The Great Schism stirred the ambition and ingenuity of the European clergy and nobility as it defied solution over almost 40 years. Scholars have documented the crucial contributions of major ecclesiastics such as Simon de Cramaud, Pierre d’Ailly, and Jean Gerson, as well as those of aristocrats on both sides of the Channel: the royal dukes Philip of Burgundy, Jean of Berry, Louis of Orléans, and John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster.1 Outside this circle labored hundreds of lesser-known figures, charged with tasks ranging from diplomatic missions to legistic research, who provided essential support to the major players and even tried their hand occasionally at influencing policy themselves. Such a one was Honorat Bovet, a Benedictine monk and prior of Selonnet in Provence, legist, diplomat, and author. Bovet’s earliest work, the *Arbre des batailles* of 1389, earned him posthumous renown; in this work and

1 I wish to acknowledge Hélène Millet, distinguished colleague and generous collaborator, for many insights crucial to the arguments made here. Translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

in two other literary texts, he offers trenchant commentary on the the Schism at crucial moments in the last decade of the 14th century, as the court of France and the Gallican church struggled with the recalcitrance of popes in Avignon and Rome. Every episode in Bovet’s adult life was shaped, usually for the worse, by some event inspired by the divide in the papacy, and his career itself indeed parallels the course of the Schism. His extant works, sincere attempts to steer western policy at a crucial moment, engage the central issues of the day with admirable rigor and courage. This chapter will concern itself with Bovet’s role in Schism-related issues, especially those concerning the role of the French crown and the University of Paris in the three Paris councils that led to the French church’s withdrawal of obedience in the summer of 1398.

The career of Honorat Bovet has been well detailed elsewhere. He was born about 1350 in the viscounty of Valernes near Sisteron in the modern department of Alpes de Haute-Provence. His family was of the lesser nobility and was able to cover the costs of his education. One of the first documentary references to him occurs in a papal letter of 1368 sent from Rome: he may well have accompanied Pope Urban V, a fellow Benedictine and a great benefactor of the University of Montpellier where Bovet first studied, on his abortive journey there. Bovet had most likely entered the order not long before this time and by 1371 had been appointed prior at Selonnet in the diocese of Embrun. By this time he was already “bachelier en décret” and would in time add a license and a doctorate in decrees to his credentials. Bovet’s experience with the law is the most significant element in his intellectual background: it provided him with several important political opportunities and is pervasive both as theme and method in his literary productions.

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3 The letter is dated 20 February 1368; Michel and Anne-Marie Hayez, Urbain V (1362–1370): Lettres communes (analysées d’après les registres dits d’Avignon et du Vatican), vol. 7 (Rome, 1981), n° 22864. Urban reached Rome on 16 October 1367; under pressure from the Italians and from the French cardinals, he returned to Avignon on 24 September 1370, dying three months later. He was succeeded, of course, by Gregory XI, whose death after his own return to Rome eight years later triggered the Schism. In his Somnium super materia scismatis of 1394, Bovet’s narrator claims to have been in Rome during Urban V’s brief sojourn there (Ivor Arnold, ed., L’apparicion Maistre Jehan de Meun et le somnium super materia scismatis (Paris: 1926), p. 76).