

to his foster (mother) Malmuru (Ir. Maelmuire), daughter of Tufgal (Ir. Dubhgall), whom Athisl had to wife." To this the rune writer adds: "It is better to leave a good foster-son than a bad son."¹ Crosses were also erected by Mail Brikti (Ir. Mael Brigde), son of Athakan (Ir. Aedhacan) the smith;² by Thorleifr Hnakki in remembrance of his son Fiak (Ir. Fiacca);³ and by an unknown Norseman to the memory of his wife Murkialu (Ir. Muirgheal).⁴ Another cross-slab commemorates Athmiul (? Ir. Cathmaoil), wife of Truian (*i.e.*, the Pictish name *Druian*), son of Tufkal,⁵ while still another stone contains a fragment of a prayer to Christ, and the Irish saints, Malaki (Malachy), Bathrik (Patrick), and Athanman (Adamnan).⁶

The advance of Christianity during the tenth century may be attributed to a large extent to the prevalence of the practice known as *prime-signing* or marking with the sign of the cross. According to *Eyrbyggja Saga* (ch. 50), this was "a common custom among merchants and mercenary soldiers in Christian armies, because those men who were 'prime-signed' could associate with Christians as well as heathens, while retaining that faith which they liked best." Nearly all the Norse kings who reigned in Dublin during this century seem to have accepted Christianity. When Gothfrith plundered Armagh in 919 "he spared the church and the houses of prayer, with their company of culdees (*ceile-de*) and the sick."⁷ We may assume

¹ *Ib.*, pp. 86-95, 195-199.

² *Ib.*, pp. 150-153.

³ *Ib.*, pp. 203-205.

⁴ *Ib.*, pp. 209-213.

⁵ *Ib.*, p. 169.

⁶ *Ib.*, pp. 212-213.

⁷ *Annals of Ulster*, A.D. 919. The same source in recording Gothfrith's death (A.D. 933) speaks of him as "the most cruel of the Norsemen."