The so-called “Collection of Nicholas of Bar” occupies a prominent place in Palémon Glorieux’s repertory of quodlibetal questions. The 170 questions that it contains were first listed under the name of Nicholas in the 1925 volume, before being redistributed, in the second volume published in 1935, amongst the eighteen different authors involved in it. In the meantime, an article published in the third volume of the *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* in 1928 had justified the respective ascription of the questions to these little-known late thirteenth-century theologians. Before discussing the interpretation he gave of this collection, one should recall the pioneering role that Glorieux played in the exploration of scholastic sources. Teaching at the time in Lille, Glorieux was connected with the French Dominican school led by Pierre Mandonnet and Marie-Dominique Chenu, based a few kilometers away at “Le Saulchoir,” near Tournai, and whose “Bibliothèque thomiste” hosted the two volumes of *La littérature quodlibétique*. In those years, as the editorial program of the *Archives* made clear, the priority was given to text editions and research based on first-hand knowledge of unpublished materials. Taking his part in these efforts to tackle the mass of unexplored documentation pertaining to medieval scholasticism, Glorieux was also pursuing, so to speak, a particular hobby-horse, reconstructing the succession of masters occupying the chairs of theology within the University of Paris. For that purpose,

---

he was searching to associate all University exercises he could come across—be they sermons or quodlibetal disputes—with precise dates, which would then serve as anchors for the global chronology of the theology faculty he was trying to construct. With all the due respect one may have for his colossal achievements, it is fair to recall that many of his conclusions were premature.

This eagerness for precise dates is evident in his approach to Nicholas of Bar’s collection. To quote Glorieux’s own words: “The first impression one gets by reading this list [of the various masters’ names found in the margins] is that one is confronted with *quodlibeta* that must have followed one another on a regular basis from year to year.” The rest of the demonstration serves only as a confirmation of this first impression, to which no objection is raised in the course of the article. The conclusions reached on the basis of that “first impression” have been generally accepted by scholars dealing with this material and have not been questioned so far. However, the very statement of this result sounds rather unlikely: fragments of twenty-nine different quodlibetal series would have been reproduced in a strictly chronological order, over a period of twenty years, running from 1285 to 1304. It suffices to add that these texts were copied by the same hand in only one go for one to understand that a strict chronological ordering of the *quodlibeta* is highly implausible. It would require that the scribe himself would have shared Glorieux’s obsession with the chronology of the theology faculty.

During the interwar years, another close associate of the Saulchoir, a Dominican friar himself although not residing at the convent, was Jean Destrez. His masterpiece on the diffusion of university manuscripts through the *pecia* system was published in 1935, the same year

---


5 Glorieux, “Notices,” p. 203–4: “La première impression que l’on ressent à la lecture de cette liste… est qu’on se trouve en présence… de quodlibets qui durent se succéder assez régulièrement, sans doute d’année en année… La collection aurait été faite au fur et à mesure des soutenances annuelles, et suivant leur succession chronologique… Il semble parfaitement légitime de la considérer comme s’étendant de façon régulière sur une assez longue suite d’années.”

6 Through confusion caused by the certitude displayed by Glorieux, some of his readers were misled into thinking that the *quodlibeta* were actually dated in the manuscript itself. Such is the case of L. Cova, “Alcune questioni di Simone di Lens sul peccato originale,” *AFH* 73 (1980), p. 475, n. 2.