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Briefly Noted: *God's Other Children: Personal Encounters with Faith, Love, and Holiness in Sacred India*

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strength of Eliza F. Kents's present work lies in its comprehensiveness, readability and accessibility. While addressing the concerns of Western scholars on religious environmentalism from the framework of sacred groves in south India, the author not only familiarizes the readers with the nuanced and shifting meanings of embodied practices of rural Tamil people but also uses a language that speaks at once to both the audience, the western readers and the local Indians. The academic virtue of the book is that, though it is a

monograph on sacred groves in Tamilnadu, it displays the author's wide sweep of knowledge not only about the practices of sacred groves across Tamilnadu but also about similar works on the same phenomena in different parts of India, and also about current views and debates on the subject by Western scholars, Indian environmentalists, social activists, and Hindu nationalists.

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### Briefly Noted:

***God's Other Children: Personal Encounters with Faith, Love, and Holiness in Sacred India.* By Bradley Malkovsky. New York: Harper Collins, 2013, xiii + 289 pp.**

IT is often assumed that when a person converts to a particular religious tradition, interest in other religious paths is necessarily forestalled. After all, why venture forth when one has arrived "home"? Fortunately for us, this stage did not last long for Bradley Malkovsky, associate professor of comparative theology at the University of Notre Dame and long the editor of the *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies*. Like many seekers of his generation, this convert to Catholicism was drawn to India and to the religions of the Subcontinent. In *God's Other Children*, the scholar wends the reader through his personal encounters with Hindus, Muslims, Christians, as well as Buddhist Vipassanā meditation, Yoga, Indian Catholicism, and, he would say, providentially, his future wife. One is reminded of Wilfred Cantwell Smith's maxim that there are no abstract Buddhisms, Islams, and Hindus, but living,

breathing Buddhists, Muslims, and Hindus. The humanist, personalist nature of this insight is manifest in this poignant and timely spiritual autobiography. What is it to be an adherent vulnerable to the veracity of other religions, to beliefs and practices not one's own? If God in Christ is "already present" in the religions, what are Christians called to in a pluralist world? How does a post-Vatican II Catholic (and others, by extension) remain faithful to his own tradition while learning from others? It can be argued that the answers lie not in abstraction but in time and space, in a particular human life and between particular people in concrete situations. Of course, the reader may not arrive at this author's answers, or even accept some of his theological premises, but one cannot help but respect the seriousness with which he engages the quest. One is reminded of Klaus Klostermeier's *Christian and Hindu in Vrindavan*

(1969) for its candor and theological seriousness. And herein lies the usefulness of the text: Malkovsky is no dilettante. His journey to India to do doctoral work (on Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta) followed graduate study at Tübingen. As often happens in such journeys, the author got more than he bargained for: cross-cultural disorientation, encounters with holiness, an inconvenient love with a Muslim woman, near fatal illness, transformation. So as Malkovsky skillfully traverses religious and cultural terrain, he explains the topography as he goes, parsing doctrines, practices, and contexts necessary to understand the meaning of his variegated experiences—and, most importantly, the stakes

involved in crossing each religious border. Avoiding jargon, the author wisely employs footnotes for more detailed explication and provides references for further study. This bipartite text will be particularly useful to undergraduates, especially those studying comparative theology, theology of religions, interfaith and inter-religious studies, contemporary Indian studies, and for those preparing for their own imminent journeys across and within.

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