|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Interview with Roderick C. Meredith Presiding Evangelist of the Global Church of God**  **by Ewin H. Barnett and Sue Ann Pomicter** |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | Articles based on these two interviews originally appeared in the Dec. 18, 1995, and Oct. 28, 1996, issues of an independent Church of God newspaper, *In Transition,* published from 1995 to 1997 by John Robinson.  The following text is not identical to the *In Transition* articles. The following contains additional information because it is the complete text of the two interviews conducted by Ewin Barnett and Sue Ann Pomicter in Missouri.  At the time of the interviews Roderick Meredith served as the presiding evangelist of the Global Church of God. Things changed two years later when he was no longer part of Global and had founded the Living Church of God, of which at this writing (in 2008) he is still presiding evangelist. | | | |  | | LAKE OF THE OZARKS, Mo.--On Oct. 15, 1995, while attending the second half of the Feast of Tabernacles at the beautiful Lake of the Ozarks in central Missouri, Dr. Roderick C. Meredith graciously granted us a historic interview, the first Internet interview of its kind.  The impetus for this interview came from the realization that there may be as many as 10,000 people who will be making a decision in the near future about where they will fellowship. Many people naturally have questions about the Global Church of God and Dr. Meredith in particular. We felt it was time for the really frank questions that were on many people's minds to be directly asked of Dr. Meredith, even if they appeared to be downright impolite, because people were creating their own stumbling blocks based upon rumor and false information about him and the church he founded.  In researching the questions and approach to be taken during this interview, Sue and I took much of our material from questions and comments we have seen posted on the various cyber forums as well as personal conversations. Dr. Meredith was not provided with any of the questions in advance of the interview. | |
| |  | | --- | | The first distribution of this interview will be on CompuServe, America Online and at least one of the Internet listservers. It may later appear in print.  ***Q: After you left Worldwide, why didn't you fellowship with some other Sabbath-keeping group or with the Church of God International?***  A: I sincerely felt that some of those people had actually been put out of the church--disfellowshipped--for very good reason. Some of these groups left while Mr. Armstrong was still alive, still doing the work and still preaching the truth, and were in fact disfellowshipped properly, and I felt I had no reason to join disfellowshipped members who left at a time that they should not have left and left in a spirit of rebellion.  ***Q: By what authority did you start a church yourself?***  A: I started the church because I had been taught for over 40 years by Mr. Armstrong and certainly others and by Jesus Christ through example, through teaching of the Bible, that we are to go into all the world and preach the gospel. I felt the one that Mr. Armstrong handed the torch to had not merely dropped it but had deliberately thrown it to the ground. It was my responsibility, as one of the three senior evangelists who had been left in the work up to that time, to carry on the work Christ began through Mr. Armstrong. I would have felt guilty had I not done so.  ***Q: As I understand the way Worldwide is structured they are owned by an association. If Worldwide is liquidated, the assets of the church can flow to the association. What happens if Global is liquidated or changes ownership? Who inherits Global, so to speak?***  A: We are quite new, of course, and we haven't really faced that, I guess. We probably would have it go to the state or something of that sort at that point. We will have to think that through, and I don't remember any specific--we don't have some association it's going to, though. No one is going to profit from it personally; that is not our purpose.  ***Q: If you felt that a large number of people would come to Global, but have some reservations about you personally for whatever imagined reason, would you favor the appointment of a different head of your organization?***  A: I would certainly favor the appointment of someone else as the head of Global if I sincerely felt that Christ wanted someone else there and that they could do a better job and that more people would come, and so on.  I have thought about that and talked about that, even with our other leading men, some of whom might be the ones, and everyone has assured me and I see by the fruits that, in spite of any problems I have, every leading man who has had experience has had problems. If you don't do anything, then you don't have any track record.  But, if you have been a person of accomplishment for decades, then they can always find something wrong to pick at, you see. Someone who has been hiding might not have anything to pick at. But someone who has been in the arena, fighting the battles of the work and of God, will always have something people can misjudge or misunderstand or pick at or may have made genuine mistakes, as I certainly have, and have tried to repent of and learn from for the 46 years I have been in the church.  ***Q: What is your comment to the statement that when you act as the sole presenter of the TV program you are connecting the church too much to you as a personality rather than just a presenter. Would you consider a format with more than one presenter?***  A: Yes, I have already thought about it and talked about it, as many of our people at headquarters know. I have mentioned several alternative presenters, and this may in fact occur within the next year or two.  At the time we started, it didn't seem there was anyone else who could have done it beside myself. It seemed the best thing to do. Christ guided Mr. Armstrong to do that, and so I as one of his leading students and early students intend to follow the way Christ directed him and that's why we started that way.  ***Q: Originally you had talked about your hope that someone younger would come along. You did have--***  A: We've got three or four people in mind. I've been talking about that for some time.  ***Q: Some have noted that the church board is packed with your friends and relatives. Is this a long-term situation, or will new members be rotated in? Who appoints or nominates a board member?***  A: I nominate board members as the chairman of the board, but I think it is a misstatement for people to word it that we pack things.  Who could I choose at the beginning of the work? Mr. and Mrs. Don Davis and my wife and I were the only leading members that were there, and so I had Mr. Davis on the board, and I had my wife on the board, as Mrs. Herbert W. Armstrong was on the board until her death.  I thought a feminine representative in that kind of a corporate board is okay. It's not the council of elders. In the council of elders women are not elders; they are not on the council. But the board has to do just with the general policies of the work and the specific legal things and so on.  We have my wife on the board. We may later have some other lady on the board, and we have Mr. Davis, who had been on the board at the beginning. He is not now, by the way.  We are going to be rotating, in fact. Then we have Raymond and Carl McNair, and people say they are my relatives. Well, as I think you know, Raymond and Carl McNair were my relatives 19 and a third years ago when my wife died. Now they are my ex-brothers-in-law. Many people hate their brothers-in-law or ex-brothers-in-laws [laughs], and I knew them long before I knew my wife. They are very dedicated.  Raymond McNair was the very first evangelist to come with me. Of course he is on the board. But others on the board are not my relatives, so I am not trying to pack it with anyone but put on it the distinctly older, dedicated men [who have] wisdom such as Mr. Pope and such as Mr. Salyer and others who are not relatives and have not even been longtime friends because I have not known them as long or as well as the McNairs.  ***Q: Are you as rotten as people say you are?***  A: Someone asked was I as rotten as people say I am? They ought to ask my wife that or someone who knows me. All kinds of accusations have been made about me that are often self-serving to those who accuse. And, as Mr. Herbert Armstrong said, those who accuse are often guilty of the very things they accuse others of.  I was too intense, too strict, in certain ways back in the 1960s when I was director of the ministry [of the Radio/Worldwide Church of God]. I have specifically addressed that at the beginning of both of our ministerial conferences, publicly apologized, repented of that, have asked God to forgive me for being too strict literally scores of times in my personal prayers.  But I wasn't ever firing people or trying to ruin them. They know that. I always tried to work with the ministers, get them to do more, save them in their jobs. I just had a strict personality and [they] had so many visits per week they were supposed to get in, so many reports and so on--which is overdone--the system is what bothered people, plus an intense personality.  I have mellowed as I've gotten older, and we are getting rid of that system. Mr. Carl McNair is over the ministry. He doesn't have any such system, and I let him run his job and I run my job and I/we are trying to build a spirit of servant leadership. Most of our people know that.  Now the fruits show that. We didn't start yesterday. We started two and two thirds years ago. We have demonstrated that we are trying to serve the brethren and serve one another.  ***Q: Some people remember that you were sent to Hawaii by Mr. Armstrong. Without necessarily naming names, is there anything you want to say about that time in your life?***  A: Well, I have had many, and I don't mean a few, but many of the leading men of course told me that they knew, as I knew, that Mr. Armstrong was not personally responsible for that as much as others influencing him at a time when he was having palpitations of the heart and was cut off. He did not know fully what was going on.  When I came back he had a two-hour, completely private visit with me and apologized to me in a sense for most of the two hours for what had happened. He put me back on the council of elders and began to use me more up until the time of his death.  He had been misguided and misinformed. When Mrs. Armstrong was alive she would spot the phonies around him and the bad guys. Once he lost Mrs. Armstrong, he tended to have people, and I won't name their names, take advantage of him. As he got older he couldn't see well or hear well, and those things happened and men took advantage of the situation.  ***Q: We have heard the Global Church described as hierarchical and collegial. Could you elaborate on these concepts?***  A: The term *hierarchical* means that we feel we are under the direct direction of God through Jesus Christ, and Christ, by the fruits, by circumstances, by miracles, appoints a leading man as He did Mr. Armstrong.  Remember the Sardis church [Church of God Seventh Day] did not appoint Mr. Armstrong the head of anything. He simply had to break away and was shown by the fruits that he was the one Christ was using to do a work.  I think the fruits of the Global Church show that God has used me to do a work at this time. If I can keep humble, and keep doing the work in the right way, and carry on the work in the way Christ used Mr. Armstrong to do, then He will continue to use me in that way.  Collegial. One of the other leaders of a group attacked me for that, as you may know, in his booklet on church government using the word *collegial* to say that I was doing away with the whole government of God.  Of course I didn't mean it the way he took it or tried to twist to mean at all. Collegial means brotherly, and I was using it as a synonym for brotherly, not as a synonym for voting and politics. So, in a collegial sense, we do have more input, more hearty counsel in the Global Church of God leadership than we did have toward the end of Mr. Armstrong's work because, again, his wife was gone, he was taken advantage of by bad guys, cut off.  In his earlier years he practiced a great deal of collegiality. He took us young men, who were the age of his sons, and really listened to us and would change quite often and get multitude of counsel on every new doctrine, every major decision, and would back down again and again when he found he was wrong.  That's what I'm doing. I am getting input. I am getting multitude of counsel. I am listening to it. I am not regarding myself as a one-man show, and must not do that, but as the leader among a group--first among equals but not a towering leader over the others in the work.  ***Q: In regards to the situation with the former association, what would you say to those who are not comfortable with the changes but who are thinking: Christ is in charge, [so] shouldn't we patiently wait for Him to work it out? Or: I am being faithful to the church that God called me into?***  A: I know that one person, very beloved of me, said that "I feel that I've got to stay in the church in which Jesus Christ placed me." I told this individual: Look. Christ didn't place you anywhere. He reached you through Mr. Armstrong's programs and through *The Plain Truth* magazine and the literature, and He called you so that you studied with an open mind and proved where the truth is, where the truth of God is being preached and then you acted on that.  That is the key thing: They that remain in the truth are the Church of God. They that preach the Word and believe the Word are the people of God. That's where you've got to go, wherever that is being done.  The Bible is filled with that, of course. Remember, Paul said follow me as I follow Christ. Mr. Armstrong always said follow me as I follow Christ. He said, if you should ever find that I am not preaching the truth to you, you should leave me and not follow me.  We have that in writing, by the way. Dave Pack has it in the little book he is putting out. He said all kinds of things like that. People often forget that.  ***Q: How do you think Global got labeled as being legalistic? Did it ever deserve that label?***  A: I don't think we deserve that label in a real sense at all. I think that people who did not want to join us or who felt threatened by us had to do something to defend their own turf, so to speak.  What could they say? They couldn't say that we were immoral or we're doing something awful, so they invented other things such as attacking me personally or calling us legalists or things of that sort.  Some people, of course, really want to water down the law of God and the way of God and so they would naturally call us legalists. Others who would not have that feeling still picked that up and began to use it, perhaps not even understanding themselves how it got invented.  ***Q: What is your comment on the tendency in the past that some ministers had of micromanaging people's lives such as checking their cupboards for white sugar?***  A: That's been a concern that we've had for years that I have had and others of us who I think are really trying to recapture the true way of God. Some ministers individually did do that out in the field in Worldwide. I never, ever, ever, taught them that in my classes at Ambassador College or in my letters which are still extant that I wrote to the ministry or any other way.  In fact, I had to correct them and warn them against that in spite of the fact that when I was over the ministry some of the men did that and I found later more about it [then], even when I was there. It got kind of covered up to some extent. But I did correct the people many times for that.  That is wrong. Each person in the church has to live his own life and decide how much white sugar he wants to have or how much coffee he wants to drink or things like that. Those are not major issues. It's just part of a way of life to glorify God in your body or seek quality or whatever we are talking about.  The minister ought to teach the principles and ought to teach God's way of life but not get into people's personal homes and try to micromanage their lives. That is not his business at all.  We have taught that specifically in the last two ministerial conferences in the Global Church under my direction, and all the ministers know that. We've told them specifically don't do that. So we are doing away with this micromanaging of people's lives.  ***Q: How can a prospective supporter of Global know that the church will maintain a strong commitment to preaching the gospel as we know it?***  A: The people can have confidence that we are going to continue preaching the gospel as we know it for many reasons.  First, I know that this may sound like the weakest reason but it is really the strongest one: If you see that Christ is already using us in the Global Church to do that, and Christ has moved the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day to where we are, you still have to have faith in the living Christ.  Christ did test His people by moving that pillar somewhere else in this recent situation. Christ is still the head of the church, and we should never, ever forget that.  Secondly, in the human sense Mr. Raymond McNair, Carl McNair, Dibar Apartian, Larry Salyer and I and others have been preaching--Raymond McNair and I have been preaching and teaching--the truth and the way of God that God guided Mr. Armstrong to preach since 1952 when we graduated from college, or when I did, so that's about 43 years.  I have been consistently doing that. I think at age 65, having preached the truth that long, it would be kind of crazy to think that I would suddenly veer off some other direction.  I've had every chance to preach something different, do something different, if I wanted to get bitter at such times as I was sent to Hawaii. I never did that, I never veered off. Mr. Raymond McNair has never veered off. So I think they ought to look at the track record and see that that is the case.  Thirdly, it is written right in the constitution and bylaws of the Global Church of God that I do not have authority to change any major doctrine. Remember that we publicly published and stated that all our major doctrines are the doctrines extant under Mr. Armstrong at his death in January 1986. I do not have authority to change any major doctrine without the concurrence of 90 percent of the council of elders.  In the council of elders you have such men, as I have said, as Raymond McNair, Carl McNair, Larry Salyer, John Ogwyn. They have been in the ministry for decades, and they are not going along with some major change unless it is very clearly proved in the Bible. They have demonstrated that in their lives for decades.  ***Q: Is there any plan for a successor should you die?***  A: I have the option of nominating a successor or else leaving it up to the council of elders. Even if I nominate a successor, then the council of elders could override that by 75 percent, not 90 percent, but 75 percent, if they strongly felt that someone else ought to be in that job.  Again, you get into the area of faith in Christ. If Christ has used me to do the work, will He guide me to make the right decision?  It all comes back to faith. People can have faith in voting, or they can have faith in Christ. I think they have to decide between that at some point. Will they trust in Christ to direct these things, or will they trust in voting?  ***Q: Are there any aspects of British-Israelism that could be considered racist?***  A: Not if it is presented correctly. God is not a racist at all, and He created all the races. People can misunderstand British-Israelism if we constantly harp on the fact that God chose America and Britain and blessed them and so on.  But, on the other hand, most of our actual preaching based upon that teaching is not [that] America and Britain is the greatest, but the main thrust of the preaching that I do publicly, which means the work, and most of us do in the telecast and magazines and booklets, is the fact that we are going to be punished with the greatest national tribulation in human history because we have failed to do what God wanted us to do. So we are being racist against ourselves, if you want to look at it like that.  ***Q: Are all races welcome in Global, and what role will they play in the Kingdom?***  A: All races are welcome in Global, and as you know we have Mr. Wesley Webster, our minister now in Washington, D.C., and still overseeing Guyana. But he is actually our Washington, D.C., minister.  We have some elders in the Philippines now, and we are going to have other elders from other ethnic backgrounds as soon as God calls them and brings them along. We are very happy to have them.  People of other races will have the same opportunity in the world ahead, in the Kingdom of God, that any of us have. They are going to be given blessings of being kings and priests right along with us. Remember, all races become spiritual Israelites when they are converted. All of us become spiritual Israelites when we inherit the promises God gave to Abraham.  ***Q: Are members of other Churches of God welcome at your services as often and for as long as they feel the need?***  A: True members of other branches of the Churches of God are certainly welcome at our services. Dozens of them regularly come nearly every Sabbath. They are welcome to come and participate. They do not have to give tithes and offerings to us to come or anything like that, but just to come and fellowship with us and check us out.  The only thing we would object to if they try to proselytize or cause division, of course. But, as long as they come to worship or to learn and check us out, we are very happy to have them have us worship with us on that basis. We hope they will find that we are doing the work.  ***Q: Is there a way for people who are presently attending another fellowship to donate to your efforts of preaching the gospel?***  A: We have a media fund. It is a separate fund, and we guarantee that every penny from that fund will go right into the media. If someone does not wish to contribute to the Global Church as a church but just wants to help support the public effort of the *World Ahead* telecast or magazine, then we will definitely put that right in the media fund and we will be glad to have them do that even though they are not members. If they wish to support the work we are doing, that would be the way to do it. Just designate it the media fund only.  ***Q: What should our attitude be towards those in the other Churches of God or towards Sunday-keeping Protestant churches?***  A: If we are talking about people in other seventh-day Churches of God, who are keeping the Sabbath and the holy days, then I would say that in many cases, probably most cases, we regard them as brethren and feel that they are, as far as we know, converted, they are good people but may not have the zeal to do the work of God as we understand it.  We hope they will. I pray regularly that God will bring together the vast majority of everyone who is faithful and zealous--I often put those two things together in my prayers-- together in one place to do one work before it's all finished. I think God will answer that prayer. I think that people will be drawn to wherever the work is really being done.  As far as Protestant churches who do not keep God's law and do not keep God's Sabbath, we want to love them, help them--many of my relatives and friends are Protestant--and reach them every way we can. But we certainly do not regard them as brethren because they do not even know the truth or obey it in anyway whatever.  ***Q: Would Global be open to joint projects with some of the other Churches of God such as sharing a particularly attractive Feast site or media effort?***  A: We would have to approach those decisions on a case-by-case basis. We would not want to water down the approach that we have, which we feel is successful and that God has commissioned us to do. We have considered having Feast sites or summer camps and sharing things like that, and have even mentioned that to some of our United friends. Nothing has come of it yet, but perhaps it will in the future.  ***Q: How would you respond to a sermonette man who asserted that Global was the only true Church of God?***  A: The young man was probably overzealous and making a mistake. We are not the only true Church of God. God's true church is in a number of branches at this time, as far as I can tell.  Some branches perhaps will tend to be more Laodicean, some more Philadelphian. We hope and pray and believe that Global will be more Philadelphian and intend to keep it that way.  Even among the Global membership there will be many who will be tending towards Laodiceanism. We need to encourage each other amongst ourselves and with our brethren in other groups not to become Laodicean, to hold the torch of the truth high, to do the work and to hope that every one of us can escape the coming tribulation and be in a place of safety and eventually in God's Kingdom.  ***Q: What is the function of women in the church. Are they to just support the men? What about women in the Kingdom of God?***  A: Women in the Kingdom will not be men, and the men will not be men either. We will all be spirit. We will not be composed of flesh anymore. We will all be given the chance to be kings and priests in God's Kingdom.  Christ made no distinction on that whatever in talking to the brethren of His day. Nor did Paul, nor the others who wrote about us judging the world and being kings and priests.  In the work today there is a distinction that Christ clearly shows that the men should be the ministers and the major leaders as, frankly, in the case of virtually all religions all over the world, even those who don't know the Bible or any kind of Christianity, because men do have more leadership in this physical flesh.  However, as you noticed in our *Behind the Work*film we have women in a number of key positions, as our art director for the*World Ahead*magazine and the set designer and art director for the *World Ahead* telecast. A number of other women are in key positions and probably will be in more key positions as we get bigger and more varied in the activities we perform in the Global Church.  ***Q: What about the elevation of ministers in the church? Are ministers up here and the brethren down here?***  A: We have tried to teach servant leadership and not all kinds of preferential treatment to the ministers. We want to serve the brethren.  I think we may need even to be careful of little things which are a natural carryover from Worldwide. That is, they have special parking spaces and yet there are times when special parking places may be helpful. Maybe Christ would even have that if you have to prepare a sermon and get there--a minister who has two churches and has to drive between them--just for the sake of the job or the activity at the time.  I know that at most of our places, including our headquarters at San Diego, on the Sabbath there are no special parking places. I just park wherever I can find a place at church services.  Here at the Feast they have a parking space, which is helpful because it is an outside resort. The places could all get filled up and I could rush in at the last minute because I have had to preach up in Niagara and down here and people are calling me and I am having to call to San Diego about things there and everyone is trying to talk to me as you can see before and after the meetings. It just helps me to get in and get out quicker.  We don't want this fat-cats-from-faculty-row [approach], as they used to say in Big Sandy. We don't want that approach in the Global Church, and we are trying to avoid that.  ***Q: If you had not been forced out, would you have stayed to collect your paycheck?***  A: No, that is not true. I was getting right to the very edge of precipice of leaving, and God knows that and I was praying and actually fasting twice a month for some sign to make it clear.  He could have given me any number of signs. Frankly, He gave me several. The climax: being fired, where I had to sit in a rocking chair and do nothing. So I was ready to leave after they came out with the *God Is ...* booklet and a number of other things were said.  One young smart aleck telling me, one of their leaders, he said, "Mr. Armstrong gave the whole church a bucket of lies!"  I challenged him on it.  He said, "Yes! A bucket of lies!"  That was the attitude of a number of those people there that became forcibly impressed on my mind. When I realized that was their attitude, that those changes were heading in a total opposite direction from everything we had proved was the truth, then I knew it was time to leave. I was just asking God to guide me specifically in the timing so that I would not hurt anyone else and that I would be able to help the people that God was calling out by leaving in the right way and at the right time.  ***Q: With one of the other organizations, the members have to state that Mr. Armstrong was the Elijah. They have to be interviewed by a minister. Are all people with Church of God background are welcome in the Global Church of God?***  A: That's right. We honor Mr. Armstrong, but we do not worship him. People do not have to say they knew he was the Elijah or any such thing like that to be in the Global Church of God. We want to honor him and build on the legacy he left, but we'll let Christ show whether or not he was the Elijah to come, the final one who will finish up the job of preparing.  By the way, I do not claim to be the Elijah, and I most sincerely before God do not think I am. God may raise up a very powerful man later to put the capstone in some way; maybe he'll be one of the two witnesses. So that's up to Christ to show us very clearly.  ***Q: Is there a question that you hear often that we did not cover?***  A: One thing that people are confused about, especially our Worldwide brethren who are still there, many who I know and love deeply, they have a false loyalty thinking they've got to follow the hierarchy that is there.  What they've got to realize is that over and over Christ shows in the New Testament that we are to follow the truth, to be followers of the truth, not of an organized corporation as such. Mr. Armstrong always said follow me as I follow Christ.  One man was asking me a while ago, just after services, that one leading evangelist was telling him that, just as people in ancient Israel should never have left and should follow the king no matter what, so people should follow the leaders of Worldwide no matter what.  I told the man that you are comparing apples and oranges because in the Old Testament physical, carnal nation of Israel, people lived in that nation, that was their nationality, so to speak. They were Israelites. They might have been killed if they had gone over with the Philistines or somewhere else, as a matter of fact. They normally should have stayed there and waited for God to take care of the situation.  The opposite has often proven to be true in the New Testament, where we are called out individually, sometimes even wives apart from their husbands or the husbands apart from their wives. It is a spiritual calling to the truth and to find where Christ is working, where the truth is being preached and the work is being done. That is up to each one to decide.  When the major organization we all loved and helped build and were a part of--I helped build it with my life for 40 years, efforts, prayers, taught all my children that way of life--when that was taken over by absolute apostates and turned away from the law of God, the way of God, and purpose of God, we were forced to leave in order to obey the God of the Bible.  Anyone else ought to see that point. You must not use the false analogy of the kingship of ancient Israel and try to apply that to the leadership of the present former association and say that those things are the same because they absolutely are not. If you read your New Testament carefully that becomes very clear indeed. | | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Interview with Roderick C. Meredith Presiding Evangelist of the Global Church of God**  **by Ewin H. Barnett and Sue Ann Pomicter** |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | An article appeared in *In Transition* Oct. 28, 1996, under the headline "Global Church Leader Discusses Growth and Challenges Facing GCG." It was based on the following interview, which is reproduced here in full with only light editing of spelling, capitalization and punctuation. | | | |  | | LAKE OF THE OZARKS, Mo.--Dr. Meredith spent the first half of 1996's Feast of Tabernacles at the beautiful Lake of the Ozarks Feast site, where this interview took place. This was our second interview of him. The first took place during last year's Feast at the same location.  ***Q: What has happened in Global in the last year?***  A: We've made a good deal of progress because we have been on television much more than we had at this time last year. Last year we were just starting on WOR [New York] and KCOP in Los Angeles. Now we've been [on] a number of other stations. As you just heard us announce, we're going on WGN [Chicago], which will be broadcast all over these United States coast to coast. So we're very grateful for that.  A number of other ministers have come with us since the last interview. We're grateful for them also. I don't want to name them all lest I forget someone.  Since that time we've had the publication of the *American and Britain in Prophesy* booklet and other key booklets and information. Our international work has been strengthened. Many additional people have come with us in the Philippines and in other parts of the world who were grateful for the work we are doing. | |
| |  | | --- | | ***Q: What is Global's top focus today?***  A: Doing the work.  ***Q: You mentioned going on the Chicago superstation WGN. It was announced that membership has increased by 35 percent during the last year. How is Global growing in Canada, Europe and South America?***  A: The growth in Europe has been minimal, although we have grown some there. I don't have a number to give you, but from what I've heard it's been 15 or 20 percent.  We have had new people come with us in South Africa.  Canada has grown a great deal more because of we have gone across Canada on the Vision network. WGN will do for us here what Vision did up there. We have had dozens of new people starting to attend church because of the program. We have had dozens of new people starting to attend church because of the program. We have started many new churches and video groups as a result of the growth of the work in Canada.  ***Q: Recently Global announced it had borrowed over $1 million. What are the plans for those funds?***  A: We're planning to put that money primarily into the work. It will enable us, in other words, to go on WGN, to handle the follow-through from that, and to be able to handle the magazines, the booklets and literature and any new staff that will be required as well.  ***Q: Are any joint projects or coordination being planned with any other group such as United?***  A: Not that I'm aware of.  ***Q: You have spent some time several months ago addressing conspiracy theories. How has this issue affected the church?***  A: We have lost a few dozen people because of that. We're very sorry because I personally know and love some of those people, as a number of our ministers do. Those people got very hooked on conspiracies and certain other ideas, sometimes of their own devising, and made it a divisive issue. We would have been glad if they could have just left it alone and attended church, but they insisted on pushing it on other people. It became a divisive issue, so we're very sorry about that.  The things in that area have calmed down a great deal in the last several weeks. It seems like those people have separated themselves.  As you know, one group sent out a letter saying the "disfellowshipped brethren of Cincinnati, but then they put in their own little blurb about that. They admitted in their own writing that they disfellowshipped themselves. We didn't disfellowship them, they disfellowshipped themselves. Then later, because they began to cause trouble, we did formalize their disfellowshipment. But they took it upon themselves to leave first.  ***Q: How should Global members should relate to members of other Churches of God?***  A: I think it depends on what other Churches of God you are talking about, frankly. Some are more militant or have different types of problems. In general we want to love and respect other Sabbath-keeping people of whatever background.  I think we can have a closer association with some who doing more of the work, preaching more of the truth. There are some who have gone off, who are very militant, who are attacking Worldwide continually and perverting scriptures to show that Mr. Tkach [senior] was "the great man of sin" of 2 Thessalonians, "sitting in the house of God, showing himself that he was God, and performing great signs and lying wonders."  They were *not* sitting in the house of God that Paul was talking about there in that way at all, and they were not showing themselves as God. Some of those people we want to love and pray for, but we do not necessarily have a lot of contact with people who are that far off.  ***Q: I want to ask you about those who are part of the stay-at-home Church of God. Why do you think most of them decide to stay at home? Is there any way for Global to address their concerns?***  A: We would like very much to reach out to them. We love them. Many of [us] know some of them, and I feel that they are in that situation because of the greatest apostasy among God's true people in hundreds of years that has just taken place. That has caused tremendous confusion, disillusionment, hurt, a sense of betrayal, frustration, and those people are not all monolithic in their thinking.  I have corresponded with a number of them. Some are hurt more over church government. Some are hurt over feeling betrayed doctrinally. Others are hurt over all kinds of things.  We do want to, in any way we can, reach out to them, let them know they are welcome at Global.  The way to find out about us is *not* to listen to our enemies attack us. As many of the early church-history writers point out, the early true Christians were attacked by virtually everyone. You have to find out, in fact, the history of the early true church by looking at articles and letters and books written against them. That's the only record you have, to know that they were there, by the things written against them.  We urge the stay-at-home people to check us out personally. Come just as visitors. They don't have to commit; they can just [come] as visitors and see what we have.  I have been called a dictator, and a bad guy and a legalist. All they have to do is come and talk to hundreds of our people to disabuse themselves of that idea. They will find that we have been going nearly four years now, and I'm not a dictator, and we are not pushing legalism, which we don't have anyway.  People are basically very happy. We are preaching more of the full truth of God and the way of God, that we all learned for years, than we feel that any other group is doing. We are certainly doing more of the work.  Our brethren are committing our lives to the work in a remarkable way. They will sense that spirit of zeal when they come to Global. So they need to check us out and not listen just to what our enemies are saying.  ***Q: Some groups in the church elevate the doctrine of government over the written Word of God. Government has been stressed in some of the Global literature. Where do we find the balance?***  A: We are finding the balance in Global. If you talk to our ministers and our members, in a vast majority of our churches you will find that most of them are very happy. They are not being dictated to. They don't feel anyone is trying to run their lives at all.  We do feel that we should follow the overwhelming majority of very plain, clear scriptures about government. From the time of Moses appointing captains over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens; King David doing the same thing; Christ appointing His apostles; Paul appointing the evangelists under him--every big example in the Bible is like that, including the indication in the world ahead that King David will be put over Israel once again as king and the same pattern will be carried right on.  People look desperately for one or two little scriptures to somehow get around those great big obvious examples.  The true pattern of God's government: We practice that government in Global. But, as I just exhorted our ministers in this meeting here just before you folks came to interview me, we are to learn to practice, and I am constantly teaching our ministers to practice, servant leadership.  Our whole attitude should be to try to help, to serve, to generally encourage and build up, to teach and train, but to strengthen our members, not to dictate to our members, not to run their lives, not to be on their case, not to stress who is in charge here.  The issue is not who is in charge here. The issue is how can I help you. How can I serve you? How can I teach you the truth? How can I help you get in the Kingdom of God.  ***Q: In the matter of interracial dating and marriage, is there anything you wish to that you had stated differently?***  A: No, I've always made it very clear that we had practiced for 40-some years, going into the homes of brethren of different races, loving them, helping them, praying for them, eating with them, having them in my home for dinner, encouraging all kinds of social fellowship and loving Christian fellowship--but we discourage interracial dating and marriage. Not as a capital sin, but as something that brings a great deal of trouble, frustration, unhappiness and sorrow to the vast majority of people who get in that situation.  Following the clear example in the Bible of Abraham, even though his own household was taught the ways of God, as God says, he sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac of his own people. That is God's way. It is clearly in the Bible.  It is not put as a capital sin. We do *not* put people out of the church for that. We will have, and have, some interracial marriages and people in that situation in the Global Church. But we feel it's more loving to tell the people about the problems than to let them drift into problems like that without any guidance whatsoever.  ***Q: So, you're saying that you would perform an interracial marriage if the circumstances were correct?***  A: We do *not* recommend interracial marriage. Our ministers have the option to perform them, and that is up to them. There could be circumstances where some of our ministers do that, I imagine.  ***Q: How would you respond to somebody who would then say that this is racist?***  A: I would say that they themselves simply do not understand God's plan and God's purpose. God clearly, though examples and statements in the Bible, indicates that in this human, physical flesh we are male and female, we are black or white or whatever, and that we ought to emphasize our own strengths and marry within people who share those same strengths.  When I was in England, Muhammad Ali said over the BBC, this interviewer asked him: "A lot of black athletes are getting white wives. Why don't you get yourself a white wife?"  He said, "I want my sons to look like me."  That statement was very well thought out, that's normal, that's right: "I want my sons to look like me." I think people should be taught that.  You see, when they vary greatly, marrying across wide racial lines, they are in one sense repudiating their whole ancestry. They're going to change what their family and their lineage has always been, whether it be black, white, yellow, American Indian, whatever.  Of course some say that there is no sin involved, and often there isn't. The only sin that could be involved, and quite often would be, is if both parents are very knowledgeable and dedicated and perhaps both sets of parents would tell the children, "Don't do that."  In that case, they would be directly breaking the Fifth Commandment. They would be dishonoring their father and their mother by such an action, and that is breaking the Ten Commandments.  ***Q: Do you have any immediate plans for any management restructuring in Global?***  A: No. Not of any consequence.  ***Q: How do you respond to those who say that Global is not for them?***  A: They need to prove it by coming to meet with us and giving us a chance to show them what we are rather than listen to unsubstantiated accusations from others. They should judge us by our fruits. I think that is very important for any fair-minded person to consider.  The second thing: Mr. Armstrong always said you could tell how much people's hearts are in the church and with God by how much their hearts are in the work. I think they will be able to ascertain that if they check it out. Everyone who wants to be a part of the Kingdom of God in the future should really want to find out where God's work is being done today.  You would think they would have great interest in getting the facts about where the government of God is being practiced and experienced here and now. Global is where that is being done, I think better than anywhere else on earth. | | |