chapters than Hidalgo. Morelos embraced the insurrection partly because he believed in the messages of his calling so fervently. The values of charity, personal sacrifice, hierarchy, and mutual obligation led him and many other priests to join the movement, yet without questioning the Catholic doctrine in which they were formed. Taylor ends with the notion that the Bourbons were the cause of their own demise because their reforms, while they attacked old patterns of custom and tradition, put into doubt their divine right to power. Religion was the fundamental expression of colonial rule and, while priests were allied with governors, the empire was safe. It is through the changes to religion in the eighteenth century that we can understand the shift in loyalties and the explosions of rebellion of the early nineteenth century.

This book will naturally be read by specialists of the field, but it would be a great pity if historians of religion in general did not also take it up, if only to examine the sections of particular interest. Such a fine example of scholarship should be read widely.

Sonya Lipsett-Rivera
Carleton University

Susan Eva Eckstein — *Back from the Future: Cuba under Castro*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. Pp. 286.

So much attention has been given to Cuba and Castro in both the press and academia over recent months that in some ways it is difficult to imagine an author, much less a reviewer, saying anything new. In February 1996, when Cuba downed two civilian aircraft piloted by Cuban Americans and registered in the United States, the United States Congress passed the highly controversial Helms-Burton Bill, directly affecting Canada and other nations trading with the island and provoking much comment across North America. In the face of worldwide condemnation of the Cuban initiative, Havana proved obdurate, refusing to apologize and indeed using only slightly veiled threats to suggest that further violations of the nation's ''sovereignty'' could expect the same reaction. While cooperating in the search for survivors, Castro accepted no blame at all for the incident, which he said was entirely the fault of the Cuban-American community in Florida and its backers in the United States.

Almost seven years after the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and nearly six since the end of the Soviet Union itself, this outpost of a largely forgotten cold war is still alive if not exactly kicking very hard. Despite assurances year after year from the American right that the Castro dictatorship was on its last legs, the regime in Havana still has control over the whole island, there is no anti-Castro insurgency or even serious opposition movement in the republic, and, despite pushing 70, the *líder máximo* shows little sign of exhaustion or interest in early retirement.

Indeed, 1995 is said by Cuban government officials to have been the year of a long-awaited slight improvement in the economy. The suggestion is that for Castro-

ists the worst is behind them and that the reforms undertaken at the economic level have now begun to bear fruit and will do so increasingly in the future. Thus Castro may well be feeling his oats at the present time. The riots of the summer of 1994 and the mass *balsero* (rafter) exodus seem rather remote memories, and discussions with Cuban officials find them unusually upbeat on a number of fronts.

This is not so for the Cuban people as a whole. Even the most diehard *fidelista* admits that the Revolution's achievements are fraying or in many fields gone altogether. Despite undoubtedly more vibrancy in the capital and major towns now than a year or two ago, neither Havana nor any place else in Cuba could be referred to as booming. Nonetheless, by the standards of most pundits' predictions a mere two years ago, Castro has cause for self-congratulation for his dogged determination, so far successful, to hold on. The cost has of course been high. Reformists who choose to operate outside the Communist Party can expect prison cells or harassment for their pains. The economy may be improving, but it is still a shambles, and the country is completely run down and barely functioning.

This year's questions must thus include: How does Fidel hold on to power in the midst of such disaster? How exactly did the disaster come about and come to be so complete? Will political reform come as has economic? How ideologically motivated is this grand old man of Latin socialism?

Fortunately, well before the recent crisis, Susan Eva Eckstein, known most widely for her previous work on Mexico and urban poverty, turned her attention to the situation in Cuba and the phenomenon of the Castro government. The resulting book is probably one of the most wide-ranging, comprehensive, and helpful books on the Cuban government written in decades. Moving quickly and well to dismiss the prevailing wisdom that Castro is an ideologue whose thinking is dominated by slavish following of a Marxist model, Eckstein brings out important distinctions on the utility of ideology for the regime. The tendency of Cubanologists to exaggerate is eschewed throughout and instead one gets a critical but balanced look at the experiment conducted in Cuba over the last 37 years.

In this analysis the author shows a deep understanding of what makes the government tick and how Castro has shown flexibility in dealing with real problems, even though his own preferences might have been for more orthodox solutions. This book provides a fine history of the period from 1959 to 1993 and a good basis for analysis of current events in this rapidly evolving nation.

At home with phenomena as diverse as the revolutionary construction minibrigades and the Cuban Armed Forces, Eckstein forces us to take seriously Castro's claim that the Cuban experiment is responding first and foremost to Cuban considerations and priorities. Her handling of the internationalism strand in Cuban foreign and defence policy, of the special characteristics of Soviet aid, and of the roles of sectors such as farmers and women in society stand out. The emphasis on the effect that real, normal people have on government is refreshing if at times surprising.

Against such a backdrop one is tempted to avoid what may strike readers as quibbling. But it must be said that the English, even the analysis, is at times a trifle odd. Cuban-U.S. relations are not by any means good but they are not marked by

''hostilities'', as the author claims at one point. However one wishes to style events in the Mahgreb in recent years, Algeria has surely not been ''attacked'' by Morocco of late. Maurice Bishop was many things but he was not ''head of state'' of Grenada. Finally, inhabitants of Havana are referred to as *habaneros*, not *habañeros*.

Equally, the book very much needed more information on pre-1959 relations between the U.S. and Latin America and between the U.S. and Cuba to set the stage for the analysis to follow. The number and timing of Soviet military deployments to the island are at times exaggerated or simply erroneous.

These problems, however, pale in comparison with the positive elements of this work. Eckstein's volume is truly a fine addition to the literature on the Cuban revolutionary experience. It is essential reading for anyone interested in Cuban history or politics and is as close to a definitive work on the subject of Castro's Cuba as anything written to date.

Hal Klepak
Royal Military College of Canada