of God’s promise of liberation. Hopefully, such insights will constitute the essence of a theology of peace.

Readers whose eyesight can manage to read an 8-point type of print and who can mentally correct the many typographical errors will find valuable insights in this hastily lithographed book. Other readers may prefer to wait for some future and better edited version even if they are left behind in a fast moving dialogue for peace.

Actually, the dialogue has to move even faster if it is to keep up with the accelerating flow of contemporary history. Authentic dialogue can increase the options that give man a measure of control over history and greater concern for future world populations than is being given by the geopolitical will of present superpowers and their macroeconomic oligarchies.

Then again, others may believe that history has gone completely out of control and, in their paralysis, now long to be taken up and away from historical involvement and passively wait for the Armageddon finish.

Vicente Marasigan, S.J.


This latest, and perhaps the last book by the eminent Redemptorist moralist, Bernard Häring, is a cry from the heart for the whole Catholic Church to reflect very seriously on the spiritual suffering of divorced and remarried Catholics. He is not the only contemporary moralist to be very much concerned about this growing problem, but his worldwide renown after fifty years of extraordinary pastoral experience and prolific writing make his reflections especially noteworthy.

Häring believes that the Church could do more to help the divorced and remarried. Pope John Paul II had issued a call for “pastors and the whole community of the faithful to help the [remarried] divorced, and with solicitous care to make sure that they do not consider themselves as separated from the Church” (Familiaris Consortio, no. 84). In the same document the Pope admitted that circumstances, especially care for the children’s upbringing, could demand that the couple continue to stay together but with the obligation of complete abstinence from the acts proper to married couples (ibid.). Only then could the couple be readmitted to the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist (ibid.).

Häring would like to go beyond these requirements which most couples find too demanding. The practice of the Eastern Orthodox in admitting the divorced to a second Church-recognized marriage is proposed by Häring and
examined in depth as a possible solution to this now widespread Roman Catholic problem. In the 1980 Synod of Bishops, which was especially concerned with current Church marriage and family problems, Haring notes that over 90% of the Synod Bishops expressed the opinion that the Roman Catholic Church should seriously examine the matter to see if Rome could learn from the Eastern Church solution (p. 11).

The Eastern Church solution is based on a spirituality of oikonomia, or economy of salvation. It means "the entire order of salvation of God as the benevolent father of the household and a spirituality that is marked by praise of the Church's all-merciful 'steward' or 'householder' and by trust in the 'good shepherd'" (p. 40).

This approach insists on indissoluble faithfulness in marriage and seeks earnestly for the healing of troubled marriages, with great emphasis on forgiveness — an essential point in their spirituality of economy (p. 43). If, however, the marriage is beyond healing and "living together is no longer compatible with a sacrament of salvation... indeed when living together in fact works against the salvation and integrity of the other partner, the "moral death" of the marriage is accepted (p. 45). This analysis takes place in counselling, not in a matrimonial tribunal, a western juridical institution unknown in the East (p. 43).

In the Eastern Church there is no question of a hasty second marriage. "A period of mourning is needed, a time for healing deep wounds" (p. 45). If there had been a sin involved, at least two years of mourning and penance were expected (ibid.). If a second marriage is allowed, the note of sorrow and mercy is part of the liturgy, emphasizing God's patience and mercy (p. 49).

Other suggestions of Haring include the "internal forum" solution when an "external forum," matrimonial tribunal solution is not available. As Haring notes and experience confirms, the couples seek this solution to their problem, bothered by their conscience and longing for the Eucharist especially when the child of their second marriage is being prepared for first Holy Communion.

Recourse to epikeia is also offered by Haring when a prudent judgment is made, all things considered, that the first marriage was invalid but proof is lacking in the external forum. Thus a matrimonial tribunal solution is not available. Haring would approve a second marriage and allow the pastor to conduct very quietly the ceremony (p. 73). Haring insists that such solutions are not "by means of an isolated and hidden decision by the individual conscience" but "the fruit of careful advice and counselling" (p. 75).

A change in Canon Law is also recommended by Haring so that in case of doubt the matrimonial tribunal would not be forced to decide in favor of validity (Can. 1080). For Haring this is a harmful example of tutiorism which the Church rejects in other areas of morality but not with regard to marriage
(p. 59).

The importance of Haring’s book is underlined by the fact that L’Osservatore Romano (11 March 1991, p. 2) published a very negative criticism of it by William E. May, professor of Moral Theology at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. Professor May tries to demolish each of Haring’s arguments and concludes that “it is Haring who distorts and misrepresents Christ’s teaching and in this way seriously endangers the life of the faithful” (ibid.).

Whatever the merits of May’s arguments against Haring, it is sad to find him offering no hope, no solution, NO WAY OUT for the millions of Catholics, often innocent victims of a broken marriage, looking to the Church for greater understanding of their tragic situation. May’s criticism will seem juridical and unfeeling while Haring will appear as the compassionate pastor keenly aware of the lost sheep and ever searching, to the end of his career, for some way out of their very painful situation.

No Way Out? will be useful to all concerned with modern marriage problems, professors and counsellors. The problem is so widespread in the Church that it can safely be said that we have not heard the last word on the subject. Haring’s suggestions and tentative solutions deserve our serious consideration.

Gerald W. Healy, S.J.