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**RALPH BARTON PERRY'S 'THEORY OF VALUE'
AS A TOOL FOR DISCERNING
HUMAN MOTIVATION IN PRIESTLY FORMATION**

By

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Abstract

In the best of times, the task of forming young men for the Catholic priesthood is a complex one. Yet, we are in such times that only the presumptuous would dare argue that things are not downright perplexing. Those directly entrusted with this task in seminaries and other houses of formation are at times not even sure what else they could do. They engage candidates for formation whose goodwill and appropriate disposition cannot be ascertained. Nevertheless, they forge ahead with courage sustained by hope, that the Lord who calls and whose task they have accepted to fulfil, will show the way through the maze and complexities that formation has become in our time and age. Thus, it is an imperative that the effort to seek for better and improved ways of appropriately engaging in the task of forming young men for the Catholic Priesthood should be a never ending one. I propose here, a perspective which though pertains to axiology, nevertheless bears relevance to the said task. It is an approach which could, hopefully, be developed as a module, in aid of the formation process. Adopting an analytic methodology, it takes 'the theory of value as interest' as proposed by Ralph Barton Perry, to highlight certain elements of it, while indicating what could be included in an effort at evolving a model for the fulfilment of the task of forming priests for the Catholic Priesthood.

Key Words: Axiology, Formation, Interest, Value.

1.0 Introduction

In the best of times, the task of forming a human person is not an easy one. Yet we are in such times that only the presumptuous would be bold to say things are not complex, if not perplexing. Society has become secularized and materialistic, social and cultural norms which were hitherto relied upon to mould the minds of the young have all but broken down. Those entrusted with the task of forming candidates for the priesthood work with candidates whose goodwill and appropriate disposition towards the process are not always altruistic. Nevertheless, they forge ahead, with courage sustained by hope, that the Lord who called them and whose task they have accepted to fulfil, will show the way through the complexities that formation in our time and age has become.

This paper has chosen to contribute to the discourse from the perspective which though pertains to axiology, nevertheless, bears relevance to the task at hand. It is an attempt at proposing an idea that could, hopefully, be developed as a module in the formation process. It highlights certain elements of Ralph Barton Perry's theory of value that are relevant in this regard while indicating what could be included in the development of a module for the fulfilment of the task of forming young men for the Catholic priesthood. It should be noted that this is not from the perspective that the programme of formation is inadequate. Rather, it seeks to highlight a tool that can enhance the process with a view to attaining better results.

This paper begins by drawing an outline of some of the difficulties faced in formation today that make the call for an enhancement of the process necessary. It then presents a brief analysis of what axiology represents, which will provide the background for the examination of the theory of value proposed by Ralph Barton Perry. It will proceed with an analysis of certain salient elements of Perry's theory and conclude by indicating the aspects of the theory that might be useful in relation to the formation process in Catholic Seminaries. \

2.1. Formation for the Catholic Priesthood

Formation could be categorized as the process of moulding the character of those who believe they have been called by God to be his special ministers as priests so that in their knowledge and disposition, they may be fitting for the special role to which they feel called. It is, therefore, a process that involves a building up of and focusing of the intellect and will of candidates for the priesthood, so that in their outlook and disposition, they will be genuine representatives of Christ and fitting tools in the hand of God for the salvation of the people of their time. The New Ratio calls it a “journey of discipleship” that gives “shape and structure to the identity of the seminarian and the priest and make him capable of that gift of self to the Church.”¹

An easy analogy to this is the process of training recruits into an elite military unit. It does require the breaking down of their individual perspectives and rebuilding same according to the demands and peculiar orientation of a fighting unit. This is what the Lord himself, sought to do when he called his disciples to walk with him and in the process, learn from him and come to know him. Thus, Pope Francis likened formation to working on “‘uncut diamonds,’ to be formed patiently and carefully, respecting the conscience of the individual, so that they shine among the People of God.”² It is therefore the experience of a disciple, who approaches Christ and allows himself to be conformed ever more to Him.³

This process, in our time, is carried out in a formal manner in specialised institutions called seminaries. A seminary is therefore a special institution in which those who feel called to serve God and society in a special way as priests are trained/formed. This process has four major aspects, namely: Human, Academic, Spiritual, Missionary and Pastoral aspects. In our clime, this process spans a minimum of eight years.

On the one hand, given the demands of the role that priests play in the life and faith of the People of God, the importance of a process that delivers well-prepared priests cannot be overstated. On the other hand, the complexities of life and society today are

such that the process of formation, more than ever before, calls for a level of thoroughness that cannot be over-emphasised. Society is more complex, and the prior life and exposure of candidates make the task of formation even more difficult.

2.2. Problems of Formation in Our Time

Allusions have been made above to problems in formation in our time. Expressions like confusion and complexities have been used. The point is that society has become quite complex, and candidates come forward with a mixed bag of influences and motives, such that some products of the process now give cause for concern. How often have we had cases of priests who were excellent seminarians becoming sources of embarrassment soon after they were ordained? Could they have had certain character traits and attributes that were not known or affected by the process of formation? There are increasing signs of a tendency towards taking liberty with established order and norms and several other anomalies. As a result, the approach and orientation to ministry by some appear skewed. What, with the unremitting appeal of the phenomenon of ‘healing ministry’? Many priests have been known to even defy their bishops in pursuit of such activities while it remained glaring that interest in them is motivated, not so much by apostolic zeal, but by the spoils that accrue therefrom. One could also mention instances wherein a priest exhibits such level of ignorance in matters material to the core of his ministry that one wonders if he learnt anything while in the seminary. Could it be that he was not taught, or it was the case that he just was not interested enough to pay attention?

On their part, members of formation team in the various seminaries strive very hard to follow and exhaust the prescribed curricula. They, therefore, rightly feel embarrassed when confronted with situations like those indicated above. A plausible opinion in their favour is that the same programmes successfully produce very excellent priests whose priestly ministry are a source of pride and hope. So, what went wrong in the case of those who do not meet the mark?

It has been the tradition of the Church to continually evaluate and re-appraise the programme and processes of formation to ensure that it continually meets needs of every age and time. Such efforts have produced landmark documents like *Optatam Totius* and *Presbyterorum Ordinis* of the Second Vatican Council to the *New Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis* (The Gift of Priestly Vocation) by the Sacred Congregation for Clergy in 2017.

While the general programme of formation is regularly subjected to reviews and updating, it is also important that mechanisms are regularly updated to strive to ascertain the disposition of the candidates for formation. With the growing complexity of society, occasioned by the collapse of the norms and values that hitherto held her together, as well as the negative influences to which candidates are now exposed before coming into the seminary for formation, it is imperative that particularly efforts are directed at ensuring that candidates for formation have the correct perception of and appropriate motivation for the priesthood.

3.1. Axiology: A Brief Configuration

Axiology is a branch of philosophy that concerns itself with unravelling the dynamics involved in the very ubiquitous activity of man known as valuation. Almost at all times, we engage in a process of subjecting the content of our cognition to valuation. The result of this process is that we show preference for certain things; choose some in place of others; and we are disposed to certain situations and things while others repel us. Axiology seeks to understand the reasons why we show these preferences. It strives to isolate the genus, value. Not to just enumerate and catalogue instances of value, but attempt to answer the question, ‘what is value *per se*?’ This is the kind of question that Plato proposed when he asked, ‘what is justice?’ while insisting that he was not interested in instances of justice, but in the genus justice itself.

Since its origins as a specialised branch of philosophy at the turn of the 20th century, distinguished philosophers have

thrown themselves into the task of isolating the genus value, and several responses have been proposed. One particular response that is relevant to the theme I have chosen is that of Ralph Barton Perry . He had noted the complication in the nature of value. He observed that value “seems to be at one and the same time relative to the individual and also binding on him.”⁵ He illustrated this with our experience of beauty which is, on the one hand, an emotional attitude towards an object, and on the other hand, the attributing to the object, a worthiness to evoke a like attitude.⁶ So Perry sought to find the genus of value so that when it is established, it will form a foundation for both the subjective and objective features that manifest themselves, even within a singular experience of value.

This quest took Perry beyond the ordinary phenomenon of valuation to an analysis of the dynamics of the human mind that is the subject in every situation of valuation. Thus, he proposed a definition of value derived from an analysis of the processes of the human mind.

3.2. Perry’s Value as Interest

Perry noted the characteristic of the human mind to be for some things and against other things; to view some things with favour and others with disfavour. He calls this the “bias of the subject toward or away from an object.”⁷ He believes that this duality is a function of the motor-affective characteristic of the living mind. This is what manifests itself in various forms, such as liking and disliking, desire and aversion, will and refusal, or seeking and avoiding. This motor-affective attitude of human life, Perry calls *interest*.

For Perry then, this is the original source and the constant feature of value. In his words:

That which is an object of interest is *eo ipso* invested with value. Any object, whatever it be, acquires value when any interest, whatever it be, is taken in it; just as anything, whatsoever becomes a target when anyone whosoever aims at it.⁹

In other words, value is any object of any interest. He proposed the following equation to present his view in the simplest of terms: “X is valuable = interest is taken in X.” For him, this is value in the elementary, primordial and generic sense.¹⁰

Perry therefore, builds his conception of value around interest. According to him:

It follows that any variation of interest or of its object will determine a variety of value; that any derivative of interest or its object will determine value in a derived sense; and that any condition of interest or its object will determine a conditional value. *In short, interest being constitutive of value in the basic sense, theory of value will take this as its point of departure and centre of reference; and will classify and systematize values in terms of the different forms which interest and their objects may be found to assume.*¹¹

Thus, value is a specific relation into which things possessing any ontological status whatsoever, whether real or imaginary, may enter with interested subjects.

What emerges from this is the central role that interest plays. Interest as configured by Perry means much more than mere curiosity or when referring to things we like. In fact, it covers all the attitudes of man that mark him out as a being that acts on behalf of what concerns him. Understanding Perry’s notion of interest is therefore very central, not only for making sense out of his theory, but also for the purpose I have chosen to apply it.

3.3.1. Interest: A Psychological Connotation

Ralph Barton Perry did not content himself to the regular everyday configuration of interest. To establish its parameters in respects of its role in defining values, he went beyond its everyday application to seek out that particular and peculiar feature that distinguishes the human person in the process of choice-making. That is, he sought to identify the special factor(s) at play that

distinguish an instinctive response to stimuli from what might be termed a ‘considered choice.’ He examined attributes like internal organisation, individuality, tendency and adaptation and found that though they may serve in distinguishing life in broad terms, they nevertheless are inadequate in providing an explanation for the very specialised pattern that choosing and deciding assumes in the human person. He however settled for what he calls *Prospiscience which stands for the capacity of the human person to act in the light of expectation*.¹²

Perry noted that the need for self-preservation and food gathering is hardly sufficient to explain the vast array of a person’s special desires and aspirations. According to him,

It is characteristic of him (the human person) to be primarily concerned with the freight which he carries; and to set sail for distant parts, rather than merely keep afloat. It is this creative and adventurous aspect of life for which the narrower biological categories fail to provide, and which indicate the presence of a capacity to direct action by hope, fear and expectation.¹³

It is here that the characterisation that lifts man into a plane different from that of mere organisms is found. The human person emerges then from the strictly biological sphere into the psychological sphere while still retaining his biological antecedents with its encircling environment.¹⁴

What this means is a spotlighting of that area of human behaviour that is termed purposive. In ordinary language, terms like *aimed, directed, intended, in order to, for the sake of, with a view to*, and several others are used to specify this category of human actions. The contrasts are termed *accidental, instinctive and random occurrences*.

Thus, Perry holds that “the key to a man’s bias is not to be found in the results of his action, but in what he expects of it.”¹⁵ The human person acts for a purpose and his actions are termed purposive because they are performed for their expected

effect(s). None of such actions or even responses, is selected at random. Rather, each is chosen for its perceived relation to what is desired.¹⁶

What we find here is that propiscience, which stands for the capacity of man to act in the light of expectation, captures that human tendency to act for a purpose. Thus, for Perry, an interest emerges, when we encounter an object, a situation, an ideal or whatever, and we establish a nexus between what we expect and what that object, situation or ideal promises.¹⁷

To understand this, let us go on to examine the two principal components of this configuration of interest. They are the *governing propensity* and what Perry calls *the subordinate or auxiliary response*. These two form the axis on which he pegged his configuration of interest.

3.3.2. Two Operative Principles in Interest

The governing propensity, as employed by Perry in his definition of interest, coincides with what Edward Tolman calls *determining adjustment* in his article, "Instinct and Purpose."¹⁸ In both instances, it connotes the tendency on the basis of which a prevailing circumstance constitutes a stimulus for which a response is required. One may wish to identify the tendency to avoid pain by whatever means possible, as the governing propensity in the case of a dog that scampers behind the obstacle when the whip is taken down. While, in the case of Socrates, it would be the overriding sense of obligation to obey the law regardless the cost, rather than escaping from prison to save his life.

The governing propensity, therefore, is that general set which is, at any given time, in control of the organism. It is what initiates effort. According to Perry, "whatever excites endeavour, inaugurates the very state in which that endeavour is to terminate."¹⁹

The auxiliary responses on the other hand, are the acts by which the governing propensity is executed. They have the nature

of being tentative since they are selected based on their relevance to the end in view. There is no guarantee at the time they are executed that they will bring the desired end. All that the agent knows is that he has chosen them by the results they promise. These results are sought for in view of the governing propensity. Herein, lies the link that gives character to an interested act.

From the foregoing, one finds that an act of interest is synonymous with an action that is purposive. Therefore, Perry holds that our actions are never entirely innocuous, except they fall into the category of accidental, spontaneous or instinctive actions. According to him, “most human actions, instead of being born *de novo* at the moment of performance, merely pass over from an implicit or partial state to an explicit or complete state.”²⁰ They unfold in a serial order, leading on to the goal that is desired or that is in view.

Yervent Krikorian accedes to this when he notes that in ordinary conception, purposive action “is determined in terms of foresight, provision, or conscious desires.” According to him, “the idea of what one wants comes first, and action brings this idea into concrete existence.”²¹

In general terms, therefore, one can conclude with Perry that *purposiveness* can be ascribed to an “act of which it can be said that its occurrence is due to its promise or forecast.”²² On the contrary, when an act is called *random* it is implied that it is of the nature of pure reflex. The purposive therefore, is that which is meant or intended to be. The agent of the act construes the situation in terms of something ulterior and views it in the light of some aspect or relation that transcends the given and present fact.

4.1. Perry’s Value Theory and Priestly Formation

Perry has defined value as the object of any interest. Whatever it is, the moment interest is taken in it, becomes a value. This means that anything whatsoever acquires value for an agent whenever he takes interest of whatever kind in it. The analysis

of interest revealed remarkably fascinating elements: Values are not limited to objects that we own or aspire to own; they are not limited to concepts and ideals; they cover all facets of human life. Value is the operative principle in our process of decision-making. Not only regarding those things we hold in high esteem, desire, attracted to, and so on, but also those things that are negative, that we reject, that repel us, that we hate and so on. It is the kind of interest that an object, situation, ideal or whatever, elicits from us that determines the kind of value it acquires for us.

Given the forgoing, the priesthood can be considered a value. In which case, there is a governing propensity for which the priesthood is only an auxiliary response. Put differently, there is a higher end for which the priesthood is a means. In this scenario, choices have been made, and those choices were made based on their perceived relevance to the desired goal.

If we accept the foregoing as a credible assumption, then, the question can be asked: what kind of interest gave birth to the value that is expressed in the choice of a priestly vocation? In other words, what is the general set or governing propensity to which the priesthood is an auxiliary response? A clear answer to this question would require a brief analysis of the factors involved in the process. They are:

a.) The Act of Cognition: This occurs when we individuate an object. What is crucial here is that the candidate individuates it, then an interest is taken in it. One cannot develop interest in what he is not aware of. I opine that it is how the society perceives the priesthood that provide young people the need for them to embrace it. It is the perception that it receives that determines the kind of interest it generates. If positive, it will be respected and considered worthy of embracing; and if negative, it will be derided and not considered worthy of giving one's life to. So, like in all value situations, perception or cognition is the first crucial step. Thus, for proper formation, it is important the process takes into account the candidate's perception and conception of the priesthood.

b.) Determination by the Governing Propensity: The nature of interest generated is determined by the governing propensity. This, we remember, is that general *set*, which at any given time, is in control of the organism. It is what initiates effort. The governing propensity provides the basis on which a prevailing circumstance constitutes a stimulus for which a response is required. This is what goes into constituting the kind of interest that the object cognised (in this case, the priesthood) elicits. This is very crucial. It is this propensity that will show whatever has been cognised as an opportunity to be utilised or a danger to run away from. This translates or interprets what is cognised in the light of expectation. Thus, the interest generated will acquire a special character depending on the perceived utility of the object in relation to a goal. So, the interest might be positive, it might be negative, primary (as an end in itself) or secondary (as a means to an ulterior end), it might be spiritual or mundane. It may attract, it may repel. Whatever the kind of interest that is generated is the kind of value that the object acquires.

c.) Subordinate Response: This refers to the means chosen with a view to actualise the promise the object represents or to nullify the threat that it poses. In this instance, there is a choice on what to do. Whatever means is chosen is tentative in nature. It may deliver the desired goal or may fail to deliver. It is nevertheless the chosen means. On this, if the governing propensity (general *set*) is love of God and humanity, the priesthood could be perceived as a means of serving God and humanity. The value that it will hold and what it will represent will however be very different if one aspires after greatness and personal ego rather than the service of God and humanity.

These factors come into play in the determination of a value. They should, therefore, be taken into consideration in the process of discernment of the vocation of a candidate in formation for the priesthood. The nature of a candidate's response to his call to the priesthood would be determined by how he perceives the priesthood at the time he recognizes the call. That perception

EKHELAR, Anselm

goes a long way in determining what kind of answer the response to the call will be. *It is what he cognised the priesthood to be that constituted it into a fitting means for realising the unfulfilled phase of his governing propensity.*

4.2. Possible Ends with the Priesthood as the Means

Some ‘cynics’ in the West would react to the news of the great numbers in our seminaries with questions about the socio-economic condition of our country. The thinking is, ‘if such great numbers are flocking into the seminaries, it is because the priesthood is wrongly perceived as an easy route out of the harsh prevailing economic conditions.’ Such thinking would suggest that if the economic conditions here were to improve considerably, the numbers flocking into the seminaries would drop. One may be tempted to reject such claims, but it would be wise we examine the reality on grounds to find out if any aspect of this could be true.

In the first instance, it must be affirmed that the call to the priesthood is of divine origin. Let us also affirm that the call can come through any means, even most mundane ones. If these two assertions are not in doubt, it remains to be added that it is very important that calls to the priesthood, via mundane means, need to be purified during the years of formation. In other words, if a child gets attracted to the priesthood because the Reverend Father owns the only car in the village, it is important that while in formation he grows to understand and accept the fact that there is more to being a priest than owning and riding a car.

Furthermore, there is no denying the fact that the priesthood gives one an automatic ticket into the higher strata of society. The people revere the priest so much and many of them are willing to deprive themselves in order to provide for him. Nothing can be more touching than to see a poor woman bringing a hen to offer to the priest when her own family cannot slaughter one for a meal. From the moment of ordination all through his life, he is revered, supported, protected and provided for by the people. We are aware that in many places, people from a priest’s home

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and all well-wishers gather as soon as he is ordained, levy themselves, in order to give him a car (ostensibly for his work). Meanwhile, a majority of those making the contribution cannot dream of owning one themselves. At that same time, the peers of such newly ordained have not even secured jobs, that is, if they have completed their university education. From the moment of ordination till the time of death therefore, he is accorded such honour and privileges that cannot be guaranteed by any other profession or calling. Yemi Akinlaton supports this view when he affirmed that:

An individual who is guaranteed a life-long employment and other benefits accruing therefrom in the priestly job centre will seize the opportunity even without conviction as to the vocation or job itself. Some aspirants to the priesthood do not want to lose the opportunity such as this given on a platter of gold.²³

The same view is captured in the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria when it noted:

While one must avoid falling into the error of attributing vocations to poverty in the land, the fact cannot be ignored that for some, it would also mean that the alternative to queuing at the embassy is queuing at the seminary gate as prospective candidates for the priesthood. Some are attracted to the priesthood because they see in it a means of upward social and economic mobility. Yet, there are many who are attracted to the priesthood by the recognition of the nobility of service.²⁴

If these are true, it is only necessary to be reminded that by divine providence, such mundane considerations could serve the will and purposes of God to attract someone to the priesthood. The evidence of the problems that have been severally highlighted

EKHELAR, Anselm

supports the opinion that many come into the calling with the wrong mind-set and remain with it for a considerable length of time.

The implication of Perry's theory in relation to the forgoing is that if the nature of the value one has in respect of any object, real or otherwise, can be identified, then the nature of the interest that engendered it becomes apparent. Inversely, if you can identify one's interest, then you can pinpoint the kind of value and object he works for. When we apply this to the disturbing trends we find in the priestly ministry, we may wonder if the cognition that provided the object of interest (in the case of priesthood for the problematic priests) did not promise something that is not exactly altruistic in relation to the vocation? For example, the single mindedness with which some priests go after material goods make it inevitable to question what may have attracted them to the priesthood in the first place. If, from the onset, one clamours and lobbies for "plum" assignments, what are his values and his goal for which he considers the priesthood a means? What is such a person's perception of the priesthood?

These questions can go on and on, but it suffices to keep in mind that a thing is what it is to us, by virtue of the nature of interest it elicits in us. There is a mind-set (which Perry calls the Governing Propensity). Cognition presents us with an object which we may believe to be useful for the fulfilment of the terms of the mind-set. This engenders interest, which in turn translates the object into a value in consonance with the character of the interest that was generated.

4.3. Applying Perry's "Value as Interest" as a Tool for Priestly Formation

The programme of formation must take into cognizance that which has always been true: not all motives for wanting to embrace the priesthood are altruistic. In this case, we have already established that whatever the motive is at the beginning of one's formation for the priesthood does not really matter. What matters is that one's motives for wanting to become a priest

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should eventually become altruistic and holy.

This awareness must form a basis from which to structure and direct the work of formation. It comes therefore, as a tool for discernment. In this regard, it must be re-emphasised that formation and selection are two different exercises. Awareness for discernment in this case, is not conceived as a tool for selection, but an aid to formation. Discerning that there may be skewed expectations, efforts are directed at correcting those expectations.

This is important at all levels of the formation process. The first step should be at the Diocesan Vocations Team level where an attempt must be made to clearly and carefully discern if there exists a genuine vocation. A well-trained and experienced team can strive as much as is possible, aided by the Holy Spirit, to go beyond the claims of the candidate to understand the nature and authenticity of the call to which the candidate is responding. Then, the seminary Formators and all the various levels of assessment that the candidate will pass through, till the final decision to ordain a candidate, can greatly benefit from this awareness too. Thus, knowledge of the axiological configuration of value as interest can be a great help at these various levels of discernment. If we have the tools and the appropriate environment, determining the candidate's true perception of what his calling is should be a *conditio sine qua non* for approval for ordination.

One understands too well, just as Shakespeare observed, 'there is no act to find the mind's construction on the face.' Yet, it is very important that we recognise how much havoc the failure to identify and correct misconceptions of the priesthood have caused. Efforts should not be spared then to discern, to the extent possible, wherever these misconceptions exist and to correct them.

The study of axiology needs to be integrated into the academic curriculum of philosophy for the seminarians. In this way, candidates can be helped to realise that the skill to question, which philosophy imparts, should first be applied to the self.²⁵ This will bring them to appreciate and take cognisance of the dynamics involved in the process of choosing, liking, loving

EKHELAR, Anselm

and preferring and so forth. This is what one could refer to as 'formation in values': Being brought to an appreciation of the motor-affective processes involved in the making of choices and in the exercise of preferences. 'Knowledge', they say, 'is power'. Awareness could serve as a very powerful motivation to right whatever may be wrong. This is particularly important since there is the possibility that an interest may elude one's cognition. Which means, the candidate may not necessarily be aware of the true content or nature of his interest. The right discernment will therefore be beneficial to him. In this regard, programmes and activities need to be developed that would act as aides to this end.

One cannot but observe that there is so much furtiveness in the life of those in formation these days. So much is done for the benefit of formators' observation. Often, the real self is kept far away from observation until the supposed moment of freedom. It is obvious from the foregoing that for as long as this remains the case, the true motivations and the genuine character of a candidate will not benefit from the process of formation. Systems must, therefore, be evolved that will engender trust on the part of the candidates so that they may open themselves up to formation. It is in this regard that the often clamoured-for 'auto-formation' can find its true meaning and relevance: wherein, a candidate freely opens up himself to embrace the process that seeks to help him become conformed to Christ whose 'sample' he is preparing himself to become for the people of his time.

5.0. Conclusion

This effort was intended to highlight the important role our perception plays in determining what we make of things. This is the background to our process of decision-making, of choosing and of exercising preference. The theory of value proposed by Ralph Barton Perry shows this very clearly. The analysis leading up to the definition of value as interest reveals that a thing acquires value depending on what that thing is in relation to our general mind-set or governing propensity.

From this analysis, one can infer that the difficulties in the priesthood; difficulties that turn the formator's job into a nightmare, may derive from perceptions of the priesthood that produce a set of priorities and objectives that are at variance with what is generally expected. This paper recommends therefore that the truth be affirmed, that not all motives for embracing the priesthood are altruistic. Perry's theory shows us why we cannot afford to ignore this fact. It is therefore the thrust of this paper that affirming this could be a useful tool in the hand of the formator so that he can better discern what the motives of the candidate are, and in the process engage in a meaningful and productive formation exercise.

Endnotes

¹The Congregation for the Clergy, "the Gift of the Priestly Vocation" in *New Ratio Fundamental Institutionis Sarcedotalis*, (Vatican City: Pauline Publications of Africa, December 2016), 8.

²Pope Francis, *Address to the Plenary of the Congregation for Clergy* (Vatican City, 03 October, 2014): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 226 (04 October 2014), 8.

³Ibid.

⁴Ralph Barton Perry is an American Philosopher who lived between 1876 and 1957. He set out the core of his axiological theory in his major works: *General Theory of Value: Its meaning and Basic Principles Construed in Terms of Interest*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926) and *Realms of Value: A Critique of Human Civilization*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954).

⁵Ralph Barton Perry, *General Theory of Value: Its meaning and Basic Principles Construed in Terms of Interest*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 25. [Hereafter cited as GTV.].

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid. p.115

⁸Ibid. See also, "The Definition of Value," *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Method* 11 (1914), where he calls it "a general kind of reaction," a "subjects liking or disliking." pp. 149-150.

⁹GTV, pp. 115-116.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 116.

¹¹GTV, p. 116. Emphasis is mine.

¹²See Ibid. p. 180.

¹³Ibid., pp. 181-182.

¹⁴GTV, p. 183. The point here is that Perry identifies a faculty at work that cannot be explained either by man's biological or physiological configuration. He identifies its operation with the mind

¹⁵Ibid, p.212.

¹⁶See GTV., p. 209. Perry credits William James with pioneering the conception of consciousness being primarily a selective agency. According to James, "consciousness is at all times primarily a selective agency." (*Principles of Psychology*, [London: Macmillan and Co., 1901], Vol. I, p.139). Perry subscribes to this when he affirms "our senses themselves are organs of selection. Attention, perception, thought, taste, and the moral will are all modes of choice by which a man's personality and his world are finally individuated and stabilized." GTV., p. 209.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 183.

¹⁸See Edward C. Tolman, "Instinct and Purpose," *Journal of Philosophy*, 27(1920), p. 20.

¹⁹GTV, p. 194.

²⁰Ibid., p. 98; GTV, p. 206.

²¹Yervent H. Krikorian, "The Meaning of Purpose," *Journal of Philosophy*, 27 (1930), p. 97.

²²Ralph Barton Perry, "A Behaviorist View of Purpose," *Journal of Philosophy*, 17(1921) p. 103.

²³Yemi Akinlotan, “Materialism and Christ’s Call to Discipleship” in Charles Hamawa (ed.) *Proceedings of the National Seminaries Committee Workshop*, Ibadan, 2005, pp.169-170.

²⁴The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria CBCN), *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, December 2005, #5.

²⁵See *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sarcedotalis*, no.67