INTRODUCTION

This dissertation tries to prove that if attention is shifted from the topics or the subject matter of George Herbert's individual poems to the creative imagination responsible for the creation of his poetry in general, a significant change can be seen in the position allotted to Herbert by critics, both old and new.

None of the critics on Herbert, to the best of my knowledge, has connected Herbert's poetic art with his creative imagination. I do not claim that the things discussed here are entirely new, not to be found anywhere in any critic, but I wish to emphasize that attention has not been paid to Herbert's creative imagination which actually generates those things. It is perhaps because man is very often unaware of certain things that work much on his heart and mind and upon which depend much of his aesthetic enjoyment and spiritual elevation. Herbert's creative imagination working behind all his important poetic creation is one such thing.

All the critics on Herbert can broadly be divided into four groups. The first group is of those who got interested and engrossed in his Christian piety. They are
personalities like his biographer Izaak Walton, Nicholas Ferrar, Francis Bacon, Barnabas Oley, and others belonging to Herbert's own age, the 17th century. The second group took interest in his poetic skill and artistic ingenuity. This group consists of critics like Coleridge, Ernest Rhys, J.H. Shorthouse and others who belonged to the nineteenth century. The third group was neither under the spell of his Christian piety nor did it like his wit and dramatic style. Critics belonging to this group were Dryden, Pope, Addison, and other writers of the Augustan age or the 18th century. The fourth group is of the modern critics who reacted against all the three groups mentioned above. They revived the metaphysical theme and style and were therefore against the third group of the 18th century that had ridiculed and under-rated it. Reacting against the other two groups also they held that if Herbert's piety and his poetry are taken and treated separately it does harm both to his religion and to his art. They see Herbert's greatness in the fusion of his exquisite art and sensitive personality. They are critics like J.H. Summers, Arnold Stein, T.S. Eliot, Austin Warren, Rosemond Tuve, Aldous Huxley, W.H. Auden, Helen Gardner, Helen Vendler and others. They discuss things that are closely connected with the creative imagination. But they have failed to announce it and connect it with Herbert. They talk of unification of sensibility, completeness of perception,
comprehensive harmony, wholeness of vision, exquisiteness of art working in conformity with the truth of lived experience, the entirety of his work as an ouvere or finished good, the absoluteness of his sincerity, the intensity of his longing for God and the communication between God and man. But it does not occur to any one of them that all these things germinate, grow and branch out from a single significant thing of central importance— the seed of the creative imagination. Explaining the power of the creative imagination, Charles Morgan, in his essay entitled "Creative Imagination", says that it is "a power to be the flash of communication between God and man". He refers to it while talking about Shakespeare, Racine and Deostevosky who differed in many things but had this power in common. Morgan had no need to name Herbert there. But the critics working on Herbert have not taken the hint and have not connected Herbert with this power, though Herbert's communication with God is so obvious and well known. Even A.D. Nuttel who has emphasized this communication and has entitled his book as Overheard by God: Fiction and Prayer in Herbert, Milton, Dante and St. John has missed it. Herbert longs with intensity; he imagines with love; his imagination ascends higher and higher. God also wants to help him. God's grace and assistance descend until they reach Herbert's soaring imagination. There is action on both the sides. It is for this that I have called it "The Dynamic Balance" of the
creative imagination. This dynamic balance almost always yields fruitful results and rules out the dichotomy between the human and the divine creative imagination.

The vast range of this creative imagination, in a quite spontaneous and almost unconscious way, endowed him with that completeness of perception and the wholeness of vision which enabled him to discover the note of harmony in things that are generally taken to be conflicting and contradictory. This discovery reveals that Herbert is not a minor poet of limited range, just belonging to a school led by John Donne, but is, in this particular respect, even greater than John Donne. Because, as Grierson rightly remarks, Donne is characterised as being "more aware of disintegration than comprehensive harmony" (XIV). But the miraculous achievement of Herbert's creative imagination reveals a balanced and well integrated soul, which is not only aware of, but seems to have realised and delighted in the "Comprehensive harmony".

The first chapter entitled "The Creative Imagination: A Dynamic Balance" attempts to provide the required perspective for the subject through a general discussion on the nature and function of the creative imagination. In the background of this general discussion, it tries to locate and examine the position and the range of Herbert's creative imagination and in the process shows
how the creative imagination is a dynamic balance between man's own persistent efforts and the divine assistance. In order to have a proper understanding of the persistent effort of man's imagination, different conceptions and possibilities regarding the function of the human imagination in general and of the creative imagination in particular are discussed.

In the second chapter entitled "God the Creator and Man the Maker", the creative roles of God and man are compared and examined. Has God completed his creation or has He left something to be created by Man? What happens when man writes a story or paints a picture or discovers a law of motion or of gravitation? In all these cases, does man create something new or does he simply reproduce, copy or discover something that is already there in nature and life? In other words, is man a mere imitator or a creator? To find answers to such fundamental questions, information supplied by human imagination, human reason and divine revelation -- the three major sources of man's cumulative knowledge and accumulated wisdom regarding the creator and the creation -- are objectively examined. After having such a cosmic grasp of the problem, it is found that Herbert's rangy creative imagination is really creative (not merely imitative) and its range is wide enough to embrace science, religion and art and his well-designed temple is the fine product of a joint effort -
"God the creator" supplied the raw material and "man the maker" shaped the finished work of art.

The third chapter demonstrates that if the creative imagination of "man the maker" can be employed in making and shaping art, science, and craft, it can also be employed in making and shaping the conduct and character of "man the doer". Hence, the Chapter is entitled "Man the Maker and Man the Doer". A good artist may not be a good man, but if he is, the combination is as valuable as it is rare and the role of the creative imagination is full and complete. This chapter attempts to expose how, in the case of Herbert, the goodness of "Man the Doer" is directly responsible for the goodness of "Man the Maker"; and how the old controversy of art and morality is resolved to give us the music of the whole, a complete and therefore a royal music.

The fourth and final chapter shows how the creative imagination of the artist fulfills and completes another and a very important role by chiselling off and cleaning out all that makes God appear unjust and the creation look ugly and attempts to carve out a beautiful image both of the creation and the creator in his magnificent temple. The chapter thus resolves the age-old and spiritually significant tension between the suffering of the innocent and justness of God.
Thus, Herbert's poetry on the whole is a poetry of a well integrated personality which is endowed with the completeness of perception and in which religion, science, art, morality, and all the conflicts between the divine providence and human existence are tuned into a harmonious whole. It is all a miracle of the creative imagination which is different from and far above the magic of the so called metaphysical wit.

It is hoped that this attempt will throw some new light on the working of a creative mind that was at once religious and poetic and will be of some significant help to scholars working on George Herbert.