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## GUEST EDITORIAL GOD IS GIVING US AN OPPORTUNITY

By Frank Bateman Stanger

"... yet four months, then comes the harvest? ..." (John 4:35, R.S.V.) "Behold, now is the acceptable time ..." (II Corinthians 6:2, R.S.V.)

Jesus was a master in the art of taking advantage of opportunities. Do not misunderstand me—He was not an opportunist. An opportunist is one who takes advantage of circumstances with little regard for principles or ultimate consequences. Jesus by His conduct emphatically repudiated the practice of opportunism. He refused to jump from the pinnacle of the Temple in order to give His ministry the momentum of sensationalism. He refused to be made an earthly king at the time of the Feeding of the Five Thousand. Some have suggested that during the closing days of His earthly ministry the Greeks invited Him to transfer the sphere of His ministry to Athens. But He refused to exchange the Cross of Jerusalem for the "comfort" of Athens. On trial before Pilate He refused to initiate any measures that might have meant His escape from the Cross. Certainly Jesus Christ was not an opportunist.

On the other hand, Jesus was ever sensitive to opportunities and He was quick to seize them. He seemed to sense the "fit time," the occasion of the favorable juncture of circumstances for the fulfillment of His redemptive ministries. The Divine statement of our text relative to opportunities grew out of the fact that Jesus had taken advantage of a spiritual opportunity. He had conducted a memorable interview at Jacob's Well with a woman of Samaria.

There was much on the surface that made the prospect of such an interview between the Master and the Samaritan woman appear most inopportune. It has been suggested that there are at least seven reasons why Jesus should not have had this interview with the Samaritan woman: (1) She was a woman; (2) She was a woman, alone; (3) She was a bad woman, alone; (4) She was a Samaritan; (5) She came from Sychar, which means "drunken," perhaps so named from the character of its inhabitants; (6) He was tired; (7) It was noon, and undoubtedly hot.

But Jesus recognized the spiritual opportunity of the occasion and He took advantage of it. He "must needs" offer to her and her friends the Water of Life.

As a result of this interview in Samaria, which was the successful outcome of a spiritual opportunity taken advantage of, Jesus, in talking with His disciples, gives expression to the Christian principle of the stewardship of opportunity. "Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields: for they are white already to harvest."

Spiritual opportunities are inevitable because of both the spiritual needs of men, and the redemptive will of God. The Apos-

tlés were quick to realize the spiritual opportunities presented to them. Paul declared that "a great door and effectual is opened unto me." The Divine Voice reminded the Church through John on the Isle of Patmos: "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it."

What is the opportunity that God is giving us as a Church and as Christians? Our discovery of our opportunity is realized along the avenue of realism — neither a minimizing nor a magnifying of the facts—but a courageous, stark appraisal of the true situation. We discover our opportunities when we face honestly our failures, our needs, our challenges.

I.

I would suggest, first of all, that God is giving us an opportunity for THE INACTIVE TO BECOME ACTIVE. There is a tragic amount of inactivity within the membership of every Church. Many folks do not worship regularly, many people are not developing their own spiritual lives. Large numbers are not serving either the Church or others through the Church, Alas, too many are giving practically nothing of their material substance.

I am afraid that the average Church member, perhaps even the average minister, approaches the problem of inactive mem-