay in the Jerusalem Temple without the knowledge of His parents, His Baptism, forty days Fast and Temptation are narrated with historical point of view. His Public Life, appointment of the Apostles, Miracles and Sermons are recreated in a historically convincing vein. The Transfiguration, the Last Supper, The Gethsemane prayer, Judas' betrayal, the arrest, the interrogation, Barabbas' liberation, Pilate's public hand washing, the Sentence and the suicide of Judas are fixed into the contemporary Jewish tradition.

8.3.1.2. The Passion of Christ is recreated in the novel in quite parallel terms with the Biblical narration. 'King Jesus' is sentenced to death
on the cross; he is scourged and crowned with thorns. He carries His cross, Simon helps him, he consoles the women, he is crucified between two thieves, his clothes are divided among the soldiers, he prays for his persecutors, he entrusts his mother to John, he offers Paradise to the good thief, he cries to the Father in despair and he dies at the ninth hour. At the time of his death darkness covers the earth at noon. The soldiers pierce his side. Joseph buries his body. He resurrects on the third day and appears to his disciples. He invites Thomas to touch his wounds and appoints Peter as the Shepherd. He ascends into heaven.

8.3.1.3. All these Biblical events are fictionalised consciously by Graves to authenticate them historically. The outcome is a Jesus story that deviates from the Gospel story. The deviation mainly springs from the interpretation given to the title 'King'. The Evangelists depict Jesus as a king, not of this world but of the Kingdom of God. During His interrogation by Pontius Pilate Jesus answers, "My kingship is not of this world" (John 18.36). From the narration of His nativity onwards the Gospels show the meaning deviation occurred in the term 'king' when it is applied to Jesus. "The wise men from the East" come to the palace of Herod in search of the newly born king of the Jews. But He was born in a stable. There are a number of scenes in the Gospels, which emphasises the difference between Herod’s kingdom and Jesus’ kingdom of God. Jesus teaches the disciples who argue over the question who is the greatest among them: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest; and the leader as one who serves. So Jesus'
kingdom is a kingdom of service, humility and love. Again Jesus says to His disciples. “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms” (Luke 12.32). So His kingdom is a kingdom of poverty. It is hard for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God (Luke 18.24). The kingdom proclaimed by ‘King Jesus’ is not the Kingdom of God but the kingdom of Herod the Great.

As Graves approaches the Jesus story with an already set mental frame of the King of the Jews, the legal heir to Herod’s throne his Jesus is compressed into the Son of David structure. In short, King Jesus depicts only one dimension of the multi-dimensional Christ story that Jesus is the Son of David. Graves reconstructs Jesus as the Jewish Messiah - the Son of David, the rejected king. In pre-Christian times there was a Jewish doctrine implying the Messiah as an ideal Hebrew prince of the Dynasty of David (Dodd 92). In reading the Gospel, Graves adopts the method adopted by modern stylistics and he keeps his focus on the few words that are foregrounded in the text to locate its meaning. He found the following three statements as the key to decipher the hidden content of the Gospel story. “Then the proconsul (Sergius Paulus) believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.” (Acts 13.12); “Pilate entered the Praetorium again and called Jesus” (John 18.33); “Pilate also wrote a title and put it on the cross; it read, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews” (John 19.19). This stylistic analysis led him to the conclusion that Jesus was the legal heir to the Herodian throne. And he reconstructed the Gospel story in this format
8.3.1.4. Similarly Graves misinterpret the title 'Son of David'. In the Gospels this title is used to refer to Jesus with an intention to ensure Jesus' symbolic right to be the king of the Jews, the long waited Messiah, and the fulfilment of prophecy. Jesus Himself brings out this confusion regarding Him in the following passage.

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, 'What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he? They said to him, 'The son of David'. He said to them, 'How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,

The Lord said to my Lord,

Sit at my right hand, till I put thy enemies under thy feet?

If David thus calls him lord, how is he his son? (Matt.22. 41-45).

The Jews consider themselves as the people of God. God is their king and ruler. Their king is only a representative of God. The son of David is a phrase designating the king. And hence Jesus is given this title to admit His power as their king and God

8.3.1.5. All these deviations happen because of Graves' reading of the Gospel story with the particular mental framework of a historian consciously dedicated to prove the historicity of it. He was provoked to take this stand due to the staunch attacks launched against the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth by modern historians of Jesus research. His overenthusiasm in historicising Jesus resulted in compressing Jesus into the Jewish epoch. Graves' identity as a Roman Catholic and his lineage connected to a poet and a historian have exerted strong formative influences upon this fictional handling of the Jesus story with a strong thrust to its historical foundation
Having been brought up in a Catholic atmosphere he was hurt to know the historicist argument against historicity of Jesus. This provided the initial inspiration to take up a research on the historicity of the Jesus event. His unwillingness to hurt the sensitive Orthodox Catholics persuaded him to choose the fictional format instead of a purely historical account of the Jesus story. Unfortunately, Graves' reconstruction becomes very much limited and restricted by his intention to prove Jesus' historicity. Thus this novel becomes an example to show how the intention/the foresight of a reader could change the meaning of a text.

8.3.2.1. Jayakanthan, on the other hand, encloses Jesus in the Christian epoch of the first century AD by representing Him allegorically in his novelette, Joseph Wept. Jayakanthan's Jesus is the Christian Messiah - the Son of Man, the Suffering Servant. At the beginning of the Christian era the Messiah was thought of as an eternal Being, called "The Son of Man" as though He were the type or representative of humanity (Dodd 92). The protagonist of this novel, Joseph, possesses all the elementary qualities of the Biblical Jesus. He is the reincarnation of the Jesus who consoled humanity with the invitation, "Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ... for I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11.28-29). He is depicted as the epitome of humility by his life of selfless service to others and unconditional love to all. He is identified with the 'Suffering Servant' by suffering atrocities and injustice quietly, bearing torture and agony to save others. He calls all others 'Sir'. This is typical of the South Indians. He serves in the Hotel where he is working as if he is the least servant of all. He is so selfless that he blames himself for the sins of
other people. When he is accused wrongly he bears it without showing the least resistance. The prophecy made by the Old Testament by prophet Isaiah regarding ‘God’s Servant’ is fulfilled literally in Joseph. So he is identified with the Jesus who was always convinced that “first he must suffer many things and be rejected by his generation” (Luke 17.25).

8.3.2.2. Actually Joseph is projected as a model for all humanity to follow and imitate. Joseph is a self baptised Hindu who follows Jesus Christ more ardently than any Christian. Like the Apostles and Saints he is ready to lose himself for the Saviour’s sake. To follow Jesus, he sacrifices his wife, friend, job; the company of the priest who is like his own father and the security of his native village. He lives a gospel life of detachment, poverty, obedience and chastity. The author gives the Sermon on the Mount as a weapon to the poverty stricken hardworking Indian. S/he could liberate herself/himself with an effective practice of it. The Indian psyche that admits and respects any spark of virtue, goodness and divinity could be recognised as the hidden seed behind this reconstruction. Jayakanthan’s longing to create a kingdom that combines both the Hindu socialism and Marxism fertilised his imagination to sprout in this direction. The Gandhian milieu that could dream of a 'Christianised' Hindu and a 'Hinduised' Christian empowered Jayakanthan to attempt this unique reconstruction. His own experience with poverty might have led him to delineate Jesus as an answer to the cry of the poorest in India. All these facts confirm realisation that the reader’s fore having plays an effective part in reshaping the reconstruction.
8.3.3.1.1. D. H Lawrence and Faulkner produce Jesus stories that are modernised and distorted. Lawrence recreates Jesus as the disillusioned prophet and a mythical Saviour God. During the time of Jesus most religions outside Judaism, believed in a Saviour God who had lived, died and risen again (Dodd 93). In *The Man Who Died*, Lawrence reads into the Gospel Jesus story an epilogue after the Resurrection scene. His Jesus regains life because the soldiers took him down from the cross too soon. This resurrection without death ideology introduces the distortion element in the novella. According to the Gospel teachings, there is no resurrection without death. Through the parable of a grain of wheat Jesus teaches His disciples, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12.24). Unlike the Gospel Jesus who taught, “Whoever would save his life will lose it” (Matt. 16.25; Mark 8.35; Luke 9.24), Lawrence’s man wants to save his life. He says to the peasant, “Yet if they discover me, they will do it all over again ..” (7). In all the Gospel narratives of Jesus’ post-Resurrection appearances Jesus is depicted as strengthening and reinforcing the disciples in the faith in His mission and imparting them the power to continue it in the world in His name (Matt. 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20,21). But Lawrence’s risen man says to Madeleine, “My mission is over, and my teaching is finished, and death has saved me from my own salvation” (13).

8.3.3.1.2. The resurrection produced in the man a feeling of nausea to his past life of preaching and self-sacrifice. He frees himself from the obligation to establish the Kingdom of God and goes into the world to establish himself. Lawrence’s Jesus-portrait establishes the author’s identity
as a radical revolutionary who considers concurrence with tradition and accepted social standards as a sign of weakness and an expression of slave morality. His modern individualistic outlook prompts him to view Jesus' earthly life that was sacrificed for others as a failure. So he depicts his protagonist as a man going in search of self-actualisation and sensual satisfaction. This analysis of the novella establishes how the fore-conception of Lawrence as the reader brings out deviation in the overall sense of the Jesus story. The psychological distortion occurred in him due to his mother's infatuation with him turned Lawrence into a creator of distorted fictional beings. He was so distorted that he could not have marital relationship with his girl friend. He could marry only an older married woman-Freeda. So he remained a man of one woman through out his life. But in all his novels he describes extra-marital relationships. This shows his pre-occupation with such relationship. Hence a life of celibacy and self-denial is, for him, one of illusion. The Jesus figure created from this type of a conceptual reservoir naturally becomes a disillusioned prophet who views his life before crucifixion as a failure and seeks fulfilment in the natural family life of the world.

8.3.3.2. Though born in a Christian family Lawrence became dejected with Christianity from a very young age itself due to the conflict between his parents who belonged to two different factions of Christianity. His elopement with the wife of his teacher widened the moral gap between himself and Christianity. And he dreamed of a religion of his own. He advocated it under the name 'Blood Religion'. He fancied of a marriage between Christianity and the Pagan religion. To him the faces of Jesus, Pan
and himself were interchangeable. This revolutionary mental frame induced
him to reconstruct the Jesus story in an irreligious manner. He describes his
own experience after facing death and coming back to life. And suggests
them to be the experience of Jesus after his resurrection. Even though the
name Jesus is not mentioned in the novella, it is considered as a Jesus
reconstruction as the man who died is identified with the Biblical Jesus
through the parallels to the Bible story. Up to his resurrection, ‘the man’
parallels the Biblical Jesus minutely. But, when he regains life, due to the
carelessness of the soldiers who took him down too soon from the cross, he
feels relieved of his past life that was dedicated for the divine mission of
establishing the Kingdom of God. He frees himself from the life of
‘excesses’ and goes into the world to establish his own self. In Lawrence’s
view Jesus’ self sacrifice is a result of compulsion and as a result it is a
negation of human individuality and freedom of choice. So he makes a
complete turn in the life principles of the resurrected man. He separates
himself from the Father’s will and goes to establish his own will. In his
theory each individual should be allowed to stay in his own kingdom: the
cock in his kingdom of hens, the farmer in his own kingdom of clay and the
slaves in their kingdom of day to day toil and common enjoyments. This is
an expression of Lawrence’s own philosophy of life. Thus this novel
establishes that the fore-conception of a reader effects deviation in the
meaning of a text.

8.3.4.1. Faulkner re-establishes Jesus as the Worthless Shepherd who
misleads the flock (Zech 11). He re-invents the Jesus story in the allegorical
rendering of the story of a First World War French corporal and his twelve-
member squad. On a Monday morning in 1918, the corporal induces a temporary armistice by leading his regiment into a strike in which the French regiment refused to make an ordered attack. Consequently the entire regiment was arrested and the corporal was sacrificed as a scapegoat. With an intention to make it a Jesus story, Faulkner creates events parallel to the major Christ-events in the life of the corporal. The corporal is born in an inn. He is the mother's son. His teen and youth years are hidden from the eyes of the public. He liberates a prostitute. He has twelve disciples. One among them betrays him and one rejects him. He organises a Last Supper with his disciples. He faces temptation. He is sentenced to death. He is crucified. He is crowned with a crown of thorns. He has a symbolic resurrection and a union with the father. In spite of the conscious superimposing of the Biblical parallels on the corporal's story, Faulkner's story turns out to be a modernised and distorted version of the Biblical story. The author makes Christ a symbol of war. Though an ardent Christian, Faulkner creates an unconventional Christ who inspires people to actively react against injustice through strong decisions. In the place of the obedient Son of the New Testament, he places an authoritative leader who drags his followers into conscious disobedience. His Jesus figure shows mere similarity to the 'worthless shepherd' of the Old Testament who misleads his flock to destruction. Like Lucifer he leads his soldiers against the father. Finally, he embraces a useless sacrificial death.

8.3.4.2. The painful experience of defeat and failure that the Southerners got from the civil war against Northerners persuaded the Southerners to find solace in the worship of the defeated heroes, the martyrs
of the civil war. These racial schemata inspired Faulkner to equate a failed war hero with Jesus. And this resulted in the reconstruction of Jesus as this chivalrous corporal who propagates peace among the soldiers of the First World War against the wishes of the authorities. This evaluation leads the researcher to the conclusion that this novel exemplifies the effect of the reader’s ‘race’ on the meaning of the text.

8.3.5.1 Malayalam author O. V. Vijayan shows Jesus as the universal redeemer - the Son of God (Is 11.10-11) Adopting the iconographic - iconotrophic method Vijayan fabricates a Jesus figure who is a mixture of the Biblical Jesus and the Jesus of the modern dreams. He effectively utilises icons, iconotrops, synonyms of Christ, names of the Gospel persons and Gospel quotations. His short novel The Prophet's Way projects Jesus and His Sermon on the Mount as the panacea for the current problem of multi-racial existence in India. Vijayan’s merit lies in the fact that standing firmly in the Hindu faith, he reinvents the Biblical Jesus a relevant prophet in the Indian milieu. His Jesus is the Son of God who sacrifices His life for the sins of the world. He is the way to the father. He establishes freedom from karma. He preaches the Gospel of love and harmony to a country that bleeds in communal riots. He is being persecuted in those who are suffering. His Jesus is beyond Christianity. He is the universal Saviour beyond the limits of any religion. Joseph, one of the prime Jesus figures in the novel, undergoes an eventful life of experiment with Marxist revolution, Capitalist luxury and wine before he attains the stigmata of the Crucified Christ in the garb of a Hindu monk. His decision
to follow Christ- the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world instantly transforms him into the Jesus figure.

8.3.5.2. This novel advocates the fact that it is possible for any one to become a Christ figure without any consideration to cast creed, religion or social status. Vijayan transforms individuals belonging to various fields of life into Jesus figures. His Jesus figures include a Hindu, a Christian, a Moslem, a Sikh and a Jew. In Vijayan's creative world life itself is a process of transubstantiation. God's love and mercy flows into humanity and it can not be limited. Any one can become the mediator of this love. Prostitutes, thieves and underground Mafia are there in Vijayan's kingdom of God. Modern socio-cultural Indian context in which Vijayan has to confront the realities of life prompted this typical Jesus reconstruction. The Constitution of India declares that it is a secular state that ensures equal rights to all religions. In spite of her majority being Hindu population, she admits her multi social status with pride. The post-partition, post-independence communal riots and bloodshed wounded her permanently. Sensitive leaders and thinkers felt the need for finding a solution to this pathetic down fall of a nation otherwise virtuous and noble. Vijayan's response to this social need for redemption shaped this novel. Thus the novel becomes an example for the influence of milieu on the reading of a text.

8.3.6.1. Nikos Kazantzakis reinstates Jesus as the Good shepherd who sacrifices his life for the flock (John 10.11). He tells the story of Christ allegorically through Manolios, a Greek shepherd, who was voted by the
village elders to play the role of Christ in the traditional enacting of the mystery play of the Passion of Christ. This appointment instantly transformed Manolios and his friends into Christ and His disciples. They identify themselves with the poor, suffering Greek refugees and organise a fight to secure their livelihood and property for them. And in this process Manolios is persecuted and murdered by his own people. Manolios is depicted as a fusion of the socialist-Greek-hero and the Biblical Jesus. He is the good shepherd who sacrifices his life for the sheep.

8.3.6.2. Kazatzakis' novel brings home the affirmation that an individual can become either a Christ or an antichrist simply through a conscious decision from his/her part. In his view life is a Passion play and one has the freedom to choose his/her own role. The author himself states that the struggle between Crete and Turkey gave this particular face to his Jesus. He shows how Christianity has become irrelevant in a world that is very much in need of Christ. Thus this novel shows the impact of moment on the reader-interpretation of a text.

8.3.7. All these six novelists make Jesus the victim of the author's imagination, fancy, personal preferences and ideologies. All of them declare the rationalist's unhappiness with the present day Christianity due to its failure to widen its horizon according to the long leap made by humanity in the field of science and philosophy. Their wish for the Church to be identical with the Gospel Jesus is expressed clearly through these reconstructions. There are some strong similarities in their depiction of the character of Jesus. In all these six works Jesus is depicted as the founder of
Christianity. He is a man for others. He is a person with a mission and a message. He has to face persecution and death for the sake of his mission and message. And all these works include a scene of exaltation and resurrection. All these authors are haunted by the fact of Christ’s Death and suffering. The key concern in all these works is the extent to which suffering can be alleviated by a proper attitude towards love. They all fail in authenticity test formulated by modern scholarship. There are two main criteria for determining authenticity. The criterion of difference/ opposition and the criterion of multiple attestation (Kereszty16). The first states that if a story about Jesus, that fits well into the life situation of Jesus can not be explained as a product of the contemporary Jewish or Hellenistic milieu, nor derived from the traditional teaching of the Church or from the literary purpose of the author, then there is a certainty that the story is based on an actual event in the life of Jesus. The multiple attestation criteria suggest that if something about Jesus is recorded in different works its authenticity can be asserted.

8.4.1. A study of the reconstructed Jesus stories inevitably raises the following questions on the freedom of expression accessible to the creative writers in reinventing the Jesus story: The question of the factors that inspired these authors to reconstruct the Jesus story; different modes adopted in these reconstructions; the effect - shift produced by the difference in mode; the special effect created by the presence of the Jesus figure; the elements that produced variation in these reconstruction of the same story, the important formative forces that effected this variety; whether the reader has the right to express the meaning evolved by his own
independent reading of a classical or traditional text; the question of how it should be dealt with — Ban or boost.

8.4.2. The story of Jesus has a universal appeal that intimidates the creative minds. The seeming impossibility to reproduce the magnanimous story captivates the risk-loving adventurers in them to try a hand at its reproduction. As distinguished authors of all ages consider themselves the voice of the oppressed and the suppressed, the Jesus story supplies them with an easily accessible and effective medium. The immediate imperative that prompted Graves to attempt a Jesus reconstruction was his staunch desire to prove the historicity of Jesus. Jayakanthan attempted a Jesus reconstruction out of his belief that the Kingdom preached by Jesus is the kingdom of his dreams. Lawrence saw Jesus as a medium to expose his own experience as a resurrected man after his narrow escape from a deadly illness. Faulkner found Jesus as an emblem of ‘Southern Martyrdom’. Kazantzakis was fascinated by the Jesus story as an expression of the conflicting life of the superman. Vijayan saw Jesus as the prophet of universal brotherhood. In short, these eminent writers of fiction tried a hand at reconstructing the Jesus story just because it was found to be the fittest groundwork to convey their message to the world.

8.4.3 The authors of the selected works have apparently adopted any one of the Bakhtinian mode of reconstructions. The ‘enclosure within the epoch’ mode, in which an interpreter recasts a text in total fidelity with the values and standards of the original authors’ epoch with a complete indifference to the interpreters own epoch is adopted by Robert Graves and
Jayakanthan. They reproduce the Jesus story of the first century A.D. Their Jesus figures, king Jesus and Joseph are aliens in the twentieth century context of these authors. Graves makes a biographical retelling of the Jesus story by selecting Jesus of Nazareth Himself as his protagonist. Jayakanthan exercises an allegorical retelling by projecting his protagonist, Joseph as an allegorical reflection of Jesus of Nazareth. In this mode the surrender of the interpreter's mind to the Gospel is visible. Lawrence and Faulkner transact in the 'modernisation and distortion mode' in which Jesus is remodelled to suit the value system and ideology of the modern world. This shift in basic principles ends up in a distortion effect in the traditionally accepted Jesus story. Lawrence pursues a biographical rendering of the Jesus story by identifying his hero with Jesus of Nazareth and Faulkner recasts Jesus into the figure of the leader of a First World War mutiny. These two works actualise 'free production' by questioning the traditionally followed 'boundness' of text. Vijayan and Kazantzakis proceed with the 'creative understanding' mode in which there occurs a fusion of the biblical Jesus epoch and the current epoch of the interpreter. While Vijayan attempts a biographical retelling of the Jesus story, the Kazantzakis weaves an allegory of the Gospel.

8.4.4. The stories that are enclosed within the epoch stand apart by supplementing the contemporary reader's understanding of the Jesus story. *King Jesus* replenishes the modern reader with the Hebrew background that paved way for the rejection and crucifixion of the Gospel Jesus. Jayakanthan familiarises the Indian readers with the Judaeo-Christian substance of the Jesus story. Both of them can be considered successful in
relation to their respective goals. Modernisation and distortion distances the common reader away from the Gospel Jesus. Lawrence's Jesus story is just a private dream of his own. It does not even have any distant similarity to the Gospel story except that the hero is a conscious extension of the Gospel Jesus by the author. It provides the reader with an insight into the psychological reactions possible in the life of a Christian celibate disciple due to the loss of faith in the Resurrection and after life immortality Faulkner's Jesus figure is the incarnation of the self-willed modern man. He organises people against the authorities and fights against evil and injustice. To establish peace he utilises indignation against the current state of affairs in the place of the Gospel's "good will". The stories that are woven around creative understanding fix Jesus in the minds of contemporary readers as someone probable and possible for all ages. Vijayan frees Jesus from the boundaries created by the rigidity of religious biases. He makes Jesus accessible to every one and any one. Kazantzakis shows transformation into the Jesus figure as a positive means to glorify life. He invites every human individual to follow Christ in His Passion and Death.

8.4.5. The historian reconstructs the past with strict adherence to truth. There is no place for imagination and author interference. Fiction is defined as "any literary narrative, whether in prose or verse, which is invented instead of being an account of events that in fact happened" (Abrams 64). Narratives in which the fiction is based on historical facts and events to a prominent degree are referred to by the name, 'historical novel'. Regarding the 'truth-value' of fiction literary critics assert that 'fiction' "should be regarded as referring to a special world,
'created' by the author, which is analogous to the real world, but possesses its own setting, beings, and mode of coherence” (Abrams 64). Fiction is like a dream where anything and everything is possible and permissible. The author as creator dominates the world of fiction as its God. S/he creates her/his characters and events, as s/he likes. No one sensor could interfere with fiction. In the case of the Jesus story any writer can reproduce it from his own point of view as fiction as there exists no autobiography or authentic biography in its strict sense.

8.4.6 The Jesus figure places the reconstruction in a familiar frame of reference. It provides profundity and epic stature to the otherwise common, ordinary story. It also can be assumed to have an extra-element of popularity and publicity. In the modern world of propaganda and advertisement names of heroes and controversial reconstructions sell easily. The presence of the Jesus figure provides a universal appeal to the work.

8.4.7. These fictional reconstructions vary from each other primarily due to the reason that they are created by authors distanced in intention, race, milieu, thought-forms and presuppositions. The reading-reconstruction process adopted in these works can be substantiated with the help of a statement made by Macherey P. A. He states, “...a true analysis does not remain within its object, paraphrasing what has already been said; analysis confronts the silences, the denials and the resistance in the object” (150). Race, milieu and the author element are found the most important formative forces that produced this variety. Race means the racial context of the
reconstructor. Milieu is the socio-cultural context of the reconstruction. The author element includes both the intention and the fore-structures.

8.4.8.1. Another important formative force that effects difference in reconstruction is rationalism. Many of the rationalists believed that the real Jesus must have been an ordinary person with nothing supernatural or divine about Him. His life must have confirmed to ordinary human patterns, and be explicable in purely human categories. They claimed that the Gospels must be studied like any other books. Their reliability could not be taken for granted. Graves’s identity as a Roman Catholic living in the milieu of the search for the historical Jesus induced him to reconstruct Jesus with a special focus on His historicity. His intention was to historicise Jesus. His understanding of Jesus was limited by a fore having which anticipated a purely earthly Jesus who is accessible to historical research. This naturally produced a foresight of Jesus as the Son of David. The conceptual reservoir created through an elaborate study of related disciplines provided the fore-conception. Instead of attempting a pure historical reconstruction, he attempted a historical novel out of his regard for the sentiments of orthodox Catholics (353).

8.4.8.2. Jayakanthan’s racial background as a Hindu who could respect and worship all Gods empowered him with capability to reconstruct Jesus in the Gospel-sense. The Indian milieu of the twentieth century that encouraged Marxism and the liberation of the common man played an important role in the shaping of his Jesus figure. He understands Jesus as the symbol and saviour of the suffering common man. His Jesus concept is
that of the suffering servant who establishes the Kingdom of God with liberty, equality, and fraternity.

8.3.8.3. Lawrence turned out to be a rebel against the Catholic Church through his elopement with Frieda who was a married woman with children and husband. This led him to reconstruct the foundation of Christianity - the Resurrection of Jesus - in this distorted manner. Twentieth century rationalism prompted many European Catholics to question the authenticity of the Church's dogma based on faith. His hate-filled conceptual reservoir led him to exercise extreme freedom in mis-handling the story of resurrection.

8.4.8.4 The Southern-racial temperament that encouraged the worship of national heroes constituted Faulkner's depiction of the corporal as the Jesus figure. The post-civil war milieu prepared this outlook in Faulkner. Southern failure in the civil war prompted the southerners to question God's fatherhood and His exercise of justice. This conceptual reservoir moulded Faulkner's Jesus figure into a rebel against the father and the faithless shepherd. The existentialists like Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Karl Marx and Camus introduced the attempt to make man god.

8.4.8.5. Post-independence multi-racial context of India in which Vijayan was born and brought up exerted a strong influence in Vijayan to reconstruct Jesus in this typical style. His individual longing for a Bharat free of racial conflicts induced him to highlight the respect and love due to all religions and their prophets. His multi-religious family background
invested him with a certain broadmindedness that could help him to recognise the meaning and merit of each and every religion. In his universal religion all prophets are the sons of God and the intermediary between God and man. The message of God came through the prophet’s when written down by human agents was tainted by human finitude and limitations. So Vijayan highlights the disparity between the teachings of Jesus and the practice of the Christians.

8.4.8.6 The racial conflict between Crete and Turkey in which Kazantzakis was born and brought up provided the impetus for him to retell the Jesus story against the background of a racial struggle for existence and sustenance. His father’s anti-priest attitude prompted him to place his Jesus figure in anti-priest, anti-bishop and anti-hierarchy atmosphere. The psychology oriented superman centred modern world inculcated in him an interest in the psychology of the superman. So he focuses on the psychological conflicts probably faced by Jesus in taking various crucial life determining decisions.

8.4.9.1.1. The theories of reading and interpretation advocated by deconstructionist critics who followed the philosophy of Nietzsche gave immense freedom to the reader to interpret texts in maximum deviation from their traditional meaning. This means that there is no such thing as a ‘full’, complete or determinate meaning. These theories support the deviation of the reconstructed Jesus stories from the Gospel story. The most prominent among them is put forward by Roland Barthes. In “From Work to Text” Barthes describes the change that took place in literary studies.
during the 1960s in relation to important innovations in such disciplines as linguistics, anthropology, Marxism, and psychoanalysis. He makes a rough comparison of it with the movement from Newtonian to Einsteinian physics, in that now literary study demands that "the relativity of the frames of reference be included in the object studied". He describes three changes that occurred in modern literary criticism:

1. Relativization of the relation between the writer and the reader, which is largely the consequence of the new understanding of human beings that has resulted from the Marxist-Freudian epistemological break.
2. The designation of the text rather than the work as the object of literary study, which is the consequence both of the new understanding of human beings resulting from that epistemological break and of a new understanding of language and related non-verbal semiotic systems resulting from structuralism.
3. The production of a new language for the discipline of literary criticism that reflects the relativization of the frames of reference and the shift from work to text (Barthes 156)

8.4.9.1.2. Barthes proceeds to trace these changes through seven propositions which concern method, genres, signs, plurality, filiation, reading and pleasure. Method: According to him the focus shift from work to text is a consequence of a change in the method of literary study. To deal with a piece of literature as a text is to treat it as "a methodological field" and a "process of demonstration ... in the movement of a discourse" (Ibid 157). Whereas the text calls preconceived notions of genre, language, subjectivity and reading into question, the work leaves them in tact. The text "knows itself as a text" and demands that it be read a certain way. "The
selected for the present study testify that even a traditional text like ‘the Bible’ is not beyond this value slide and freedom of approach.

8.4.9.1.4. Plurality: Barthes speaks of the multiplicity of meaning in the text. The etymology of the word text implies that it is a tissue or woven fabric of meaning. He clarifies his stand with the metaphor of the reader strolling in a state of empty receptivity on the side of a valley. What the reader perceives is a multiplicity of undifferentiated sensations that are “multiple, irreducible, coming from a disconnected, heterogeneous variety of substances and perspectives. Lights, colours, vegetations, heat, air, slender explosions of noises, scant cries of birds, children’s voices from over on the other side, passages, gestures, clothes of inhabitants near or far away” (Ibid 159).

Thus he cancels any remote chance to assume a universal meaning to a text on the basis that the text is woven out of “citations, references, echoes, cultural languages which cut across and through it like a ‘stereophony’ (160). Michael Payne explains Barthes attitude to the text in the following passage “Like the man possessed by demons in the Gospel of Mark (5.9), the text proclaims, My name is Legion. for we are many.” The text will therefore determinedly resist whatever monistic efforts- in the name of Church, Marxism, or other reductive hermeneutic- are exerted as reading strategies to curtail its multiple significations”(Payne 6). With the death of the author concept, Barthes releases the powerful revolutionary potential in the text. Barthes describes the text as “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and
clash.” The text is “a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture” (Barthes 146). The text liberates “anti-theological activity” and refuses to fix meaning in reason, science, or law (147). The unity of the text, therefore, is to be found not in its origin but in its destination, which is the place of the reader (Barthes 148). Payne states “In his later reflections on filiation, he is ready to acknowledge the return of the author, not as a ghost but as a guest in the text. As a “paper-author,” the writer’s life no longer constitutes the determining origin or faintly concealed code of his work but rather is but among one many fictions that contribute to its meaning” (6)

8.4.9.1.5. Reading: Barthes begins his thesis on reading with the disarming observation that “structurally, there is no difference between ‘cultured’ reading and casual reading in trains.” (Barthes 162) In his view reading is not playing with a text but rather the active practice of reproducing the polysemous play of the text; that reading as practice requires rereading, in which the text is played much as a performer plays a musical score. Indeed a defining characteristic of the text is that it demands “a fresh inscription” as part of the experience of being read. The future of the text is a new text into which its predecessor is absorbed. In this view, the reader has the right to express his interpretation of any writerly text. When the story of Jesus is viewed as a text, the reader is empowered with the right to interpret it in her/his own way and express it.

8.4.9.2. Nietzsche’s arguments on reading can be successfully adapted to justify the reading process followed by these authors in creating
these Jesus reconstructions. In his 1986 Preface to The Dawn Nietzsche stated that reading well “means reading slowly, deeply, with consideration and caution” (22). According to Payne

To read as Nietzsche advocated requires not just reading with sufficient care to recheck what comes before in the same text, seeing if one understands the earlier portions properly in terms of what comes in the later ones. It also requires a determination to place what one is reading in relation to the previous works of the writer and to see where the writer’s work goes on from there. Furthermore, it involves uncovering, approximately as an archaeologist does, what lies buried beneath what is now being read (14)

Nietzsche describes the perfect reader in the following statement “When I imagine a perfect reader, he always turns into a monster of courage and curiosity, moreover, supple, cunning, cautious, a born adventurer and discoverer” (Nietzsche 264) The authors of all these reconstructions should be considered as a Nietzschean reader, the slow reader who searches not for a reflection of experience that s/he has already had, but for an opening into the possibility of a new kind of thought or experience

8.4.9.3. David Birch describes modern attitude to reading in the following manner, “It foregrounds not the individual subject, but an interaction, a struggle, a play, where understanding and meanings can never be fixed. The ego is therefore decentred, and reality becomes a play of languages, where neither voice can ever be determined as correct or incorrect” (7). In the case of the selected authors of the Jesus reconstructions the ego decentring is obvious. Birches utilises Derrida’s arguments to assert
reading as a dynamic uncertain activity. He shows how Jacques Derrida challenges the conception of texts as fixed centres of meaning by discussing how writing generates meaning through a constant process of differing and deferring that he called difference. Derrida argues that as there is a constant deferring of centre, a single, fixed meaning can never be determined. It is constantly postponed and deferred (7-9). Therefore there is no single meaning of meaning and no text is ever finished. Derrida views the text as "a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself" (Derrida 84). Harold Bloom views our idealisms about texts as poor illusions and argues that in practice there are no texts just interpretations (7).

8.4.9.4 The deconstructionists give much importance to the interrogation of the underlying assumptions of the text. Macherey states:

a true analysis does not remain within its object, paraphrasing what has already been said, analysis confronts the silences, the denials and the resistance in the object - not that compliant implied discourse which offers itself to discovery, but the condition which makes the work possible, which proceeds the work so absolutely that it can not be found in the work (150).

Developing this idea Bakhtin states text as a site for the interrogation of meanings. Bakhtin acknowledges that meaning is not fixed and stable, and that there can be no single, final and true interpretation. Different social group may produce different 'ideological themes' or meanings from the same utterance due to the shift in their 'evaluative accents'. He relates this 'multiplicity of meaning' to what he calls 'multi-accentuality' - that is, its
openness to different evaluative orientations. Bakhtin advances the term *unfinalizability* (*nezavershennost’*) to justify freedom of expression. To explain the meaning of this term he paraphrases an idea of Dostoevsky: “Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future” (*Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 106)

In the fictional reconstructions of Jesus the Gospel story is interrogated by different authors with an intention to locate its multiple meanings. They use the Gospel story only as a subordinate matter to attain their larger goals. They express their conviction that in the realm of fiction the distinction between the facts of the Gospel story and the mere speculation about it is not an important factor as long as they fit into the character of the story.

8.4.9.5. The selected writers of Jesus reconstruction unwittingly invite a synthetic misperception of their differing projects because each of them is responding to certain fundamental questions. Graves asks, whether Jesus is not a historical person. Jayakanthan visualises the question of what the relevance of Jesus in India is. Lawrence probes the question of how the dying Christianity can be revitalised. Faulkner ponders over the dilemma whether Jesus is an answer to the problems of the war-inflicted world. Vijayan discusses the issue of why Christianity could not satisfy the Indian mind. And Kazantzakis thinks aloud the question why the Saviours are persecuted.
8.4.10 Theories of reading can throw light to the reason for the varying response from different readers to these reconstructed texts. Roman Ingarden considers reading as the process of concretising the work to the reader’s consciousness by filling up and removing the gaps in it. And hence reading is reconstruction. Whenever a person picks up a text and begins to read it, a complex multiplicity that constitutes the human subject confronts a network of signifiers that is replete with intertextual references, allusions, and quotations that are intricately woven into the fabric of culture. And the reader’s prejudices, mental sets and inherited value system affects her/his reconstruction. A work is the expression of an attitude of mind with its own exclusive world of feelings like jealousy, ambition, selfishness, or generosity. According to Albert Camus, a man defines himself by his make-believe (9). There is thus a lower key of feelings, inaccessible in the heart but partially disclosed by the acts they imply and the attitudes of mind they assume. The mind’s first step is to distinguish what is true from what is false. Understanding the world for a man is reducing it to the human, stamping it with his seal (13). A man is always a prey to his truths. (24) For the existentialists negation is their God (31). Husserl speaks of fictions as “extra-temporal essences” that consciousness “effectuates” at the end of every description and brought to light by the intention (33).

8.4.11. Hence readers with scientific curiosity who seeks the historicity of Jesus may find King Jesus a better reconstruction than the other reconstructions. Liberal minded socialists may rate Joseph Wept as the best reconstruction. Radical individualists may accept The Man Who Died as their best choice. Nationalist hero worshipers may acclaim A Fable
Spiritualists who profess the ideology of 'one race, one religion and one God' may prefer *The Prophet's Way* to other reconstructions. And simple-minded admirers of Christ who advocates literal obedience to the Gospel may appreciate *Christ Recrucified* as the best among the reconstructed works. This realisation leads to the conclusion that the reader's response to the reconstruction is an expression of her/his being constituted by her/his unique fore having, foresight and fore-conception. This study also reveals the possibility for the reader's response to undergo changes as the reader is a human being conditioned by finitude, situatedness and mutability.

8.5.1 The fictional reconstruction of classical religious texts is a scarcely researched field. It deserves more attention from future researchers due to the recurrent occurrence of the publication of controversial deconstructed books in the present age of anti-traditionalism. One area to be explored is the mode of reconstruction adopted by various periods of literary history and their dominant features and their formative elements.

8.5.2.1 This study points out the following suggestions to the readers for a successful reading of the Jesus reconstruction. Each and every reconstruction of Jesus is an answer to the question, 'Who do you say that I am?' Each individual who confronts Jesus reconstructs Him in her/his unique manner. As a human individual gifted with the fore-structured understanding s/he has the freedom to believe it and express it. It is meaningless to question her/his freedom of expression. But the reader also has her/his freedom and responsibility to differentiate between fact and fiction. A responsible reader of any Jesus reconstruction should approach it
with the awareness that it is the product of a limited human being distanced in time and space from Jesus of Nazareth— the source. For a comprehensive view of the Person Jesus one should free herself/himself from her/his fore-
structure and blend all available reconstructions of Jesus— Biblical, historical, theological and fictional. Biblical reconstruction has a priority over the others in that it was the earliest to be originated and its authors lived closer to the time and space of Jesus. Its nearness in time to the Jesus event attributes it with more credulity and reliability. Historical reconstruction functions as a witness who certifies the credibility of the Biblical reconstruction by providing it a greater value than a mere faith level reconstruction. All the others, theological or fictional are expansions of this skeleton. And they should be tested against the Biblical portrait whose authors lived closer to Jesus of Nazareth.

8.5.2.2. It would be useful for the reader to keep in mind the basic typology of texts established by Barthes. In Barthes' judgement the primary evaluation of a text can be based on neither science nor ideology. Instead, it must be based on the practice of writing. There are two kinds of texts for purposes of primary evaluation: writerly text, which makes the reader a producer of more writing and the readerly text, which makes the reader idle, "intransitive," and serious. Thought re-enters literature and productively disrupts it. Reading is an active and complex process. Barthes states, "As the text, in a sense, passes through me, I work to name, rename, or unname its meanings in a necessarily metonymic labour that forgets even as it struggles to remember. In its inevitable selectivity of attention, reading is made possible by forgetting. Rather than constructing a unified image of
the text, as in classic literary study, Barthes's method is an effort to replay the text in slow motion. Reading for him is 'decomposition' in the cinematographic sense. It is a means of examining a text frame by frame. Barthes calls these elemental-reading units "lexias" (67). He calls the text that is fashioned out of multiple lexias as a polyhedron. Barthes lexiology assumes the necessity of and the desire for multiple readings, rather than a single act of textual consumption. Barthes proposes five universal codes for all narratives: Hermeneutic code [the Voice of Truth], Semitic code (connotative signifiers) [the Voice of the Person], symbolic code [the Voice of the Symbol], proairetic code (rational ability to determine the result, consequence, or outcome of an action) [the Voice of Empirics], cultural code [the Voice of Science] (Ibid). The readers of the fictional reconstructions of Jesus also should identify the roles played by these various codes in a particular reconstruction and free it from their influence so that s/he could get a clear picture of the Jesus whom the author is trying to project.

8.5.3 In some instances the process of re-writing and intervention will inevitably prompt to develop the reconstructor's own characters, scenes and arguments. Consequently, there will occur a movement away from the 'base text.' All these options are at the disposal of an imaginative reader and an active re-writer. Rob Pope poses different possible approaches to reconstructed texts. If the reconstructed text is different from the base text intervene in the text in some way so as to recentre it, thereby deflecting and re-directing its dominant 'ways of saying' and its preferred 'ways of
seeing’. There are basically three ways of intervening in a text ‘from the outside’ so as to de-and re-centre it.

1 Bring the socio-historical ‘background’ of the initial moment of production into contact- and perhaps collision- with the textual ‘foreground’. 2 Trace the variable fortunes of the text’s subsequent moments of reception- seeing precisely how it has been viewed and reviewed. 3 Shift attention almost entirely from the base text so as to focus on other texts entirely - perhaps by other authors (Pope 22)

8.5.4 In the 1930’s and 40’s New Criticism empowered the reader with the argument, "The text was, rather, a self- contained object with its own meaning, form and function" (Colebrook 221). The New Critics proposed that the meaning and value of a work of art be decided by the reader’s response When the reader interacts with a text, he/she actualises the schematised aspects of it to bring out its meaning. As all understanding is contextual the text is not considered as an entity in itself. It is created in the flow of reading that is temporal. The context of the interpretative community determines the reader’s choice of interpretative strategies. So it is a deep necessity to study the socio- cultural context/ the race, milieu and moment of the reader/interpreter in evaluating a reconstructed text

8.5.5 Last but not the least: the reader should remember the fact that it is impossible to understand another person by reading about her/him or by assembling cold facts concerning her/him. One should spend time with the person, talk with her/him. And it is true of Jesus too, in order to know Him: one should spend time with him in meditation and talk to Him in prayer.