Hugh Capet (1st June) and his son Robert (25th December). Such was the power of Adalbero and Gerbert in those days that it was said their influence alone sufficed to make and unmake kings. The archbishop died on the 23rd of January 989, having, according to his secretary’s account, designated Gerbert his successor. Notwithstanding this, the influence of the empress Theophana, mother of Otto III., secured the appointment for Arnulf, a bastard son of Lothair. The new prelate took the oath of fealty to Hugh Capet and persuaded Gerbert to remain with him. When Charles of Lorraine, Arnulf’s uncle, and the son of Louis IV. D'Outremer, surprised Reims in the autumn of the same year, Gerbert fell into his hands and for a time continued to serve Arnulf, who had gone over to his uncle’s side. He had, however, returned to his allegiance to the house of Capet before the fall of Laon placed both Arnulf and Charles at the mercy of the French king (March 991). Then followed the council of St Basle, near Reims, at which Arnulf confessed his treason and was degraded from his office (17th June 991). In return for his services Gerbert was elected to succeed the deposed bishop.

The episcopate of the new metropolitan was marked by a vigour and activity that were felt not merely in his own diocese, but as far as Tours, Orleans and Paris. Meanwhile the friends of Arnulf appealed to Rome, and a papal legate was sent to investigate the question. As yet Hugh Capet maintained the cause of his nominee and forbade the prelates of his kingdom to be present at the council of Mouzon, near Sedan (June 2, 995). Notwithstanding this prohibition Gerbert appeared in his own behalf. Council seems to have followed council, but with uncertain results. At last Hugh Capet died in 996, and, shortly after, his son Robert married Bertha, the widow of Odo, count of Blois. The pope condemned this marriage as adulterous; and Abbo of Fleury, who visited Rome shortly after Gregory V.’s accession, is said to have procured the restoration of Arnulf at the new pontiff’s demand. We may surmise that Gerbert left France towards the end of 995, as he was present at Otto III.’s coronation at Rome on the 21st of May 996. Somewhat later he became Otto’s instructor in arithmetic, and had been appointed archbishop of Ravenna before May 998. Early in the next year he was elected pope (April 999), and took the title of Silvester II. In this capacity Gerbert showed the same energy that had characterized his former life. He is generally credited with having fostered the splendid vision of a restored empire that now began to fill the imagination of the young emperor, who is said to have confirmed the papal claims to eight counties in the Ancona march. Writing in the name of the desolate church at Jerusalem he sounded the first trumpet-call of the crusades, though almost a century was to pass away before his note was repeated by Peter the Hermit and Urban II.@@1

Nor did Silvester II. confine himself to plans on a large scale. He is also found confirming his old rival Arnulf in the see of Reims; summoning Adalbero or Azelmus of Laon to Rome to answer for his crimes; judging between the archbishop of Mainz and the bishop of Hildesheim; besieging the revolted town of Cesena; flinging the count of Angoulême into prison for an offence against a bishop; confirming the privileges of Fulda abbey; granting charters to bishoprics far away on the Spanish mark; and, on the eastern borders of the empire, erecting Prague as the seat of an archbishopric for the Slavs. More remarkable than all his other acts is his letter to St Stephen, king of Hungary, to whom he sent a golden crown, and whose king­dom he accepted as a fief of the Holy See. It must, however, be remarked that the genuineness of this letter, in which Gerbert to some extent foreshadows the temporal claims of Hildebrand and Innocent III., has been hotly contested, and that the original document has long been lost. All Gerbert’s dreams for the advancement of church and empire were cut short by the death of Otto III., on the 4th of February 1002; and this event was followed a year later by the death of the pope himself, which took place on the 12th of May 1003. His body was buried in the church

of St John Lateran, where his tomb and inscription are still to be seen.

A few words must be devoted to Silvester II. as regards his attitude to the Church of Rome and the learning of his age. He has left us two detailed accounts of the proceedings of the council of St Basle; and, despite his reticence, it is impossible to doubt that he was the moving spirit in Arnulf’s deposition. On the whole it may be said that his position in this question as to the rights of the papal see over foreign metropolitans resembled that of his great predecessor Hincmar, to whose authority he constantly appeals. But he is rather the practised debater who will admit his opponent’s principles for the moment when he sees his way to moulding them to his own purposes, than the philosophical statesman who has formulated a theory from whose terms he will not move. Roughly sketched, his argument is as follows. Rome is indeed to be honoured as the mother of the churches; nor would Gerbert oppose her judgments except in two cases—(1) where she enjoins something that is contrary to the decrees of a universal council, such as that of Nice, or (2) where, after having been once appealed to in a matter of ecclesiastical discipline and having refused to give a plain and speedy decision, she should, at a later date, attempt to call in question the provisions of the metropolitan synod called to remedy the effects of her negligence. The decisions of a Gregory or a Leo the Great, of a Gelasius or an Innocent, prelates of holy life and unequalled wisdom, are accepted by the universal church; for, coming from such men, they cannot but be good. But who could recognize in the cruel and lustful popes of later days—in John XII., or Boniface VII., “ monsters, as they were, of more than human iniquity ”—anything else than “ Anti­christ sitting in the temple of God and showing himself as God ”? Gerbert proceeds to argue that the church councils admitted the right of metropolitan synods to depose unworthy bishops, but contends that, even if an appeal to Rome were necessary, that appeal had been made a year before without effect. This last clause prepares us to find him shifting his position still farther at the council of Causey, where he advances the proposition that John XV. was represented at St Basle by his legate Seguin, archbishop of Sens, and that, owing to this, the decrees of the latter council had received the papal sanction. Far firmer is the tone of his later letter to the same archbishop, where he contends from historical evidence that the papal judgment is not infallible, and encourages his brother prelate not to fear excommunication in a righteous cause, for it is not in the power even of the successor of Peter “ to separate an innocent priest from the love of Christ.”

Besides being the most distinguished statesman, Gerbert was also the most accomplished scholar of his age. But in this aspect he is rather to be regarded as the diligent expositor of other men’s views than as an original thinker. Except as regards philosophical and religious speculation, his writings show a range of interest and knowledge quite unparalleled in that generation. His pupil Richer has left us a detailed account of his system of teaching at Reims. So far as the trivium is concerned, his text-books were Victorinus’s translation of Porphyry’s *Isagoge,* Aristotle’s *Categories,* and Cicero’s *Topics* with Manlius’s *Commentaries.* From dialectics he urged his pupils to the study of rhetoric; but, recognizing the necessity of a large vocabulary, he accustomed them to read the Latin poets with care. Virgil, Statius, Terence, Juvenal, Horace, Persius and Lucan are specially named as entering into a course of training which was rendered more stimulating by a free use of open discussion. More remarkable still were his methods of teaching the quadrivium. To assist his lectures on astronomy he constructed elaborate globes of the terrestrial and celestial spheres, on which the course of the planets was marked; for facilitating arithmetical and perhaps geometrical processes he constructed an abacus with twenty-seven divisions and a thousand counters of horn. A younger contemporary speaks of his having made a wonderful clock or sun-dial at Magdeburg ; and we know from his letters that Gerbert was accustomed to ex­change his globes for MSS. of those classical authors that his own library did not contain. More extraordinary still was his knowledge of music—an accomplishment which seems to have been his earliest recommendation to Otto I. Probably he was beyond his age in this science, for we read of Garamnus, his first tutor at Reims, whom he attempted to ground in this subject: “Artis difficultate victus, a musica rejectus est.” Gerbert’s letters contain more than one allusion to organs which he seems to have constructed, and William of Malmesbury has preserved an account of a wonderful musical instrument still to be seen in his days at Reims, which, so far as the English chronicler’s words can be made out, seems to refer to an organ worked by steam. The same historian tells us that Gerbert borrowed from the Arabs (Saraceni) the abacus with ciphers (see Numerals). Perhaps Gerbert’s chief claim to the remembrance of posterity is to be found in the care and expense with which he gathered together MSS. of the classical writers. His love for literature was a passion. In the turmoil of his later life he looked back with regret to his student days; and “ for all his troubles philosophy was his only cure.” Everywhere—at Rome, at Treves, at Moutier-en-Der, at Gerona in Spain, at Barcelona —he had friends or agents to procure him copies of the great Latin writers for Bobbio or Reims. To the abbot of Tours he writes that he is “ labouring assiduously to form a library,” and “ throughout Italy, Germany and Lorraine (Belgica)

@@@1 This letter, even if spurious as now suspected, is found in the 1lth-century Leiden MS., and is therefore anterior to the first crusade.