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TITLE: CRAFTING ETHIOPIA'S GLORIOUS DESTINY.

PENTECOSTAL BUSINESS FELLOWSHIPS UNDER A DEVELOPMENTAL STATE

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ABSTRACT: T

The expansion of the Pentecostal movement represents one of the most relevant religious and social phenomena in contemporary Ethiopia. This is often associated to the processes of economic development and social transformation that are reshaping the country, by referring to the "selective affinity" that Pentecostalism shares with neoliberal globalisation and the "spirit of development". However, while the expansion of Pentecostalism in Africa has been traditionally associated with neoliberalism and "the retreat of the State", in the Ethiopian case Pentecostals are prospering in a context marked by the presence of a strong developmental state that aims not only at controlling strategic sectors and material resources, but also at orientating people's life towards country transformation and economic development.

Pentecostals socio-economic endeavours seem to hold a controversial relationship with the strategy of the Ethiopian developmental state. On one side, their message about socio-economic development – particularly around the notions of good governance and the fight against corruption implying both individual and social change to promote development - resonate the Ethiopian government's agenda and international organisations' official discourse. On the other side, while echoing the government's discourse, Pentecostal economic endeavours seem to offer spaces for resource accumulation alternative to the government's channels. Furthermore, Pentecostals' holistic approach challenges the official policy of separation between spiritual activities and development initiatives.

The paper aims at disentangling this puzzle by focusing on the Unic 7000 Church in Addis Ababa. This church belongs to the neo-charismatic and independent groups particularly vocal in advocating for a more visible Christian presence in public affairs. The Unic 7000 Church's "Absolute Value Fellowship" is one of the most structured and effective business fellowships within the Ethiopian Pentecostal movement by virtue of its memberships and the scope of its initiatives.

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