

Religion in Weston's *The Japanese Alps*

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英国人牧師ワルター・ウェストン (Reverend Walter Weston 1861-1940) は英国聖公会・教会伝道協会派遣の宣教師として1888~1895年をはじめとして、全部で14年間ほど日本に滞在した。現在、ウェストンはその伝道活動より登山活動の為に知られている。信州の山々がとても中欧のアルプス山脈に似ているとウェストンが覚えたため、彼は「日本アルプス」という名をつけ、そのために今までも上高地では彼の碑石が見えるのである。

1896年にはウェストンは *Mountaineering and Exploration in the Japanese Alps* (『日本アルプスの登山と探検』岩波文庫) という書を著した。その中に4年の夏の登山体験が記されている。この本は様々な意味でかなり面白い旅行記だと思うが、私にとって特に興味深いことは、ウェストンの山に対する宗教的な思想や感覚である。日本語を流暢に話せ、日本の宗教に興味を持ったウェストンは、日本の山岳信仰をどのように理解したか、かれの山の観方、及びかれのキリスト教への信仰はどれほどその山岳信仰に影響されたか、という追及をする。

Englishman Walter Weston (1861-1940) is well known as the man who introduced mountaineering as a sport to Japan. A monument to him stands in Kamikōchi 上高地 in Nagano, the central climbing base for the Northern Japanese Alps, a beautiful and challenging area that Weston introduced to the world through his writings, and that he also named, for its resemblance to the Swiss Alps which he knew so well. Weston's first and deservedly most famous book on Japan, *Mountaineering and Exploration in the Japanese Alps*, published in 1896, describes his mountaineering activities during the summer months of the years 1891-1894. Reverend Weston wrote little concerning what he did with the rest of his time during this stays in Japan. As an Anglican missionary for the Church Missionary Service (CMS), he served three stints in the country, from 1888-95, 1902-05, and 1911-15.

Weston's writings on Meiji-period Japan are certainly unique in many important respects. First and foremost is that he describes in detail his travels on tracks that are "unbeaten" in the truest sense of the word. Not only was he the first foreigner either to climb or to write about many of the greatest peaks in the land, he was the first *person* whosoever to write about these peaks, as no Japanese had thought to do so before. Weston's contribution is therefore unique in the sense that he actually taught Japanese readers something about their own land, one result of which was the formation of the Japanese Alpine Association. Compare this to the case of Lafcadio Hearn and my point becomes clear. While Hearn is far better known among Japanese readers (although usually by his Japanese name, Koizumi Yakumo 小泉八雲), and Japanese translations of his works are more numerous, the interest in Hearn has, for the most part, been rooted in that particular Japanese enthusiasm to know what the foreign other thinks about Japan. Hearn's great popularity in the country is due in no small way to the fact that, in almost all of his writings, he casts a very favorable eye towards the land. Weston, on the other hand, is today primarily read by mountain climbers who want to know what things were like in a bygone era, and who are not necessarily concerned with the fact that the book was written by a foreigner.

But Weston and his writings are unique in many other ways as well. For one, it appears as though he spoke Japanese quite fluently, including the rather unknown dialects of Shinshū, the area in central Japan (now Nagano Prefecture) where most of his climbing took place. He tells us in detail of his conversations with guides, inn owners, and hunters, and even describes how he acted as interpreter on occasion between Japanese—interpreting between Shinshū dialect and the standard language. Linguistic proficiency, coupled with his singular choice of travel destinations, put Weston in touch with Japanese the likes of whom most Western travelers at the time scarcely even dreamed of meeting. Almost twenty years earlier, Isabella Bird had, of course, described in *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* the various types of people she met on her "unbeaten tracks" as she made her way to Yezo (Hokkaido), but these are little more than the passing glimpses of a tourist. She is sight-seeing, but Weston actually gets to know some of the most unlikely of characters. The best example is his friend Komonji, a bear hunter who serves as a guide during Weston's 1892 expedition to Yarigatake 槍ヶ岳, and who reappears some twenty years later in Weston's second book, *The Playground of the Far East*, published in 1918, this time as a warm friend and climbing partner.

Weston is also unique in that, although a missionary, almost no mention is made of Christianity in first three works, and he is never disparaging towards the native “pagan” religions in the way that most otherwise religious Westerners often were. Weston paid great attention to Japanese religions, and while this interest is echoed in the writings of Hearn and many other Meiji-era Westerners living or traveling in Japan, Weston got to see a side of Japanese religion that almost none of the others could see—that which took place on the mountains. Weston’s descriptions of ascetic practices, spirit possessions, and magic rituals, and his comments on the beliefs and customs of the mountain folk, are without parallel in the other Western writings on Japan from this period.

It is to Weston’s observations and comments on Japanese religion that this essay is dedicated. In particular, I wish to pay special attention to the aspects of mountain religion (*sangaku shinkō* 山岳信仰) which he encountered, and his attempt at interpreting these aspects. Two important points which must be made at first, and which ought to be kept in mind throughout, are first of all that describing Japanese religion is by no means one of the major tasks that Weston set out to fulfill in his works on mountaineering in Japan. To attempt to put together a coherent view entails picking up comments spread here and there throughout his travel writing.¹⁾ The second point is that Weston made a sharp, if not altogether clear, distinction between the *genuine* religions of Buddhism and Shinto and the *superstitions* that he encountered among the common folk. While, as mentioned earlier and as we shall see demonstrated below, Weston showed considerable respect for the established religions, he often treats folk beliefs as unenlightened remnants of a pre-scientific age, without, however, trying to understand logically the connections or inter-relationships that might have existed between these two spheres.

It also needs to be mentioned at the outset that in this investigation I am primarily interested in Weston’s first work on Japan, *Mountaineering and Exploration in the Japanese Alps*, which he compiled while living in the country and published on his return to Europe. This work gives, more than anything, direct observations of his travels in the mountains, with relatively little theoretical or general discussion as to the meanings given to, or the history behind, what he observes. More interpretation is given in reflective works written much later, namely *A Wayfarer in Unfamiliar Japan*, (London: Methuen 1925) and *Japan* (London: A&C Black, 1926), wherein much material either overlaps with or is an

extended treatment of sections of his earlier works. I shall reference these works when they give an illumination of the earlier, primary material.

Buddhism and Shinto

Weston shows a lively interest and a fairly broad knowledge of Japanese Buddhism and Shinto. He knows something of Buddhist myth and iconography, to say the least, and appreciates the beauty of shrines and temples. The description of his visit to Zenkō-ji 善光寺, in present-day Nagano city, holds particular interest. He gives an account of the founding of Zenko-ji, said to have been built to house a triptych “fashioned by S'akya Muni (the Buddha) himself 3,000 years ago, from gold found at the center of the universe” (*Japanese Alps* (hereafter *Alps*) p. 119). After passing through Korea into Japan, Shinto priests tried several times to destroy the icon, unsuccessfully, and it was brought to Zenkō-ji for safekeeping. Weston is respectful towards the legend as well as the images, which no one is allowed to see. After navigating the dark crypt underneath the image, he gets into a conversation with the temple attendants about “the relations of Buddhism towards Christianity” (*Alps* p. 120). Weston belies annoyance when his companion from the inn cuts off the temple guide:

As I rose to depart, my guide in the maze asked me if I would not like to make an obeisance at the shrine, but before I had time to reply, the youth who had conducted me from an inn in the town, offered an explanation in an indignant aside, that made the old man withdraw in confusion, to my great annoyance and regret. (*Alps* pp. 120-1)

Weston's attitude towards the temple and the beliefs it represents is one of interest, and he also seems to have been quite eager to make an obeisance before the altar, something that many missionaries at the time would certainly have nothing to do with.

Although detailed discussion of Buddhism in *The Japanese Alps* is on the whole limited, we often find Weston giving quick description of the various deities and historical figures who are worshipped in the places he visits. Examples are the deity Fūdō Myōō 不動明王 (*Alps* pp. 123-4) and the Bodhidharma or *Daruma* (p. 128). We find much more detailed discussions in Weston's two later books, written some thirty years later, in fact, after he seems to have been able to learn more about the religious history of the land.

Weston also gives a nice discussion of the aesthetic of the Ichi-no-miya Shrine in the province of Hida (present-day Gifu Prefecture) which shows his sensitivity both to Shinto architecture and to the relationship between that, the religion itself, and nature:

The roofs are covered with a simple thatch, and the *tout ensemble* is thoroughly in keeping with the straight massive trunks and dark foliage that surround the enclosure. It is a fact worth noticing that the Japanese almost invariably seem to have chosen the loveliest spot on the hill-side or in the valley for their places of worship. It is especially true of the Shinto temples, the earliest erections, meant to serve as a meeting-place for man and the powers without him. (*Alps* 65)

Even though much of the beautiful landscape of the country has been destroyed for practical purposes, he remarks, the sacred groves that have long been held in religious esteem are always spared the axe. His admiration does not extend, however, to the "tawdry" and "gaudily painted" wooden horses kept in a shed nearby the shrine. Next to the "sublime" shrine and surroundings, these appear truly "ridiculous." He fails to give account of the purpose of the horses, however, which are often thought to be sacred in themselves, and are often the objects of prayer and supplication.

Japanese Mountain Religion

There are many facets to the Japanese mountain religion that Walter Weston witnessed on his trips through the Alps and to other mountains in Japan. Many of these he viewed dismissively as forms of superstition. Included in this category are folk beliefs concerning spirits and taboos, and the beatification of certain pioneering religious figures. On the other hand, it seems that Weston was impressed by the piety of many of the pilgrims he encounters, especially those engaged in rigorous asceticism, and he also appears to have found a resonance in the general Japanese attitude towards the natural world. One weak point in his analysis, however, is his failure to see the inter-relationship between what he sees as "superstition" and those aspects which seem to him more enlightened.

Weston deals most clearly with superstitions in his prolonged attempt to scale Kasadake 笠岳 in Hida. After being well taken care for by the locals at a mine on the western side of

Norikuradake 乗鞍岳, Weston first arrives in the “primitive hamlet” of Gamada in 1892, and upon meeting with the headman of the village, he finds that “a wet blanket stifled our hopes:”

The appearance of a couple of foreigners was in itself a sufficiently astonishing event, but why they should want to climb a mountain where neither silver mines nor crystals were to be found was quite unintelligible to him. (*Alps* pp. 81-2)

The reasons for the resistance are not discovered until two years later, but at this time, his request for guides is refused on account of a river which had supposedly burst its banks further up the mountain. In response to the “*shikata ga nai*” of the headman, Weston and his companion hit the hot springs at Hirayu and give up, moving on two days later. The “Umbrella Peak” remains in his mind, however, and in 1894 he is back at Gamada for another attempt to scale it. This time he is told that “the woodcutters and hunters of the valley were that very night to hold their annual festivities, and no one could therefore be induced to guide us ...” (*Alps* p. 244). He finally finds a hunter, though, who agrees to accompany him, and from this man, Nakashima by name, comes the long-awaited explanation:

“The Gamada folk,” said Nakashima, “are incurably superstitious. In the lonely cliffs and ravines of Kasadake they maintain that a mighty spirit roams. Should any of the dwellers in the valley venture to conduct a stranger within the precincts of the mountain during the ripening of the grain, &c., a destructive storm would be bound to follow. This they would at once lay at the door of those who had assisted in the sacrilege, and condign punishment would follow without delay. (*Alps* p. 245)

After their plan to go ahead with the ascent is found out by the villagers, they persist in making the climb with the help of a “young hunter, who laughed at the fears and threats of the villagers” (*Alps* pp. 245-6). The bold hunter is nevertheless seen praying when the crucial part of the ascent begins, offering “supplications to the Spirit of the Mountain” (*Alps* p. 249). After returning from the successful but arduous climb, Weston decides to avoid another meeting with the people of Gamada, moving on by an alternate route.²⁾

What we see in this passage is a positivistic rejection of pre-scientific “superstitions” on

the part of Weston. As we would be likely to do today, Weston sees no rational connection between the foot of a stranger touching a mountain and weather patterns. What Weston fails to grasp here, however, in discussing the irrational fears of the Gamada folk, is just how deeply this way of thinking is rooted in Japanese thought concerning mountainous areas. Since ancient times, mountains had been thought to be otherworldly abodes of spirits and *kami* 神, and treated as sacred. Elaborate purification rituals often preceded climbs which were religious in nature, aimed at supplicating mountains deities and insuring that the right amount of water flow down into the farmer's fields. While we might also be unwilling to have our adventures thwarted by such "superstitions," it is rather disappointing that Weston, with all his interest in knowing about the "official" religions, fails to give any thought at all to such a fundamental article of Japanese faith. An understanding of these elements would certainly have given a deeper meaning to Weston's views on nature, which, as we shall see below, are quite religious in nature. He also misses the significance of the notion of the "Spirit of the Mountain," which is quite different than the human figures he sees deified and supplicated at other points, particularly on Ontake-san, as we shall see next.

Weston's most thorough description of mountain religious practices comes in relation to his ascent of Ontake-san 御嶽山 in the Southern Alps. He summarizes the activity of the pilgrims there are follows:

Ontake is a sort of Delphi of Japan, and pale-faced ascetics climb it annually to seek communion with the spirits of deified or canonized heroes who are believed to be more accessible within the precincts of the "august peak" than elsewhere. (*Alps* p. 44)

Weston gives many details concerning the organization of the climbing associations (*kō* 講) which show that he had in fact done some research into their workings. He describes their methods of climbing, the activities of their leaders, the accessories they use, and the manner in which they choose certain representatives to climb and offer prayers for the whole group. He even visited their meetings, and gives a description of the shamanistic practices that went on there. The statement above concerning "deified or canonized heroes" is evidenced with a discussion of the *sendachi* 先立ち Kakumei-gyōja, who was the first ascetic to make the climb using the route Weston uses. While Weston is certainly correct in seeing that the pilgrims

seek communion with such heroes, he misses the fact that it is not simply these deified humans that are being sought out. He misses the significance, for instance, of praying to the Sun,³⁾ and he also offers no explanation of other spirits believed to dwell in the mountains, such as that mentioned above in relation to Kasadake, or the deity of Mount Fuji, Konohanasakuyahime. Communion with deified ascetics is not the only thing that these pilgrims have as their objective, and by describing their activities in such a simplified manner, Weston tends to make their whole project sound rather silly and primitive. While it is hard to criticize Weston for not including better analysis in his work, I cannot help but think that a clear discussion of the notion of *kami* in Japanese thought, for instance, might have added much more depth to his explanation.

Weston does indeed show respect for the diligence of the ascetics. He gives a long discussion, which shall be treated below, of the *misogi* purification ritual which he witnesses one undergoing, and tells of the special T-shaped *geta* often worn by others, noticing not only that these will do much less damage to insect life, in accordance with Buddhist belief, but that “Moreover the obviously greater difficulty of progression from place to place on a one-toothed patten is held to be more meritorious” (*Alps* p. 277).

Weston also shows an interest in the shamanistic practices on Ontake. In *A Wayfarer in Unfamiliar Japan* (1925), there is included a chapter entitled “Ontake-san and its Mountain Mystics.” About half of this chapter is taken directly from the account in *The Japanese Alps* which we just touched upon, but the detailed account of a shamanistic rite that Weston witnessed on the summit is appended. Since this was not included in the earlier work, we might guess that he experienced this on a later climb.⁴⁾ After giving a much more thorough account of the prayer rituals of the pilgrims than we see in *Alps*, particularly of the *mudras* and particular chants they use, Weston tells of a group he finds behind the shrine who are transmitting their prayers through a medium (*nakaza*) to Fukun Reijin, the first mountaineer to climb Ontake from the Hida (present-day Gifu) side. The trancelike state of the medium, wherein he became stiff, shook, and made “unearthly gaspings” and the manner in which the group offered their requests to the spirit through him, are given in detail by Weston, who describes them as “uncanny” and “strange” at times but basically gives no interpretation. He does remark, however, that the spirit’s prediction of cloudy weather was indeed fulfilled by the tremendous thunderstorm that met his party on their descent (*Wayfarer* pp. 146-48).

Weston's interest in shamanistic practices is also seen in his "Notes on the Exorcism of Spirits in Korea" which is added as an appendix to *The Japanese Alps* on account of its similarity to Shintoism. The notes, which were "kindly communicated to the author by E.B. Landis" (*Alps* p. 330), are arranged in the form of a simple anthropological study and give a description of the exorcism ceremony and a detailed list of the different kinds of spirits that are exorcised.

Weston's Christianity and Vision of Nature

Most of Weston's work-related activities in Japan were directed towards the British community there, and it seems he was little involved in evangelism and the direct attempt at converting Japanese to Christianity. From 1888-95, he was a Pastor briefly in Kumamoto and then at St. Andrew's Church in Kobe, also working with the CMS Theological School and the Seaman's mission there (*Ion* p. 95). As Pastor of St. Andrews in Yokohama from 1902-05, it seems that Weston was more involved with Japanese parishioners, and probably carried on some evangelistic activities, which did not seem to meet with much success. On his third and last stay in the country, Weston was back ministering to the needs of an English congregation, again in Yokohama, but this time at Christ Church (*Ion* pp. 96-7).

While we cannot justifiably claim that the conversion of Japanese to his faith was not one reason for Weston's traveling to that country, it seems safe to say that it was not the major reason. As shown here, most of his time was indeed spent tending to his British flock. We certainly do not see Weston preaching to the Japanese mountain folk at any point in his two books which chronicle his stays there. While certainly a dedicated Christian and pastor, it might be that a certain universalistic tendency in Weston's thinking took the place of the evangelistic zeal that is so common in most missionaries. It is true that by the late 19th Century such thought, namely that God will reveal himself to different peoples in different ways and at times bring them to a saving knowledge of himself outside of the Christian church as well as within it, was well established in certain Christian quarters. Such a turn in theology was only to be expected among certain enlightened Christians in the light of new scientific knowledge (especially theories of evolution) and critical literary and historical methodology which worked to de-mythologize and relativize the message of the gospels.

In *The Japanese Alps*, we see two passages in particular which seem to express such a

theology. The first comes in the main text, where after descending from the summit of Ontake-san, Weston watches in admiration as a mountain ascetic purifies himself under the Ōtake waterfall below the Nakagoya hut:

As we stood watching the play of light and shadow on the glancing waters, a solitary pilgrim entered the glen. Stripping entirely naked, he took his stand under the icy fall, and crossing his hands on his breast, broke out into an almost agonizing series of prayers for cleansing from sin and for purity of soul. (*Alps* p. 285)

Weston comes to understand that according to Japanese belief, prayers made at the shrine on the summit would be useless unless the pilgrim had attained the requisite purity of body and soul. He concludes that this pilgrim was indeed in real earnest (*Alps* p. 286), and is reminded of the words of King David from the Psalms:

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place?
He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart. Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. (Psalms 24:3-4, *Alps* p. 286)

He then continues, quoting Acts 10:35, “May it not be of such as he that the great Apostle once wrote, “In every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him?” (*Alps* p. 286). It seems that Weston saw no need to bring into the Christian fold such a man, who understood, as David did, the need for a pure body and soul before standing in supplication upon sacred ground. The implications here are that whatever form of deity the Japanese call out to in their prayers, it is indeed the one universal God who hears their prayers, and accepts them. It would also follow from such a theology that the divinities of the Shinto and Buddhist pantheons can be understood as different revelations of the one true God, working in different cultures and different historical periods in different ways.

It is ironic that each of these verses quoted above, when read in context, rather than being universalist, makes a rather exclusivist claim. For example, in the quote from Psalms, had Weston quoted the verse in full he would have given a very different meaning. David, speaking of he who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord, states:

He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
 Who does not lift up his soul to an idol
 or swear by what is false. (Psalm 24:4 New International Version)

It is quite certain that the type of deities to whom the ascetic Weston saw was about to pray would be considered "idols" by David, as well as by most orthodox Christians in Weston's time. Likewise, in Acts 10:35, the Apostle Peter, who is speaking, is arguing that gentiles as well as Jews should be accepted into the church *as Christians*. He is by no means saying that all spiritually-inclined people are accepted by God even if they do not believe the gospel, but that all are invited to receive the gospel and *then* be accepted by God. It would be rash to conclude that Weston was ignorant of the context of these verses? a trained pastor would very likely know the passages well, and if his memory failed him, would be sure to check his Bible to make sure he had them right. What we are seeing is more likely a conscious decision to exclude certain passages in order to find a biblical justification for the dedicated spirituality that Weston sees in this man.

In a later chapter in *The Japan Alps*, Weston goes about explaining the religious exercises he described seeing on the mountain. Here he relates his experience of a séance witnessed at the meeting of one pilgrim club in Osaka. The séance itself differs little from that described above, but some of Weston's remarks concerning these activities are interesting. In response to those Christians who, he predicts, will either find an inquiry into such practices a waste of time, or who might hold that Christians should have nothing to do with such things, he writes, quoting from Bishop Wescott's "The Gospel of Life,"

"even the rudest demon worship contains the germ of this feeling by which the worshipper seeks to be at one with some power which is adverse to him. It is a witness to something in man by which he is naturally constituted to feel after a harmonious fellowship with all that of which he is conscious? with the unseen and with the finite no less than with the seen and the material." (Alps p. 297)

Here again, while not going so far as to state that this is actually one path to God, Weston shows respect for the folk-religious faith from a rather cultural-relativistic viewpoint.

In Weston's last book on the country, *Japan* (1926), which Ion sees as the "most Christian" of Weston's works, we do see many more references to his religion than in his earlier writings. The references here, though, often point to what might be termed a Social Gospel, as he remarks upon the influence of Christian ideas upon labor movements, welfare projects, education, and the rising status of women in Japan (Ion p. 106). While Weston was very traditional and politically conservative, as seen, for example, in his rejection of communistic "Russian ideas" upon labor movements (Ion p. 106), he seemed to desire to see Japan Christianized not so much in order to save the souls of the Japanese and to replace their own native religions, but to bring modern political freedoms and social welfare to the country. While this does reveal a certain Euro-centrism, it is not a metaphysical one that attempts to do away with "pagan" thought, and indeed we might see it as being rooted more in a belief in the superiority of European social systems than in the Christian teachings per se.

Reading through the earlier works, I cannot help but get the feeling that Weston's faith approached panentheism, wherein God, though separate from his creation, can be found everywhere within it. Such a faith is wholly consistent with the love of nature possessed by the man who spent much of his life in the mountains, enjoying natural beauty and feeling awe at its power. Indeed, Weston's descriptions of and ruminations upon his natural surroundings often recall the Romantic ideas of men like Coleridge and Shelley, as well as Lord Byron and John Ruskin, both of whom Weston quotes. The idea of the beauty and wonder of creation leading man's thoughts to God is most vividly expressed by Weston atop Mount Fuji, where he quotes from Milton:

All is cold and still as the grave. It is soon a positive relief to turn from all this whiteness to let the eye rest on the vast expanse of country clad in all the tender freshness and warmth of colour of its young spring life. The devices of man are remote enough not to disturb, and it is good to be for a while in the pure clear atmosphere of a region where

"Beyond earth's voices there is peace."

Grandly full of meaning come the words of Milton's great hymn of praise:--

"These are thy glorious works, Parent of Good,

Almighty. Thine this universal frame

Thus wondrous fair! Thyself how wondrous then!

Unspeakable! Who sittest above these heavens,
 To us invisible, or dimly seen,
 In these Thy lowest works? yet these declare
 Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine."

Paradise Lost, Bk. V. (*Japanese Alps* p. 214)

Indeed, it is love of nature that Weston sees as one of the most commendable characteristics of the Japanese people. In writing of their "National Character" in 1925, Weston states,

No other race with which we are acquainted have the love of nature so strongly inborn and so widespread in them. It pervades their whole life, and colours the entire range of their religion, art, and poetry, as well as of their daily pursuits and their holiday recreations. (*Wayfarer* p. 10)

He goes on to consider the influence of Buddhism as well as Chinese art and poetry on this love of nature, and gives several examples of its manifestations in poetry and everyday life. He sees Shinto as "a universal veneration of ancestors" as well as "a worship of all the powers of nature, in which fear and awe are intermingled" (*Wayfarer* p. 11). This worship is directed at the sun, the sea, daily food and the implements of its preparation, and also, of course, at mountain peaks and rushing rivers. Nature worship seems to him a very appropriate response to all the unknowable forces to which the Japanese have had to adapt: typhoons, earthquakes, volcanoes, fires, etc. Thus he certainly sees such a faith justified geographically and historically, but I would look deeper to say that Weston also found a positive good here. He is not merely making excuses for the Japanese penchant to avoid or disbelieve Christianity. Here, I think, we find the respectful gaze of a European lover of nature, one who might just think that his religion has not paid enough attention to the real significance of the natural world. Certainly the British Romantic movement had already begun to come to grips with this problem, starting roughly one century before Weston. Here, in the figure of a pastor roaming awe-struck through the mountains of Japan, we see what begins to look like a few cross-cultural steps aimed at giving nature its proper place in a missionary Christian theology.

Conclusion

These have merely been some notes on the role of religion in Walter Weston's writings. More certainly needs to be done before anything like a real theology might be formed from these scattered passages. What makes Weston interesting in this sense is not only his genuine interest in Japanese religion, particularly the mountain religion that so few Westerners of his time saw, but the manner in which this interest coincides both with Weston's Christian faith and with his love of nature, particularly of mountains. While being quite positivistic in his rejection of simple folk "superstitions," Weston was particularly attracted to the nature worship which has always been a major part of Shinto, and he seems to have found a new kind of spirituality, a new way of understanding nature as manifested in mountains, and maybe of God as manifested in nature, through his observations of Japanese pilgrims. Weston never completely spelled out this spirituality in his writings, but we can see its traces throughout them.

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- 1) Although it must be noted that discovery of the beliefs of mountain-dwelling Japanese is one of the points in his work that Weston himself thought unique, as stated in his preface: "... whilst the primitive customs and superstitions of the hospitable peasants with whom I have had the privilege of much pleasant intercourse, are in their way scarcely less remarkable" (*Mountaineering*, pp. vii-viii).
- 2) Similarly, Weston seems amused by the superstitions which led natives to encourage him to postpone his climb of Mount Fuji in an improper season. He tells of reading his own obituary when he ends up descending by an alternate route. One man commented to Weston's companion that "it was but a punishment from the goddess of the mountain, and the foreigners thoroughly deserved their fate for their irreverence in presuming to climb the peak before it was duly "opened"" (*Alps* p. 218). This brought a great laugh to the climbers. He also discusses the fate of a climber who perished after bathing in a lake near the summit of Ontake. The natives held that the man was struck down by the deity of the mountain for not undergoing sufficient purification before entering the water (*Alps* p. 279). In *Alps*, Weston merely tells the story, but in the later *A Wayfarer in Unfamiliar Japan*, he goes on to reveal that his scientific

explanation of why the man might have perished "was received with incredulity" (*Wayfarer* p. 144).

- 3) Brief mention of this is made in *Wayfarer*, pp. 144-5, although no explanation is given.
- 4) An almost identical description of the practices of a medium is given, as something like an appendix, in *The Japanese Alps*. At that time, however, Weston reports about a regular meeting of the climbing group in their home town, not on the mountain. The rituals are nearly the same, however (*Alps* pp. 308-317).