

CORRESPONDENCE

An intriguing question has come to us from the Rev. Luigi Fossati, S.D.B. His question concerns Robert de Clari's use of the term '*desvenres*', prevalently translated 'every Friday'. Several years ago, a different translation was published, i.e., 'on each side'; so that the phrase read: "... the Shroud in which Our Lord was wrapped; on each side, the figure appeared as if standing ..." (su ciascuno dei lati appariva come se fosse in piedi, sicche si poteva vedere bene la figura di N.S.)

To confirm or confute this interpretation, Don Fossati requested the aid of Prof. Bellone of the University of Turin, who, on consulting Tobler-Lommatzsch, found that *desvenres* as spelled does not exist, however other words of similar spelling seemed to suggest that 'on each side' might be correct.

For a definitive explanation of the unlisted '*desvenres*' and for a positive pronouncement of its true meaning, the Don appeals to Dr. Dembowski, specialist in Old French and analyst of Robert de Clari's text. (See his article, *Sindon in the Old French Chronicle of Robert de Clari*, in SHROUD SPECTRUM #2, pg. 13)

Sharing with Don Fossati and all sindonologists the desire for exact information, we publish Dr. Dembowski's exposition, heartily thanking him for his generous response.

A PROPOS OF 'CASCUNS DES VENRES'
IN ROBERT DE CLARI

I wish to thank Don Luigi Fossati, S.D.B., of the Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia for having communicated to me through the good services of Mrs. Crispino, his queries concerning the meaning of the form *des venres* in Robert de Clari's phrase (sydoines) *qui cascuns des venres se drechoit tous drois* (see SHROUD SPECTRUM #2, pg. 15). Don Fossati would like to know if *cascuns des venres* could mean *su ciascuno dei lati* (on both sides). Don Fossati wrote to Prof. Bellone, of the University of Turin, asking if this translation could be verified. Prof. Bellone responded saying that *desvenres* does not exist in Toblar-Lommatzsch, *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch*, but suggests that *des venres* (or *desvenres*) could be read *desvers* in the meaning similar to Modern French *revers*.

As we can see from the only MS extant, *des venres* is written out in all letters; the scribe did not mark *n* by a tilde over *e*. It would require a radical correction from *des venres* into *des vers* in an otherwise quite carefully transcribed text ("carefully" measured by the scribal standards of 1300). But even if the emendation were philologically justifiable, the reading *cascuns des vers* (or *cascuns desvers*) would not be satisfactory. I, for one, do not know of any other Old French use in which the adverbial phrase *des vers*, *de vers*, *devers* could correspond to the meaning 'on both sides'.

What our text gives is not at all a real crux. The phrase *cascuns des venres* could, of course, be read *cascuns desvenres* (the division of what we consider as separate words was treated with a great deal of freedom by the scribes of circa 1300). *Des venres* is unique in our text, but Robert used the form *desvenres* elsewhere: *Après avint par un*

devenres (Afterwards it came about on a Friday) LXX,1. He also used the parallel *deluns*: *Quant the vint le deluns par matin* (When it came to Monday morning) LXXIV,4; and *demars*: *et si le portoient cascun demars* (and they carried it every Tuesday). The forms *deluns*, *demars*, *devenres*, etc., are normal dialectal weekday names well known in the 12th, 13th and 14th-century Picard, Walloon, Hainaut and Flanders territory. These forms are based on the Latin order *dies lunae*, *dies Martis*, etc., whereas the proper Francian *lundi*, *mardi*, etc. go back to *lunae dies*, *Martis dies*, etc. word order. Northern dialects (Robert de Clari wrote in his native Picard) have thus *diluns* (*deluns*), *dimars* (*demars*), *divenres* (*devenres*), all three found in Robert de Clari, as well as *dimerces* (*demerces*) *demierques*, etc. for 'Wednesday' and *dioes*, *deioes*, etc. for 'Thursday'.

Let us concentrate on the Northern term for 'Friday'. The most frequently encountered form is *deven(d)res*, rather than the etymologically more "correct" *diven(d)res*. The initial *di-* has weakened into *de-*, probably under the influence of the very frequent prefix *de(s)-*. Tobler-Lommatzsch, vol. 2, column 1963-64 offers several examples of *divenres* and *deven(d)res*. See also Walther von Wartburg, *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 14, p. 270.

In our form *cascun des venres*, the scribe made two understandable and trivial errors. He added the final *-s* to the adjective *cascun* (Modern French *chaque*), making it either a singular (subject case) or a plural (object case) — see the correct singular object case in the *cascun demars* cited above. The first *-s* led the scribe "naturally" to the second *-s* in *des*. In the Chronique of Robert de Clari, the confusion between the cases (i.e., the absence or the presence of *-s*) is not very common, but neither is it unknown. Since this confusion was frequent in circa 1300 (when our MS was copied), modern editors do not, as a rule, emend the errors stemming from this confusion.

We must conclude that *cascuns des venres* stands for *cascun devenres* and as such was correctly translated by McNeal and Stone as 'every Friday', by Charlot as '*tous les vendredis*', and by Patrone as '*ogni venerdi*'. From the philological point of view, no other interpretation is, I believe, reasonably probable.

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