

MENTORSHIP AND GODFATHERISM: ANY HOPE FOR THE YOUTH?

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Abstract

The terms mentorship and godfatherism have become household concepts. They serve to distinguish people who are versed in experience and so have played very important roles in the life and growth of others, less experienced than they are. In more specific terms, their experiences serve the youths; who mark the teeming growing generation in need of direction. Without the knowledge of what these consist in, many youths have fallen prey to the manipulative hands of certain members of the elite class who take advantage of them and exploit their potentials for ill-ends. A just and humane society takes interest in the growth and development of its youths. Employing the analytic method, this paper serves to highlight the demarcating lines between mentors and godfathers, and then chart a course that favours the development of the youths in their quest for life-changing experiences.

Keywords: Mentorship, Godfatherism, hope, youth, experience, society.

Introduction

Growing up in the same environment we meet people older than us. To some of them, we are naturally attracted to their way of life. These, we choose for ourselves. Others were even chosen for us by our parents or guardians to help model our lives. All these are founded on the trust we have that such persons are better examples amongst many for us. It is but one feature of our human developmental stages. Like a norm, it forms part of the unwritten codes of society. One, who learns well, becomes like those, whose lives he has taken as a guide. Howbeit the status quo today calls to question this aspect of our life. To what extent are we supposed to be guided? Should there be possible limits? Who should need a guide and why? What form of guidance is profitable for the youth? Where lays the departing lines between mentorship and godfatherism? A good grasp of this can only lead to the question: any hope for the youth? These underlie the crux of this work. It opens a ray of hope that directs us to a possible fruitful future of human society.

Who is a youth?

Youth is a young person. It refers to one who is no longer considered a child. This latter classifies people below the age 15; the former goes up from there to about the mid-twenties. The classification of what ages this consists of varies depending on countries, political motives, organizations, economic basis, cultural traits, responsibilities involved and the likes. Although the voting age is 18 for most countries, youthfulness seems to begin earlier enough. The former simply marks the age of maturity and serves for a major point of departure for the young person to chase adulthood. Basic standard classification in line with UN ranges from ages 15-24, others extend it to 29, as it is the case with Britain. Whatever age limits one place for the youth, the non-negotiable veracity is that youth is a young person full of potentials. He is a person in need of experiences that would widen his vision of life.

This distinguishing factor disposes of the young person to acquire skills, go to school, and rely on mentors and godfathers for basic guidance in the ascent through the cadre of life. The various stages of human development permit that one who desires to be fully incorporated into the life and socio-cultural milieu of a people, learns the ways of the people. Human integration takes a longer period for adaptation. Common knowledge shows that animals adapt faster than humans whose wholesome development demands a gradual stage by stage passages. This is a trait common to virtually every culture, be they inclusive or exclusive ones. Man is a social being and this validates the saying that “no man is an island.” Our need for one another paves the way for norms that permit the existence of structures, be they formal or informal, for younger generations to get to know the prevailing culture of their people. All these are very common traits of our humanity. Cassirer elaborates further on this:

If the term “humanity” means anything at all it means that, in spite of all the differences and oppositions existing among its various forms, these are, nevertheless, all working toward a common end. In the long run there must be found an understanding feature, a universal character, in which they all agree and harmonize.¹

Besides this universal dimension set forth, there are divergent approaches to this common humanity. Culture, being the totality of the way of life of a people,

¹ E. CASSIRER, *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture*, Yale University Press, London, 70.

defines their identity. It is a collection of all that sum their life. The loss of this heritage is the loss of what characterizes people. What we call popular culture is what describes the most common of people at the fundamental level of human civilization. This is what elitism ravages on. It in turn becomes a culture, a way of life influenced by the modern intercultural and social structures that seek independence from the inclusive notion of the life of people as a whole. This strives to reduce the circle of social relations and creates a world further divided by class. Even in its closest form, it entails human relations that necessarily, mutually relate for diverse interests.

Parents play the first role in the education of children. This family relationship is the very nucleus of every society. To erode it is to do the same for society. It is the reproductive home for human life and culture. Since the child is not his own nor simply his parents', but an indispensable member of human society, there is a need for learning. The education of children into the various trends and worldviews of their immediate environments demands a place for other people besides their parents. Schools are the most immediate means of social integration. Teachers come in and contribute their quota to the development of the child. They form the younger generations and widen their horizons, giving vision and purpose to their lives. This runs through adulthood. In other words, one could say that they practically guide the youth to attain his set goals and objectives. Do this latter come from the blues? No, they come from the very life of the people. Some are mentors while others are godfathers; hence, mentorship and godfatherism. In what then does this guidance consist of? Allen understands this and so states the obvious:

A MAN'S mind may be likened to a garden, which may be intelligently cultivated or allowed to run wild; but whether cultivated or neglected, it must, and will, bring forth. If no useful seeds are put into it, then an abundance of useless weed-seeds will fall therein, and will continue to produce their kind.²

Every man needs to guide his mind. In the same light, the young person needs to be guided. He needs to be moulded into the life of the society. His growth period needs to be modelled by societal norms. No one can be by himself alone in society; else the word loses its grips. The formative period of youths runs through adulthood to their latter lives as independent members of the same unified society. This is not left to fate, it is guided. The extent this is done, gives the direction the society toes. It shows the value the youth hold for the good of society. Pope Francis

² J. ALLEN, *As a Man Thinketh*, Mockingbird Classics Pub., England, 11.

notes the relevance of vital rules. "The fact that certain rules are indispensable for the very life of society," he contends, "is a sign that they are good in and of themselves."³ By extension therefore, to think of a better world is to create an enabling environment for the wholesome development of young people. Nothing compares to such a venture. This is surely the right thing to do. Its nobility is worth seeking for a brighter and morally sound future. However, to understand what this means, it is pertinent to turn to mentorship.

Mentorship in view

A mentor is an experienced person, versatile in a particular field, who helps another, with lesser experience, to learn his ways. What distinguishes one is what is passed on to another believed to be without it or inexperienced. The keyword here is experience. It covers all forms of training cum charisma acquired through many years of growth and resilience. All that the mentor has garnered over the years, he, in turn recruits another person who learns from him. The so recruited person is the mentee. With docility, he takes from the mentor all forms of advice, counselling and training. His life is modelled after that of his mentor, who remains the compass and the guide. This makes the mentor a model, exceptional in what he possesses. Between a mentor and a mentee, there seems to be a somewhat symbiotic relationship that captures almost the same situations in those between a leader and a follower, master and disciple, boss and apprentice, teacher and student, and so on; in their respective human formative order.

Mentorship therefore, covers all that a mentor does: guidance, counselling, advice, training, etc. All these are done within a specified period. This would mean that mentorship also designates the period for these exercises. It is a process of growth in human skills and development; one that involves a mutual dependence of two people on each other for a particular goal. This invariably implies that there are two ways of understanding the term. The first deal with all that is being taught; the second covers the time taken to teach or learn all that is offered. Either way it is some form of activity that involves the social relations between two people of unequal experiences who seek equilibrium. Such a balance favours them both since, at the end of the process, both are said to have gained a close equal status of experience. Why is it so?

³ POPE FRANCIS, *Fratelli Tutti: Encyclical on Fraternity and Social friendship*, Orbis Books, New York, 2020, n. 212.

The mentee needs training to grow. To get such, he goes for one who has it. His disposition gives relevance to the work of the mentor, who in turn, needs to make public his work. The much of what he learns gives satisfaction to both. They rely on each other for different goals that serve for the greater good of society. This, of course, is a good perspective of what such a relationship involves. Does that mean that there is a possible negative dimension to mentorship? The most acceptable norms for works and experiences that distinguish good and bad professions in society, holds for mentorship. A good teacher is naturally a good mentor to his student. The converse is also true. All that the mentee does is to learn what is presented to him. This somewhat aligns with the words of Allen that a “strong man cannot help the weaker unless that weaker is *willing* to be helped, and even then the weak man must become strong of himself; he must, by his own efforts, develop the strength which he admires in another.”⁴ As a result, it takes an assiduous and well-mannered mentee to make the difference between good and bad mentors in his quest for the qualities they possess. What does this intend?

It simply shows that in mentorship, one’s will is allowed to thrive. The mentor is gladdened by the progress of the mentee. Should they both be well-formed in these societal norms, their progress would know no limit. This is because a learned mentee grows to be on his own without necessarily being a simple copycat. His uniqueness shows in his works, somewhat distinct from those of the mentor. Little wonder it is said that ‘the joy of a good teacher is to see his student do well’. The African adage “when the right-hand washes the left and the left does the same for the right hand, they both come up clean,” holds great sway here. Good mentors gain their satisfaction from the outstanding performances of their mentees who in turn gain their freedom to initiate another chain of relationship.

Trust is one word that better describes good mentorship. It creates the room for mutual respect. Good mentors see their mentees as humans with great potentials. All they do is to help them harness such potentials, only in this case, with an external valuable influence that brings such to realizations. This means that good mentorship is altruistic. An ego stricken mentor is a bad societal influence. It is a bad business, as contemporary youthful expressions so describe such. This is because its goal is for the self and not for the growth of society. Noble social relations demands altruism for that is what being social naturally entails. It covers a well-ordered relationship among people for defined goals and purposes. Even More’s *Utopia* does acknowledge such relations in its description of the commonwealth. “And that the fellowship of nature,” he says, “is a strong league;

⁴ J. ALLEN, *As a Man Thinketh*, 29.

and that men be better and more surely knit together by love and benevolence than by covenants of leagues; by hearty affection of mind that by words.”⁵ This is at the heart of human nature.

Godfatherism today

Godfather or godparent is a term that has a long relationship with religious traditions. In the Christian cycles, godfathers or guardians, with particular emphasis on the Catholic Church, are people of outstanding characters seen as worthy pacesetters for the growing child or adults, in the case of someone who has grown already. They are chosen as examples for the child, especially as light-bearers at (infant) baptism to co-act with parents in the training of the child. Thus, the term has a strong Catholic background and describes trusted persons at baptism who act, with parents, of course, to train a child. They act as co-parents and represent, by extension, the Church’s presence in the family; all geared towards the growth of the child. This forms the basis for the understanding of a godfather in the religious setting. Another name for a godfather, in this sense too, is a sponsor. Outside this setting, they were also seen as people with qualities worth emulating, hence the word, godfathers. This immediately presupposes godsons, descriptive of the persons on whom they will their influence.

Today, it has a wider usage that engulfs all forms of relationships of subordination between two persons. The greater and more powerful is considered the godfather; the lesser and privileged becomes the godson, who pledges complete allegiance. This accrues to the fact that the former provides sponsorship and protection for the latter. By a nuance of its divergent meanings, Edigin affirms that a godfather could imply “a person who sponsors or provides care of support for a person or project;” or even “a person directing an illegal and criminal organization.”⁶ The latter meaning underscores some closeness to mafia corporations. With the prevalent views, it is not out of place to so think.

The suffix -ism derived from the Greek *ismós* or *isma*, which gained entry into the English language through its Latin *-ismus* and the French *-isme*, literarily denotes a sense of “imitation of”, “acting like”, or “taking on the tendencies of” a certain person, people or group. It is employed in the formation of nouns that tend to give meaning to an action, stress a particular trait of distinctiveness, denote a character or behaviour, capture a system of practice, theory or doctrine and designate principles- all of a trend or a group of people. It does not automatically indicate

⁵ T. MORE, *Utopia*, trans. R. Robinson, Wordsworth, Hertfordshire, 1997, 104.

⁶ L. U. EDIGIN, *Political Conflicts and Godfatherism: A Focus on the Fourth Republic*, In *African Research Review*, 4 (2010) 17, 176.

some form of negative tendencies as the suffix is neutral. The connotation it is identified with depends largely on the common narrative of a people. Should what the -ism emphasizes be an acceptable norm among a people, it is said to be positive. If otherwise, it is a negation of some sort of shameful abhorrence to be detested. All these depend on popular public narratives. The norms of society give a better description of its -isms. Without such, it would have no base.

This seems to suggest that when an -ism is added to the godfather, it is intended to make a distinctive identification of some form of ideology, practice, movement, philosophy, and adherence or feature common to a people. Godfatherism by this becomes some form of an individualistic elitism by which a person, highly influential in society, wields his power and authority over a people through his godson. The latter by whom such an act is carried out becomes a confirmed stooge who simply does the will of his employer, in this case, the godfather. It is an ideology that permits the existence of some form of a hierarchical classification of persons where one emerges supreme, and so determines the fate of his followers through a chosen trusted fellow who governs in his name. This is properly captured by the saying: "he who pays the piper calls the tune." He provides the money, buys the fame, wields his popularity and directs the deeds for the day to day events of his supposed people.

In light of this, it is obvious that there abound so many conceptions of godfatherism. Howbeit the motive is the same: absolute control of the lives, property and governance of a given place; bearing in mind that one cannot speak of a place without its people. The people give the place its lasting relevance while the godfather seeks to chart their course. As such, the quest for absolute control of all that they do brings about the ideology in view. This symphony of relationship connotes an understanding of godfatherism, in simple terms, as the relationship between a godfather, who decides and bequeaths; and a godson, who receives and simply obeys. Adeoye gladly pens down this form of ideology in his apt description of the parties involved within a political lens:

A GODFATHER IS A KINGMAKER, BOSS, MENTOR, AND PRINCIPAL, WHILE GODSON IS THE BENEFICIARY AND RECIPIENT OF THE LEGACY OF A GODFATHER. A GODFATHER IS SOMEONE WHO HAS BUILT UNIMAGINABLE RESPECT AND FOLLOWERS (VOTERS) IN THE COMMUNITY, AND POSSESSED A

WELL-ORGANIZED POLITICAL PLATFORM, AND GENERAL ACCEPTANCE FROM ELECTORATE THAT COULD SECURE VICTORY FOR CANDIDATES OF HIS CHOICE.⁷

Such a description highlights this ideology as something predominant within the political cycle. This makes it a common phenomenon virtually all around the world. Should there be an understanding that human thoughts and behaviours are slightly the same at the elementary levels, this would serve for an enormous philosophy like godfatherism. While establishing this camaraderie within the western worldview, Albert elaborates that:

Godfatherism sometimes manifests itself in the politics of developed countries of the world and Latin American countries in terms of some criminal underworld groups sponsoring politicians during elections in return for the protection of contracts. This kind of situation is euphemistically referred to as 'party machine' politics in the American political science literature.⁸

One who surveys of a literature review in this sphere of studies might fall prey to a conception that it is a Nigerian thing. This only seems to suggest that it is a predominant phenomenon that champions the political affairs right from the post-independence era.⁹ It will not be out of place to say that it is now a household ideology. Lawal and Adeleke argue for this, believing that it permeates the heart of all processes beyond all ethnic bounds. "Going by history," they argued, "Godfatherism became popular in Nigerian political space in the 1960's, when early post-independence leaders became godfathers."¹⁰ They from thence on seem to decide who makes it to the top and who goes off the scene. What a systemic elitism that has been. Godfathers "reign across all spheres of the society: academics, legal, and religion environment."¹¹ This only buttresses the sought of influence they will on the people. No gainsaying from all these, therefore, that

⁷ O. A. ADEOYE, *Godfatherism and the future of Nigerian democracy*, In *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 3 (2009) 6, 269. Also Cfr. ALHAJI A. M.-MALI B. H.-BABAGANA A., *Determinants and impacts of politics of godfatherism and regionalism in Yobe State*, In *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs*, 5 (2019) 1, 63.

⁸ I. O. ALBERT, *Explaining 'godfatherism' in Nigerian Politics*, In *African Sociological Review*, 9 (2005) 2, 81.

⁹ Cfr. I. O. ALBERT, *Explaining 'godfatherism' in Nigerian Politics*; O. A. ADEOYE, *Godfatherism and the future of Nigerian democracy*; L. U. EDIGIN, *Political Conflicts and Godfatherism*; A. M. LAWAL.-A. I. ADELEKE, *Perceived Godfatherism, Political Awareness and Voting Behaviours in Nigeria: A Clarion call to all Prospective Electorates*, In *Advances in Social Science Research Journal*, 2 (2015) 12, 90-99; ALHAJI A. M.-MALI B. H.-BABAGANA A., *Determinants and impacts of politics of godfatherism and regionalism in Yobe State*. Many other works, innumerable to mention, duly acknowledge the fact that godfatherism is one with the Nigerian political system.

¹⁰ A. M. LAWAL.-A. I. ADELEKE, *Perceived Godfatherism, Political Awareness and Voting Behaviours in Nigeria*, 91.

¹¹ O. A. ADEOYE, *Godfatherism and the future of Nigerian democracy*, 269.

godfathers “are powerful individuals who determine who, what, when and how things operate and are usually in the corridors of power.”¹² Their length of stay over and above the populace is greatly determined by the orientation of the people in question.¹³ What difference then can we make between this and mentorship? Is there any form of closeness in meaning?

What makes for the nexus?

From the foregone, we have noted that a mentor is one with much experience, usually older. Though age is not the yardstick here, his professional experience is. We can say the same of godfatherism. It banks on the superior knowledge and influence of the godfather over his godson, who could be older. What counts in both is experience and to a greater extent, the resources at the disposal of the godfather for wielding such great influence over his supporters. In the most loosed sense, we note that experience characterizes both. They both deal with people who are more advanced on the issues at stake than their disciples, who constantly look up to them for guidance. The mentee and the godson, rely on their masters to acquire what they want for their future. This makes him/her a protégé.

The foregone immediately indicates that they have what their prospective followers desire to have. They are possessors of unique attractive features that their supporters think would quench their thirst and satisfy their hunger. Where they have arrived at, their disciples seek; either as a means or an end. What they have also served for the same purposes. In this way, we can say that they arouse some sense of reverence from their followers. How they got to their respective positions form the heart desires of both mentee(s) and godson(s). This ardent desire makes for a nexus in their lords. From this, it is evident at different degrees that mentors and godfathers could both be referred to as masters and teachers; of their distinctive specialities.

One who seeks a guide without a clear knowledge of what he wants can easily confuse both. They appear to do the same thing at the initial stages. To some extent, they are counsellors. They could give advises and instructions to their followers. There is a step by step growth in the rapport between the teachers and their students (mentees and godsons). The greater normally guides the lesser to attain his set goals and objectives; those were their wishes after all. Bearing this in

¹² L. U. EDIGIN, *Political Conflicts and Godfatherism: A Focus on the Fourth Republic*, 177.

¹³ There are divergent factors determining politics of godfatherism, Cfr. ALHAJI A. M.-MALI B. H.-BABAGANA A., *Determinants and impacts of politics of godfatherism and regionalism in Yobe State*, 68.

mind might set the mark for their ascent to their success ladders. A mentee or godson who obeys his master becomes like him in no distant time; all the training given and received serves for this purpose. To the extent that their positions are maintained, it is difficult to see the differences. Those are clearer when we journey through the means to their particular ends. The question: whose purpose is served? highlights the major point of departure for mentorship and godfatherism.

Any possible differences...

Having gone through the similarities between a mentor and godfather, by extension mentorship and godfatherism, it is good we scrabble for their differences. This would better aid our projections for the youths in their human developmental stages. There is a great tendency to easily link godfatherism with a crime because of the widespread notions people have of it. Those might not necessarily be our line of the divide for this study. Like Okey-Kalu, we shall take up their differences from their relations to lawful certified skills and development.¹⁴

Professionalism

Whatsoever it is that they do, mentors and godfathers have a great deal of expertise in their careers or professions. This is the very reason they are sought for, their exceptionality. Their differences lay in the fact that mentors maintain a closed interaction with their mentees. They simply recruit only people who have a passion for the same fields as theirs. Outside of this, he cannot offer bits of advice. Godfathers, in their own ranks, employ both the open and closed professional relationship. They do not necessarily emphasize on expertise but on usefulness and so offer advice that would serve their intended goals. Professionalism does not mean much to a godfather; utility does.

¹⁴ On the differences between mentorship and godfatherism, this work shall to a greater extent, employ the format laid down by Okey-Kalu. It shall therefore itemize them in the order so discussed therein. For such details, Cfr. O. J. OKEY-KALU, *The Differences between a Mentor and a Godfather*, Accessed: 10.03.2020 from <https://www.tekedia.com/the-differences-between-a-mentor-and-a-godfather/>

Financial Gain

Given that the social relation between mentor and the mentee is professional in nature, there seems to be more of a symbiosis. Both mutually depend on each other for a common goal. Both mentors and mentees play their parts to that the intended experience is passed on. This same mutuality does not exist between a godfather and the godson. All are geared towards the interest of the former; the latter is more of a tool for the personal goals and earnings of the former; who remains the boss. Once this is done, on the contrary, it disfavours the godson whose interest is only but a secondary one.

Career Growth

Because they maintain a common goal, integral development promotes their common interests. Mentees are not limited in their career growth. Their progress most times gladdens the heart of their mentors who see such as a display of their progress too. They share in the successes of their mentees as theirs. The very day godsons seek autonomy marks the beginning of their problems. This means that they are limited in the strict of the word. Their career growth rate is kept under constant checks by their godfathers who maintain control of all that concerns their lives. Issues of distrust are mostly rampant with godfatherism.

Encouragement Type

Mentors practically open their mentees to diverse possibilities and guide them through to attain their heart desires. Mentees have the opportunities to learn more because of the exposure given to them. This is done out of mutual respect. Such is lacking in godfatherism. All that goes as encouragement is to the merits of the superior. The godson simply takes orders and acts accordingly for the sake of peaceful coexistence. His major concern is to think as the godfather would at all times.

Goal Achievement

Mentorship is mentee-centred while godfatherism revolves on the godfather. Their goals seem alternately in juxtaposition. This means that a mentee has more chances of achieving his desired objectives than a godson who is simply at the mercy of the godfather. Godsons simply play the scripts of their bosses and remain in their shadows. When it is said that "imitation is a limitation," something of this sort is intended. It is the norm that a godson grows beyond the godfather while he is still alive. He only assumes the position of a godfather posthumously.

Sustenance

It is the joy of mentors that their mentees grow. With them (mentees), they perfect their art. The dictum: “practice makes perfect” readily comes to mind. Mentees help their mentors to derive ultimate joy in their work. This satisfaction comes from the eminent growth seen in the progress of the mentee. On the contrary, godsons remain with the godfathers (only) within the period of their usefulness to them. Once this out, nothing else remains. All is lost. They are either shown the way out or stand (eternally) at par with godfathers.

Any hope for the youth?

Hope points to an unrealised future. It is a prospect laden with possibilities. The fact that it is achievable, yet unknown, could sometimes breed fears and uncertainties of what it holds. In constant view of it, we transcend these fears and uncertainties as each day draws closer to our goals. This means that hope is always future-directed. Little wonder Bloch quickly adds: “Hope, superior to fear, is neither passive like the latter, nor locked into nothingness. The emotion of hope goes out of itself, makes people broad instead of confining them, cannot know nearly enough of what it is that makes them inwardly aimed, of what may be allied to them outwardly.”¹⁵ It simply governs the expectations of yet to be realised dreams of people. The Christian notion of hope is even more profound as it traces itself to God. This is what the theological virtues say: God is the source of hope. That too is futuristic in nature and has God as its ultimate end. It points to God as its beginning, means and end. Pope Francis somewhat deepens this in his *Encyclical on Fraternity and Social Friendship*. Hope, he says:

speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, independently of our circumstances and historical conditioning. Hope speaks to us of a thirst, an aspiration, a longing for a life of fulfilment, a desire to achieve great things, things that fill our heart and lift our spirit to lofty realities like truth, goodness and beauty, justice and love... Hope is bold; it can look beyond personal convenience, the petty securities and compensations which limit our horizon, and it can open us up to grand ideals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile.¹⁶

So far, this work had upheld that youths are young people. They are young in all the senses that the word, as an adjective, proposes: young at heart, in mind, life

¹⁵ E. BLOCH, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 1, trans. by N. Plaice.-S. Plaice.-P. Knight, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1986, 3.

¹⁶ POPE FRANCIS, *Fratelli Tutti*, n. 55; also Cfr. [Greeting to Young People at the Padre Félix Varela Cultural Centre, Havana, Cuba](#) (20 September 2015): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 21-22 September 2015, 6.

experiences and the likes. This only means that they are still at the initial stages of their lives; with many unattained goals, dreams and visions, unknown destinations and so on. Hence, hopeful! Their lives are future-directed yet rooted in relationship with others, who by a perspective; seem to have attained their goals. Some, they see as exceptional and naturally gifted, and so desire to be like them. Others, they view with the lens of hopeful thoughts to get better than. Yet others, they have no intention of imitating at all. The last group appears as those whose state they either have attained already or have long passed. Within the lens of hopeful thoughts, they find their near pars and so live on for higher goals. To the exceptional and the naturally gifted, they constantly look up to. Those become the standards for visible success, glory and splendour of the society in their sight.

This is where mentorship and godfatherism have roles to play. They provide the required guidance that aids the growth of the younger generation. Howbeit, we have seen the differences between them and so know the extent both can go for the desirable common goals every sane society would vie for. A society, religious organization, school, and all such human developmental structures that have more of godfathers in the sense we have so far seen, paves the way for unhealthy competitive grounds for the emergence of imperial statuses that create hierarchy and inequality. Elitism sets the foundation for disparity while godfatherism deepens it; thereby making it an exclusive enterprise for the powerful; at whose beck and call the young must remain. This is what such kingmakers make of others, perpetual subjects, never to rise beyond their potentials.

One could argue that a godfather provides protection for his godsons and gives them access to privileges and higher opportunities. This might be true. They leave under his shadows after all. That makes them his subjects, 'his property' as they would gladly say. Youths who get easily attracted to such guides could easily rise to a higher status. Their stay there would depend on their loyalty and allegiance to the master, whose life they live and practice. This means that godfatherism places a great limitation on self-realization and the true actualization of purposeful dreams. Unfortunately, it is the bane of the world today. Manipulative and hypnotic in nature, it gradually but steadily devours its subjects when they, perchance, seek their liberation. Where does it leave the youth? At the mercy of the master we would say.

A nation engulfed by this ideology can hardly meet up with acceptable human comportment. People would rise to power not by merits but by single choices of

individuals. It is a contradiction to imagine that democracy thrives in such a world. Specialization and expertise are thrown to the wind, destroyed by the caprices of the most powerful and feared individuals. Only those who serve their interests have their fill. A nation ravaged by godfatherism in all its structures limits its resources to the few who in turn use others as tools. Any such society that employs its populace as tools to be used and discarded never preserves or recognizes dignity as something inherent of the human person. No person is to be so treated without expecting a revolt. Everyone deserves respect and these we must encourage at all levels of human existence.

This brings us to a better appreciation of mentorship. It thrives on one's interest and speciality for the common good. Anything that would promote the common good would do well to the youth. This is because it would be banking on one's goals and modelling it for the greater good of society. One who grows to know the worth of sincere work and rises to the highest cadres based on his capacities easily appreciates others who so seek; leaning on him to learn how to do well. Mentors are models in the just sense of the word. They promote, not just their projected goals, but those of others also who constantly look up to them. Does that mean that there are no chances of swapping from being mentors to being godfathers? No doubt, there are such possibilities. A mentor who is consumed by his works alone can so think. That, however, would mean that such a one never had the true compass of mentorship right from the beginning.

The future of the youth rests with the right choices for proper human development. Such a development would direct the youth well. His hopes and aspirations would find the just means by which to grow. This hope of the youth would advance if the society creates a just enabling platform for active participation, mutual respect, trust and a good point of departure for a swift takeoff. These would increase the zeal and hunger of every youth to self-actualization. Modern society must encourage its youth(s) to greatness through proper education, social integration, and other developmental structures that foster self-realization. In this lay the future of the youth. Every youth hopes to become something in life in the far or nearest future. That which they finally become is not outside what the society provides. This leaves the onus on us to create a good thriving pedestal for all and sundry. Such a platform becomes the seedbed for a limitless wholesome human growth. On this Pope Francis affirms: "it is truly noble to place our hope in the hidden power of the seeds of goodness we sow, and thus to initiate processes whose fruits will be reaped by others."¹⁷

¹⁷ POPE FRANCIS, *Fratelli Tutti*, n. 196.

Such a good venture would go a long way in liberating our society from godfatherism; a robust individualistic form of vicious elitism. This is the extent of what mentorship can do if imbibed as a standard.

Conclusion

The paper identified youths as the young vibrant generation in need of experience. Since this only comes from society offers, they make choices between mentors and godfathers. Such choices hold grave consequences as we have come to see. Mentorship provides the enabling for human development. It allows youth access to self-growth and discovery. While godfatherism also offers traces of these, the end is unpalatable for any sane society. Therefore, the future of the youth lays in his choices for either short or long term goals. "Every situation," as Frankl rightly notes, "is distinguished by its uniqueness, and there is always one right answer to the problem posed by the situation at hand."¹⁸ Either of the choices endears him to either godfathers or mentors. Should such youth be swayed by the ills of society, the chances are that the former becomes his tool and at the same time his doom. If by the same chances he vies for the latter, his future could better be described as a utopia; whatever that is.

¹⁸ V. E. FRANKL, *Man's Search for Meaning: The Classic tribute to hope from the Holocaust*, Rider Books, London, 2004, 86.