of the fertility of nature. Myth explained it as a celebration of the capture of Kore by Plouton.@@l The Maenads (“ mad ones”) or Bacchae, the women attendants of Dionysus, with their snake-accompaniments, are only one of the various snake-features associated with the cult of a deity who was also a god of healing. The symbol of the Bacchic orgies was a consecrated serpent, and the snakes kept in the sacred cistae of the cult of Dionysus find a parallel among the sect of the Ophites where, at the sacramental rites, bread was offered to the living serpent and afterwards distributed among the worshippers.@@2 Other develop­ments may be illustrated from the cult of Aesculapius, who seems to have been merely a deified ancestor, like the Egyptian Imhotep (beIow) or the interesting Indian healer Sokha Bāba (Crooke i. 147, ii. 122). Introduced into Athens about 421 B.c., Aesculapius inherited the older local cult of the serpent “ protector ” Amynos (Harrison, 346 seq.). In Laodicea he apparently replaced an older deity with serpent attributes.@@3 In Egypt, he superseded the sage Imhotep at Memphis, and at the temple sacred to Aesculapius and Hygieia at Ptolemais the money-box has been found with the upper part in the form of a great snake.@@4 Finally among the Phoenicians he was identified with Eshmun, an earlier god of healing, who in turn was already closely asso­ciated with Dionysus and with Caelestis-Astarte.@@5

For the retention of older cults under a new name, Mahom- medanism supplies several examples, as when a forest-serpent of India receives a Mahommedan name (Oldham 128). But sometimes there is a contest between the new cult and the old. Thus Apollo has to fight the oracle serpent of Gaia, and it has been observed that where

Apollo prevailed in Greek religion the serpent became a monster to be slain.@@6 At Thebes—the Thebans were Serpentigenae— Apollo took the place of Cadmus, who, after killing the dragon which guarded a well and freeing the district, had ended by being turned into a serpent. This looks like the assumption of indigenous traits by a foreigner—cf. Aesculapius (§ 13)—much in the same way as Hercules has contests with serpents and dragons, becomes the patron of medicinal springs, and by marrying the serpent Echidna was the ancestor of the snake- worshipping Scythians.@@7 But an ethnological tradition appears when Phorbas killed the serpent Ophiusa, freed Rhodes of snakes and obtained supremacy, or when Cychreus slew the dragon of Salamis and took the kingdom.@@8 A story told by Herodotus (i. 78) admirably shows how the serpent as a child of earth was

a type of indigenous peoples, and there was a tendency to represent the earlier conquered races as monsters and demons, though not necessarily unskilled *(e.g.* the Cretan Kourētes), or to depict the conquest of barbarians as the overthrow of serpents or serpent-like beings.@@9 This obviously complicates the investigation of *serpent-cults.* Moreover, the serpent or dragon may have an opponent like the eagle (see Goblet d’Alviella, 17), or a cosmical antagonist—the lightning, thunder or rain-god. Indra, the rain-god, slew with a thunderbolt Ahi or Vitra, who kept back the waters (Oldham, 32 sqq.); the thunder-god of the Iroquois killed the subterranean serpent which fed on human flesh (Hartland iii. 151).@@10 Or the victor is the sun: the Egyptian sun-god Re had his fire-spitting serpent to oppose his enemies, of which one was the cloud and storm serpent Apophis, while in Greek myth the sanctuary of Helios (the sun) sheltered the young Orpheus from the snake.

It is impossible to trace a safe path through the complicated aetiological myths, the fragments of reshaped legend and tradition, or the adjustment of rival theologies. It remains to observe the overthrow or supersession of the serpent in Christian lands. At Axum in Abyssinia, where worship was divided between the serpent and the Mosaic Law, it is said that the great dragon was burst asunder by the prayers of Christian saints (c. a.p. 340; Fergusson, 35). At the Phrygian Hierapolis the serpent Echidna was expelled by the Apostles Philip and John.@@11 France had its traditions of the destruction of serpents by the early missionaries (Deane, 283 seq.), and the memory possibly survived at Luchon in the Pyrenees, where the clergy and people celebrated the eve of St John by burning live serpents.@@12 Christian saints have also stepped into the shoes of earlier serpent-slayers, white, in the stories of “St George and the Dragon ” type, the victory of the pious over the enemy of mankind has often been treated as a literal conflict with dragons, thus introducing a new and confusing element into the subject. This purely secondary aspect of the serpent as the devil cannot be noticed here.@@13 At Rouen the celebration of St Romain seems to preserve a recollection of human sacrifice to a serpent-demon which was primarily sup­pressed by a pagan hero, and at Metz, where St Clement is celebrated as the conqueror of a dragon, its image (formerly kept in the cathedral) was taken round the streets at the annual festival and received offerings of food.@@14 Most remarkable of all, at Cocullo in the Abruzzi mountains on the border of the old territory of the Marsi snake-men (see § 8), the serpent-deity has a lineal descendant in the shape of St Domenico of Foligno (a.d. 950-1031). The shrine is famous for its cures, and when the saint has his serpent-festival on the first Thursday in May, Serpari or serpent-men carry coils of live reptiles in procession before his image, which in turn is hung with serpents of all sizes. The rites, we may suppose, have become modified and more orthodox, hut none the less they are a valuable testimony to the persistence of the cult among people who still claim power over serpents and immunity from their bite, and who live hard by the home of the ancient tribe which ascribed its origin to the son of Circe.@@15 One may recall the old cult of Sabazios where

@@@1 Harrison, 109 seq., 120 sqq., and art. THESMOPHORIA. The rites included the “ pursuit," possibly derived from the intentional opportunity of escape allowed the victim. Plouton, also associated with Proserpine, the great mother-goddess, was patron of the chasms with mephitic vapours in the valley of the Maeander (see Frazer, *Adonis,* 170 sqq.).

@@@2 A Greek vase shows snake-bodied nymphs at the grape-harvest (Harrison 259 seq.), and in Egypt the harvest goddess Rannut had snake-form (F. Petrie, *Relig. of Ancient Egypt,* 1906, p. 26). The serpent-god revered by Taxilus (king of Taxila), which was seen by Alexander the Great on his way to India, was identified by Greek writers with Dionysus or Bacchus. For the serpent in the cult of Sabazius, see Harrison, *Prol.* 418, 535. A kind of sacramental communion with a snake is found among a Punjab snake-tribe (Frazer, *Golden Bough,* ii. 441 seq. ; *Punjab Notes and Queries,* ii. 91).

@@@3 For this and other Phrygian evidence, see W. M. Ramsay, *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia,* i. 52, 94, 104.

*@@@4 Äg. Zeit.* xl. 140 seq. Aelian *(De anim.* xvi. 36) mentions a huge serpent at the temple dedicated to Aesculapius. Serapis (Osiris- Apis) who came to acquire the attributes of Aesculapius and of Pluto, god of the dead, sometimes had serpent-form, and even in the reign of Constantine popular belief connected the rise of the Nile with his agency (Frazer, *Adonis,* 398).

@@@5 See on this branch of the subject, W. W. G. Baudissin, *Zeit.* d. *morgenl. Gesell.* lix. (1905), 459-522, and *Orient. Stud. Theodor Nōldeke* (ed. Bezold, 1906), ii. 729 sqq.

@@@6 Harrison, *Journ. Hell. Stud.* xix. 223, cf. *Proleg.* 392; and E. Rohde, *Psyche,* i. 133 seq.

@@@7 Herod, iv. 9; for Hercules and healing waters, see Frazer, *Adonis,* 174 seq.; cf. above, § 5. Here arises the question of the tendency to attribute to outside aid the introduction of culture (cf. § 2), and even of law (F. Pollock, ed. of Maine’s *Ancient Law,* 1907, p. 19).

@@@8 Cf. the similar view of serpent-conflicts in Persian tradition (Fergusson, 44 seq.), and the story of the colonization of Cambodia, where the new-comer marries the dragon-king’s daughter *(ib.* 53).

@@@9 Cf. the serpent-pillars found in the old Roman provinces of Europe (Frazer, *Pausanias,* ii. 49, v. 478 seq.). For the Kourêtes, the fish and serpent-like peoples struck down by Zeus or Apollo, see Harrison, *Annual of Brit. School at Athens,* xv. 308 sqq.

@@@10 In popular Macedonian lore the lightning or thunder is the enemy of the serpent-dragon (G. F. Abbott, *Macedonian Folklore,* 261 ; cf. also Schwartz, 150 sqq., W. R. Smith, 175, n. 1 ; Winternitz, 45).

@@@11 W. M. Ramsay, *op. cit.* i. 86 seq.; cf. Gutschmid, *Rhein. Mus.* (1864), pp. 398 sqq.

@@@12 Fergusson, p. 29, n. *2* (see, however, Frazer, *Golden Bough,* iii. 323 seq.). For analogous traditions, see Fergusson, 32.

@@@13 See Antichrist; Devil; Dragon.

@@@14 See further Frazer, *Kingship,* 184-192; Schwartz, 73 seq.; Hocker, *Deutscher Volksglaube* (Göttingen, 1853), p. 231.. Similarly, food is offered to the snake of dough in the Punjab festival already mentioned (note 2 above).

@@@15 The festival is described (as seen in 1906) by Marian C. Harrison, *Folklore,* xviii. (1907), 187 sqq. A combination of a cult of the house-snake with that of the (Christian) saint of the master of the house is said to prevail in modern Greece (J. C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Religion,* 1910, p. 260).