Rising above the modern city from its vantage point on the central rocky hill, the cathedral of Notre Dame du Puy was the heart of the medieval bishopric-county of the Velay. It was the home cathedral of two of the most important participants of the First Crusade – Adhémar of Monteil, bishop of Le Puy and papal legate, and Raymond of Aguilers, canon of the cathedral of Le Puy and author of the most spiritually dynamic eyewitness account of the First Crusade.1 The Liber of Raymond of Aguilers is a particularly important chronicle for the First Crusade because of its specific eschatological focus, typological framework and extremely early date.2 As multiple articles in the recent volume Writing the Early Crusades show, the background of the authors of crusade chronicles, both in terms of physical place and regional identity, has become a major area of analysis.3 In the eleventh century, Le Puy was home to a rich cathedral library, which housed a complete, non-standardized Carolingian Bible, now Paris, BNF lat. 4 (1–2). In constructing his Liber, Raymond was

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1 Raymond of Aguilers is identified in the prologue-letter of his chronicle as “Raimundus canonicus Podiensis”, both in the St. Victor Codex and the alternative manuscript tradition. Paris, BNF lat. 14378 f. 160r and Paris, BNF lat. 551A f. 3r.


relying not only on his deep knowledge of the Bible but on the apocalyptic texts contained in the cathedral library. Reading the Liber of Raymond of Aguilers in the context of the texts held in the cathedral leads to the realization that Raymond was a much better-educated narrator than previous scholarship has led us to believe. What I would argue is that the richness of non-biblical apocalyptic sources held within the library of Le Puy, combined with an extra apocryphal biblical passage in the Le Puy Bible, deeply influenced the way Raymond viewed the world and created a mentalité primed for eschatological narrative.

In their introduction to the translation of the Liber of Raymond of Aguilers, John Hugh Hill and Laurita L. Hill comment that “the chaplain was, as he honestly confesses, a simple churchman who knew little more than his service books and religious matters pertaining to his office. Whatever classical allusions appear in his work are usually derived from church ritual.” This dismissive assessment of Raymond’s education has become the standard view of him and his chronicle. The Liber is usually studied with an eye toward the Holy Lance of Antioch, whose discovery Raymond witnessed and whose validity he championed, though there have been studies of other aspects of his work. Alphandéry mentioned his extensive use of biblical quotation in the 1920s, and in recent years, aspects of his exploration of vengeance, martyrdom,

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