Writing to survive: A commentary on Sidonius Apollinaris, Letters Book 7, volume 1: The episcopal letters 1-11

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Letter 1

‘Acts of War and Weapons of Faith’

Introduction

1 Overview

- Subject matter and addressee

The war, the bishop, and faith. These are the themes, not only of the opening letter of book 7, but of all of the episcopal letters contained in it, although they vary in approach. It is the year 473 AD. The yearly attacks of the Visigoths on Clermont have just recommenced for a third time. Sidonius’ see is the last Roman stronghold in Central Gaul. Its resistance is as desperate as it is reckless. To give it renewed impetus, Sidonius writes to his friend Mamertus, the influential bishop of Vienne. Some time ago, to counter a panic in his town, Mamertus had introduced the brand new ceremony of the Rogationes there. Sidonius describes the event in vivid colours. Recently he has borrowed this idea for Clermont. The results are promising, he writes. He compliments Mamertus on his strong and exemplary leadership, and thanks him for the Rogations. Yet the resistance in Clermont is in need of even more potent spiritual support. That is why he now begs to be given the skull of his patron saint, Julian. The exceptional dangers of this war can only be countered effectively by the choicest weapons of faith.

The commentary will deal at greater length with the history of the Rogation Days and the impact of the cult of relics in relation to the increasing importance of episcopal leadership in Sidonius’ time. It also analyses the elaborate literary perspective which enhances this opening letter.

- Literary perspective

The literary perspective from which Sidonius has chosen to present the alarming situation in Clermont is that of Lucan’s description, in the first book of Pharsalia, of the capture of Ariminum (modern Rimini) and the panic in Rome after Caesar had crossed the Rubicon. Just as Rimini was the key to native Roman territory, in the same way Clermont is the ill-fated outpost of the empire. Caesar overran Italy; Euric has almost finished doing the same with Southern Gaul. They both threatened and threaten the heart of Roman power and civilization. The panic in Rome as a result of Caesar’s advance was met with all kinds of traditional propitiatory ceremonies; Catholic Clermont clings to the new Rogationes.

- Christianity and Romanitas

With this opening letter on the theme of the Rogations Sidonius strikes the keynote of the episcopal letters he has collected in the important seventh book, which was the final one of the first series. These letters combine the best of contemporary Christian spirituality with traditional Romanitas. Their message is: even if Roman rule in Gaul should founder, Romanitas will survive in its Catholic guise.
2 Date

The letter was written in the spring of 473 AD in Clermont. The year 471 had seen the first skirmishes between Visigoths and the defending army of Clermont. The Visigoths, who already dominated South-Western Gaul, were trying to force a final breakthrough towards the Loire and the Rhône. In 472 the attack was renewed and the town was damaged by fire. The situation was to become graver still in 473, with a more persistent siege. Eventually, the Burgundians helped to overcome the situation; thus in that year the Loire front remained undecided, until at the end of it the Visigoths crossed the Rhône, seized Arles and Marseille, and even made a sally into Italy.

The opening section of this letter indicates that, although it was not the first or second time that the Visigoths had penetrated into the territory of Clermont (\textit{huic semper irruptioni nos miseri Arverni ianua sumus}), they had not yet crossed the Rhône or reached the Loire (\textit{necdum terminos suos ab Oceano in Rhodanum Ligeris alveo limitaverunt}). So the period here is at the earliest after the attack of 472, but before the end of 473. The Goths have only just set foot on Roman territory (\textit{rumor est Gothos in Romanum solum castra movisse}), which points to the start of the campaigning season, spring 473. During the preceding winter Sidonius had introduced the ritual of the Rogations in Clermont, which is the subject of this letter.

For the chronology of the sieges, see General Introduction, par. 3.2.2 \textit{The sieges}, for this letter especially Loyen 2: xvii and Kaufmann 1995: 188 ff., and for the date of the Rogations the reconstruction by Stevens 1933: 202 ff.

3 Addressee

Mamertus was bishop of the metropolitan see of Vienna (present-day Vienne, dept. Isère) from ca. 451 till after 475 AD. He was closely connected with, and probably actively participated in, Sidonius’ inner circle. He was the elder brother of Sidonius’ friend, the scholar, priest and liturgist Claudianus Mamertus (see General Introduction, section 2.2 Life). Claudianus was Mamertus’ indispensable advisor and assistant, as Sidonius puts it, and had been ordained as a priest in Vienne by Mamertus himself.

It is possible that Mamertus had a son, Petreius. This Petreius is the addressee of \textit{Ep}. 4.11, in which Sidonius commemorates Claudianus Mamertus, and calls Claudianus \textit{avunculus tuus} (sect. 1) with regard to Petreius, which means that the latter was either Mamertus’ son or his nephew.

Mamertus may have become bishop shortly after 451\textsuperscript{126}, if he is the one referred to in \textit{Vita Aniani} 5 (MGH SRM 3: 110 f.) \textit{quidam homo nomen Mamertus adprime nobilis, multum in omnibus rebus locupletus ... qui vero nec multo post [beatae consecrationis] pontificali est functus officio}, ‘a man called Mamertus who belonged to the highest nobility and was the rich owner of property of every kind … not long after this he [was consecrated and] held the office of bishop’. In any case, he was bishop on 10 October 463, the date of a letter of pope Hilarus which mentions him as \textit{episcopus Vienensis}.

\textsuperscript{126} The year 451/52 is strongly advocated by Mathisen 1990: 135. Heinzelmann 1982 had remained on the safe side: ‘before 463’.
In 463-64 he was involved in a conflict with pope Hilarus, because he had ordained the bishop of Dea (now Die, dept. Drôme), which lay outside his diocese, though this was a matter of debate, as the range of the authority of the bishop of Vienne had changed constantly over the preceding century. Mamertus may have been motivated by political circumstances; this is suggested by the fact that it was the Burgundian king Gondiac who informed the pope. One might surmise that Mamertus feared Burgundian pressure in this their territory in favour of a candidate with Arian sympathies. He probably preferred to act quickly, bypassing rival Arles, which was far off and difficult to reach. But in this case and in similar ones, Hilarus followed a clear pattern, reinforcing ecclesiastical hierarchy in a region which was unstable. Thereupon, Mamertus’ colleagues, in their yearly council, managed to protect him against further-reaching measures. However, he had to accept the fact that only an ordination by the bishop of Arles – Leontius at the time – was regarded as valid, and he was warned not to do this again. For this question see the correspondence of pope Hilarus, Ep. 9-11 (MGH Epist. 3: 28 ff.), and Griffe 2: 163. For the council of 463 see Mathisen 1990: 135. For the organisation of the Gallican church province see General Introduction, ch. 4 The church.

In Sidonius’ correspondence Mamertus figures as the bishop who, in the early ’70s, initiated the days of fasting and prayer called Rogationes, which are discussed below. Sidonius refers to him in Ep. 5.14.2 and defines his role as follows: quorum (i.e. Rogationum) nobis sollemnitatem primus Mamertus pater et pontifex reverendissimo exemplo, utilissimo experimento inventit instituit invexit: ‘he thought of, designed and introduced’ these days. The introduction was aimed to counter the panic and low spirits of the people of Vienne, caused by all kinds of portents. Pelletier 2001: 169 supposed that the panic was used as an excuse to challenge the opposition to Christianity which in this cosmopolitan town was apparently still considerable. The panic as such might have been caused by the capture of the town by the Burgundians, according to Pelletier. At any rate, as in the conflict about the ordination in Die, Mamertus showed himself a vigorous leader who did not shun political implications and instruments. In the case of the Rogationes he took care to pave the way for their introduction through secret decision making in the curia. In 474/75 he summoned a synod at Vienne to ratify the ceremony.

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127 Thus already Tillemont, Histoire ecclésiastique 16: 105. For the relation between the church and the Burgundians, see Griffe 2: 94 ff.


129 Alc. Avit. Hom. 6 p. 110 l. 25 Peiper secreta primum collatione tractatur. Heinzelmann 1976: 225 f. did not hesitate to style Mamertus as ‘einen der bedeutendsten Bischöfe des 5. Jahrhunderts … mit einer außergewöhnlich starken Stellung, die ihrerseits wohl auf der Unterstützung … durch die … illustres der curia von Vienne basieren dürfte.’ Rousseau 1976: 363 f., however, believed that Mamertus inaugurated the ceremony ‘to shame the maiores of his city with the faith of the masses’. The novelty was to arouse the trust of the community in a direct manner.

130 Its traces are elusive, see Mansi 7: 1005 ff. and Kaufmann 1995: 324.
He further contributed to the self-esteem of Vienne by building a new church for its local hero, the martyr Ferreolus, and for the relics of Julian of Brioude in the Auvergne. Sidonius mentions the fact at the end of the current letter (sect. 7) and claims his part of the protection which is offered by these saints. The matter will be discussed in greater detail below. For a discussion of bishops, their building programs and their promotion of the cult of the saints, see General Introduction, ch. 4 The church.

Together with, among others, Graecus of Marseille (Ep. 7.2, 7.7 and 7.10), Megethius of Belley (?) (Ep. 7.3), Fonteius of Vaison (Ep. 7.4), Basilius of Aix (Ep. 7.6), and Euphronius of Autun (Ep. 7.8), Mamertus will have subscribed to the council of Arles, of about 470/75, which was held on the question of predestination and free will, again presided over by bishop Leontius. His name is not among the co-signatories of the letter of Faustus which led up to it, but this may well be due to the precarious manuscript tradition of this list. In any case, he is one of the addressees (and in a prominent fifth position) of the letter in which the priest Lucidus, compelled by the bishops, retracted his deviant theological views. For the council, and the question of episcopal hierarchy, see General Introduction, sect. 4.4 The council of Arles in the early 470s.

Mamertus baptized Avitus, the later bishop of Vienne. Avitus was to succeed his own father, Hesychius, who himself had succeeded Mamertus (Alc. Avit. Hom. 6 p. 110 l. 20 ff. Peiper: praedecessor namque meus et spiritualis mihi a baptismo pater Mamertus sacerdos, cui … pater carnis meae … successit, etc.).

The year of his death remains uncertain, despite the fact that Hecquet-Noti 1999: 25 n. 1 adheres to Schanz-Hosius’ exact dating to 475, and Shanzer and Wood 2002: 383 f. n. 7 claim ‘a near certain death-date of 473/4’. The present letter (473), and the synods of Vienne (474/75) and Arles (early 470s), together create a vague range of years as the terminus post quem (Heinzelmann 1982 says: ‘after 474’). It is equally difficult to deduce anything precise from the ninth-century Chronicle of Ado of Vienne, if it can be trusted at all. Ado Chron. s.a. 425 (PL 123: 103c) reads: Isicius [= Hesychius] tunc temporis Viennensem regebat ecclesiam ... qui episcopus floruit usque ad tempora Zenonis imperatoris, ‘at that time Hesychius governed the church of Vienne … this bishop was active up to the reign of the emperor Zeno’. Tunc temporis refers to the local legend of the translatio to Vienne of saint Germanus of Auxerre, who died 448 AD.131 Zeno was crowned as co-emperor on 9 February 474, and became sole ruler on 17 November. The words usque ad tempora are Ado’s general way of relating someone’s life span to the reigning emperor.132 Therefore the date of ca. 448 is much too early, and the connection with Zeno’s reign (474-91) is too vague to be helpful. A reasonable guess at the date of Mamertus’ death would seem to be 475/80.133

Buried at Vienne, he came to be venerated as a saint. His body was later transferred to Orléans, where, in the seventeenth century, his tomb was destroyed by fire during religious troubles. His feast day is 11 May.

131 Cf. AASS II 8 Aug. ‘S. Severus presb. conf. Viennae in Gallia’.
132 Cf. ibidem 116c Chaldeoldus episcopus Viennensem ecclesiam rexit usque ad tempora Theodorici regis.

4 Heading the book

For an addressee, receiving a letter from Sidonius was an honour, to be included in the edition of his letters even more so, and being allotted the first position in any of the books might be considered the highest accolade. At the same time, from the point of view of the author, personal as well as ecclesiastical and thematic arguments were involved in the decision as to which letter should be in first place.

This letter heads the cycle of letters 1-11 which unfolds Sidonius’ perception of the fall of Clermont in its political, social and spiritual perspective, with a central role for the bishops. The bishops are the ones who, as he sees it, knit together the web of intricacies between wartime politics, the different strata of society, and Christian faith and church organisation.

On the personal level Mamertus belongs to Sidonius’ intimate circle. Sidonius is a close friend of his brother and advisor, Claudianus Mamertus. They probably met often: Sidonius’ wife was born in Vienne, and he often visited the town, staying either at his own pied-à-terre or in his uncle Thaumastus’ house (5.6.1 Viennam veni, ubi Thaumastum … maestissimum inveni, 7.15.1 quotiens Viennam venio).

Mamertus’ ecclesiastical status may well have been the formal reason for Sidonius to put this letter first in the book. As metropolitan bishop of Vienne, Mamertus holds a prestigious post. Vienne itself is a rich and strategic river town, both before and after the Burgundian occupation (Auson. Ordo (= 24) 75 opulenta Vienna, Alc. Avit. Hom. 6 p. 110 l. 26 Vienensis senatus, cuius tunc numerosis illustribus curia floret). It has become a refuge for some of the nobles who escaped the Visigothic advance, among whom Sidonius’ uncle Thaumastus (see Mathisen 1984: 166). Consequently, Mamertus plays an essential role in the communication between the catholic church, the Burgundian authorities and the Gallo-Roman nobility.

As regards religion, he has found an effective means of reassuring the population of his town, terrified by natural disasters and inexplicable events, by introducing the Rogations. He unites personal piety and the ability to use faith as a political instrument.

He is thus characterized as a strong leader in times of emergency, a man who is a paragon of both self-confidence and trust in God, an ideal bishop held up by Sidonius to his readers, and a friend with whom he can identify himself.

As we will see next, all this is presented with much literary ingenuity and pathos. In this opening letter, stylistic complexity and stark emotionality combine to produce the ‘grand manner’, suitable for introducing the dramatic book 7, which contains so much war, and so little peace.\(^\text{134}\)

For a more in-depth account of these aspects, see General Introduction, sect. 5.4 The structure of book 7 and ch. 4 The church.

\(^{134}\) To appreciate the letter’s high stylistic level, it is worthwhile putting it side by side with the account of Avitus of Vienne, which is derived from it (see below). Avitus, a sophisticated stylist in his own right, is simple in comparison.
5 The mirror of literature: Lucan and Caesar’s march on Rome

- Lucan

This letter is meant to be heard with the sinister overtones of Lucan’s description in book 1 of his *Bellum civile* of the capture of Rimini, and the ensuing panic in Rome, caused by the advance of Caesar’s troops. This first book was very much in Sidonius’ mind, as we have seen in the General Introduction. Sidonius had followed the route Caesar had taken, when he went to Rome himself in 467 AD. He recalled Caesar when in Rimini, and described the Rubicon and its geographical position as a border river in the same way as Lucan had done (*Ep. 1.5.7*). He expressed the central theme of the bonds of kinship between the Auvergne and Rome in a direct citation from Lucan’s description of its people (*7.7.2 fratres Latio, sanguine ab Iliaco populos*). And now we get a prolonged allusion to the shattering consequences of Caesar’s march for the people in Rimini and Rome, an allusion which spans the greater part of Lucan’s first book.

At the approach of Caesar the inhabitants of Rimini complain that, having been so often the gateway to invasions, they are yet again the ones to take the first blows: ‘*nos praeda furentum / primaque castra sumus*’, ‘*hac iter est bellis*, ‘we are the place for the first encampment, here is the corridor for wars’ (from Luc. 1.248-57). Sidonius complains likewise: *Gothos in Romanum solum castra movisse: huic semper irruptioni nos miser Arverni ianua sumus*, ‘the Goths have put their encampment on Roman soil: we poor Arvernians always are the gateway for this invasion’ (sect. 1). The defence of Rimini is very poor, the defenders’ weapons are worn, among them *nuda iam crate fluentis / … clipeos*, ‘their shields which are falling to pieces with the wickerwork exposed’ (from Luc. 1.239-43). Likewise the ramparts of Clermont are ramshackle and worn, among them *putrem sudium cratem*, ‘our palisades of rotting wickerwork’ (sect. 2). Then in Lucan the scene moves to Rome. The populace as well as the leaders leave the town: *nec solum volgus inani / percussum terrore pavet, sed curia et ipsi / sedibus exiluere patres; … / … fugiens mandat decreta senatus*, ‘not only the populace panic … but also the elders …; … fleeing the senate gives orders’ (Luc. 1.486-89). The same in Sidonius, in the town of Vienne, to which the scene has moved meanwhile: *discessu primorum populariumque statu urbis exinanito*, ‘by the departure of the administration as well as the common people’ (sect. 3). Both in Rome and in Vienne the people are terrified by all sorts of *prodigia* (*Luc. 1.522-83, Sidonius sect. 3*), among them the appearance of wild animals in the town. Lucan: *… silvisque feras sub nocte relictis / audaces media posuisse cubilia Roma*, ‘bold animals from the woods had made their lairs in the centre of Rome’, Sidonius: *nunc stupenda foro cubilia collocabat audacium pavenda mansuetudo cervorum*, ‘bold deer made their lairs on the market square’. And finally, propitiatory ceremonies ensue in both cases (Luc. 1.584 f., Sidonius sect. 3).

Gualandri has dedicated several stimulating pages to this parallel in the chapter entitled ‘Realtà storica e travestimento letterario’ (Gualandri 1979: 35-74, esp. 43-49). She treats it as an example of Sidonius’ use of the literary tradition as ‘a filter between the author and his world’ (p. 43)\(^\text{135}\), also in crucial and tragic circumstances. While he gives an account of recent events, traditional devices lend themselves to express his thought, to heighten the tension or,

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alternatively, to tone down the emotion. In the present case, Gualandri argues, it is evident that Lucan suggested the structure and the rhetorical themes, whereas the conclusion is specifically Christian: effective prayers and tears of remorse, which make God repent and save the people (Ep. 7.1.6), take the place of the ineffective rites of expiation and the inspection of animal intestines, which only predict magnorum fata malorum (Luc. 1.630).

One might add that, although Sidonius is trying to live up to the expectations with which he wants to inspire his flock (Ep. 7.1.2), the bleak prospect of Caesar’s march on Rome after the Rimini episode can scarcely be missed by the reader who here finds Euric threatening Clermont. And, of course, Sidonius knew the outcome of it all when he revised this letter for publication in 477.

For Lucan as one of Sidonius’ favourite models, see General Introduction, sect. 6.1 Intertextuality.

- Sidonius and aftermath

Sidonius’ account was echoed, in the next generation and after, by Avitus of Vienne and Gregory of Tours. Comparing Lucan’s description with those by Sidonius, Avitus and Gregory brings to light in what way Christian sensibility perpetuated (literary) tradition while at the same time changing it.

Lucan had created the ‘original’ version, which was a cataclysm of cosmic dimensions (1.522-83). Sidonius gave a more sober account, highlighting only three portents: earthquakes, mysterious fires and the appearance of wild animals in town. This simplification enabled him to bring the bishop and his charisma into focus.

Sidonius’ description was given a more close-knit plot by Mamertus’ second successor in the see of Vienne, Alcimus Ecadius Avitus, bishop ca. 494 till ca. 518, in his sixth homilia De Rogationibus (MGH AA 6/2, ed. Peiper; for a translation with explanation see Shanzer and Wood 2002: 381 ff.). Mamertus’ aimed to give the story a more liturgical bias, centering it around ‘the holy night of the vigils of Easter’.

Looking back on Avitus’ pontificate, Gregory of Tours (Franc. 2.34) described what had happened in Vienne with Avitus’ homily before him (’ut scripsit’). Gregory especially underlined the story’s hagiographic traits.

6 Rogations

- Origin and character

The Rogationes form a characteristic element in Gallican liturgy. Three days of fasting and prayers preceding the feast of Ascension Day united the people in contrition and hope. By 511 AD, the year of the first council of Orléans, they had spread sufficiently for the council to prescribe them as regular practice. Canon 27 of the council reads as follows: Rogationes, id est Litanias ante Ascensionem Domini, ab omnibus ecclesiis placuit celebrari, ita ut praemissum triduunum ieiunium in dominicae Ascensionis festivitate solvatur. per quod triduum servi et ancillae ab omni opere relaxentur, quo magis plebs universa conveniat. quo triduo omnes abstineant et quadragesimalibus cibis utantur, ‘it has been decided that all churches should celebrate the

136 Avitus’ description is used again by Ado of Vienne (ninth century) in his Chronicon (PL 123, 108 f.).
Rogations, i.e. the Litanies before Ascension Day, in such a way that the three preceding days of fasting end at the celebration of the Ascension of the Lord. During these three days the slaves and maidservants must refrain from all labour, so that the community can gather in its entirety. In these three days everybody must abstain, and live on a Lenten ration’ (Conc. Gall. 1: 11 f.). They may have originated from rural fertility rites, as Sidon. Ep. 5.14.2 seems to suggest. In his survey of the origin of the Rogations, and the role the bishops played, Nathan 1998 strongly advocates the development of the Rogations from the *Ambarvalia*. According to our sources, it was Mamertus who had the brainwave to give existing processions this Christian turn, and who established the relation with the disasters and portents which befell his hometown. Sidonius is our first witness to the tradition. Avitus of Vienne (bishop ca. 490 – ca. 518) is the second. In the first of the homilies 6-8, which are dedicated to the Rogations, he relates, following Sidonius, but in a much more sober fashion, how Mamertus conceived of the Rogations in the vigil of Easter, and countered the dangers in the town. Gregory of Tours, *Hist*. 2.34, in his turn refers to Avitus’ sermon for an extensive description of their origin.

Liturgists usually call the Gallican Rogations *Litaniae minores*, to distinguish them from the Roman ones, called *Litaniae maiores* (25 April). Hill 2000, however, has shown that this contrastive terminology was not in use in the Anglo-Saxon and Frankish churches, and that the pre-Ascension days were commonly designated as the *Litaniae maiores* there.

- The Gallic bishops and the *Rogationes*

The *Rogationes* seem to have sprung from the need felt by the bishops of Gaul to strengthen the spirit of their flock in the troubled times they went through. Gaul was front-line territory during much of the fifth century, and the situation in the south-eastern part in the decisive sixties and seventies was more than once precarious. The reactions of the bishops to these emergencies form part of a much more comprehensive movement, not of defence, but of the evolution of what Harries 1994: 191 has called ‘a new form of Christian city’, superseding the pagan city. Harries distinguishes four elements: the creation of holy sites and the ensuing building activities, the promotion of processions and public ceremonial, the developing of the liturgical year and finally the interpretation of it all by preaching.

- The role of Sidonius

Sidonius’ involvement with the Rogations is particularly apt to define his historic importance as a provincial church leader, constantly on the alert to strengthen episcopal authority and centralize power in the mosaic of pagan traditions, Arian heresy, worship of the saints.

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137 Incidentally, the description in this letter of the reactions of Sidonius’ congregation to the Rogations is the only portrait we have of the Arverni in church, as Harries 1994: 220 has pointed out.

138 In an appendix of the Latin sources, he presents, apart from the usually cited ones, the text of an unedited, anonymous sermon (tenth century or earlier) which states that the Rogations were performed every year.

139 The institution was duly remembered in Vienne. Ado of Vienne in his *Chronicon* gives an account of the Rogations which faithfully echoes Avitus (PL 123, 102c-103a).
monasticism and prestigious holy men. All energy should be (re)directed to the city and its interests. See Harries 1994: 186 ff.

Here are some examples of these manifold activities: Sidonius is seen at work in Ep. 5.14 to engage an easy-going friend from outside the town to join in with the Rogations, with the argument that mortification is more remunerative than dining – solidarity with the city’s needs is what is essential. In the first letter of book 7 the Rogations are emblematic of the spirit of resistance which pervades the whole of it. Like Nineveh (sect. 3), the town has sunk very low, but can, and should, regain its vigour by showing repentance and taking pride in its local saints. Patriotism and religion go hand in hand.

From Ep. 7.3 Sidonius appears to have been productive as a writer of liturgical texts, as will be shown in my commentary on that letter. One may think of liturgical prayers for the mass like the ones contained in the collection of the Missale Gothicum (Rose 2005). The masses and the collection of prayers 45-48 from this Missale are good examples of what the liturgy on the three successive days of the Rogationes was like.

In Ep. 7.9 we meet with an example of Sidonius’ eloquence in his address to the congregation of Bourges. On the many occasions he had to speak to his own flock he will have been no less effective (see Harries 1994: 220; see also Rousseau 1976: 361-67 on the increasingly pastoral role of the – aristocratic – bishops in this time; cf. Sidon. Carm. 17.116 ff.).

In Ep. 7.6 the fear of having to surrender to an Arian king, Euric, is used as a tool, whereas – from a different angle – patriotism is marshalled in Ep. 7.7, Clermont’s pride in belonging to the Roman empire with its rich tradition, and the Arvernians’ presumed Trojan origin.

The bishop stood for his city. He gained his inspiration from colleagues who played the same role, and tried to emulate them. Sidonius may have been motivated, as Harries 1994: 227 f. supposes, by, among others, Annianus, bishop of Orléans in 451, whose speeches from the city walls put heart into the defence against the Huns (Sidonius’ admiration for Annianus is evident from Ep. 8.15). One might add the example of pope Leo the Great, who in 452 and 455 had interceded effectively for Italy against the Huns and for Rome against the Vandals.

• Some remarks on the development of the Rogationes

The Rogations were introduced by Sidonius in Clermont in 472 or 473 (see the date of the current letter) and by Faustus in Reii (Riez) in 477 AD. Faustus could be the author of the Homilia in Litaniis from the Collectio Gallicana by Pseudo-Eusebius, which then would have been delivered after the recent occupation of the town by the Visigoths (Griffe 3: 213 140). A series of homilies on the theme by Caesarius of Arles (bishop 502-42 AD) testifies to the popularity of the litanies: 148, 157, 160a and 207-209 (CC SL 104). From Faustus and Caesarius (Sermo 209) one can gather that different days from those instituted by Mamertus were celebrated in different parts of the country, sometimes in connection with Easter, sometimes with Pentecost. As I have already said, the Rogationes were finally assigned to the period preceding Ascension Day by the first council of Orléans. Their approval by Leo III (795-816) made them a definite part of the liturgical year.

140 For the much debated question of the attribution of the Collectio Gallicana see Glorie’s Prolegomena to the edition in CC SL 101: vii ff. and Frede 1995: 455 f.
For further references and literature on the evolution of rogation days see Hen 1995: 63 n. 27 and Shanzer and Wood 2002: 381. Griffe 3: 209 ff. has a chapter on the Rogations, their origin and success. Nathan 1998 has been mentioned above. See Rose 2005: 254, DACL 14/2: 2459 ff. s.v. Rogations, and ODCC s.v. Rogation Days, with literature. See General Introduction, ch. 4 The church, for the church in Gaul and the role of the bishops.

7 The cult of relics

Mamertus is praised in this letter for another feat, besides the introduction of the Rogations, viz. the acquisition of the relics of not one, but two martyrs, Ferreolus and Iulianus, for his church in Vienne, a feat which is on a par with the archetypical discovery of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius for Milan by Ambrose, less than a century before. The reverse side of this praise is Sidonius’ claim to a part of Mamertus’ treasure, which he needs for the same reason as Mamertus does, namely to raise the morale of his community and to strengthen his own position withal.

- General

This finding (inventio), digging up and transferring (translatio) of saints by Ambrose, which is described in more detail below at sect. 7, became exemplary throughout the Latin West. It gave decisive momentum to what had started ca. 350 AD, and would become essential to the development of the church: the cult of relics. Until then the saints had been venerated at their graves, as were all the dead in the Roman tradition. The cemeteries lay outside the residential areas as the dead bodies were untouchable. Now a radical change took place. No longer were the corpses perceived as taboo, on the contrary, the praesentia of the saint, his or her virtus, resided in his remains and made these infinitely more valuable, effective even in their smallest particles. The saint in glory at the heavenly altar in God’s presence and his body under the terrestrial altar linked heaven and earth. His relics were a sign of God’s special care for the community, which felt it had been judged by God to have deserved this praesentia. ‘The discovery and the installation of a relic, therefore, was surrounded by a sense of amnesty and a heightening of morale’ (Brown 1981: 93, and the whole of 86-105 for an analysis of praesentia).

Beside the religious aspect, there is another side to this new phase in the cult of the saints, which has received much attention in recent years: the increasing importance and quality of episcopal leadership in Late Antiquity, and in Gaul especially. The translationes by Ambrose, and by men like Mamertus and Sidonius, are as many proofs of their claims to leadership. The decisive move was for the bishop to concentrate the hitherto dispersed devotion at the memoriae on the graves of the martyrs in the cemeteries surrounding the city, and link it to communal liturgy, presided over by the bishop in his own church. This enhanced his prestige, for it was through his personal merit, interpreted by the faithful as his high standing with God, that the mercy of new, holy protectors was acquired for the community. See Brown 1981: 36 ff. and 95.

Further reading: Brown 1981 is entirely dedicated to the cult of saints. For translatio, see LexMA 8: 947-49 s.v. Translation. For the changing role of the bishop in general, see Van Dam 1985, Rapp 2005 and General Introduction, sect. 4.3 The role of the bishop.
Gaul had few local martyrs. From the second half of the fourth century this led to importation of foreign relics. A well known example – and important for the current letter – is Martin of Tours, who ca. 390 AD, probably during a stay at Vienne, managed to get hold of relics of Gervasius and Protasius, which eventually were distributed between Vienne, Tours and Rouen. I surmise that Sidonius, at home in Vienne, knew the relics and the story, and quite naturally began his account in this letter with Gervasius, Protasius and their inventor, Ambrose.

As regards Clermont, one of Sidonius’ predecessors, Namatius, had also had to make do with foreign relics for his new cathedral, Agricola and Vitalis from Bologna (their cult, incidentally, had also been encouraged by Ambrose half a century before). Now, Sidonius was the first to promote the indigenous saint Julian, extending his sphere of influence from the modest vicus Brioude to the whole of Clermont territory. His friend Mamertus – as we learn from this letter – in the same way promoted the local saint Ferreolus, and his companion Julian.

Sidonius’ account bears witness to the local reaction to the dearth of relics and their importation. Indeed, the veneration for local martyrs and holy bishops in Gaul developed from the fifth century onward. Among others Gregory of Tours’ Liber in gloria martyrum, Liber de passione et virtutibus S. Iuliani and Liber de virtutibus S. Martini are a precious testimony to their existence and veneration.

Van Dam 1985: 165 f. has pointed out a certain amount of alienation between Gaul and Rome: ‘In some cases at least these new cults of local saints became rivals, and even replacements, for shrines dedicated to the outstanding saints of Rome, St. Peter and Paul.’ On pp. 167 f. he also discusses as a case in point, the martyrs Ferreolus and Julian. Gaul can take care of itself, as is apparent from so many other facts besides (see on Gallo-Roman ‘nationalism’ and pride, General Introduction, sect. 3.3 Gallo-Roman aristocracy). Elaborating on this, I take it that Sidonius in this introductory letter makes it clear that the foundation for the future he has decided to choose for Clermont, and Gaul as a whole, lies in self-reliance, coming to terms with the new powers on his own conditions, reinforced by an indigenous spiritual inspiration.

Further reading: Griffe 1: 131-67, chapter 4, is entirely dedicated to the ‘Martyrs et confesseurs de la Gaule’ and Griffe 3: 214-59, chapter 6, to ‘Le culte des martyrs et des confesseurs’, where see esp. 232-234 on Mamertus, Ferreolus and Julian. See Beaujard and Prévot in GC 3: 1109 ff. on the cult of saints in the West, esp. 1122 ff. on the importance of Leo the Great, and in his wake above all the Gallic bishops, in promoting the cult of saints in times of war. See also GC 2: 976 on the importation of relics. Beaujard 1999 provides an up-to-date survey of the cult of the saints in the Auvergne in the fifth and sixth centuries. For further detail see the commentary below, sect. 7.

8 Manuscripts

This letter figures in MFPC, and is missing in LNVTR. For the manuscript tradition, see General Introduction, sect. 5.2 Manuscripts.
9 ‘You’ and ‘I’

As to the recipient, there is an exact distribution in this letter between the second person singular for Mamertus alone, and the inclusive plural for him and his compatriots (either the clergy or the townspeople of Vienne). The case for the sender is: first person plural throughout, always inclusive (Sidonius and his people, and, in sect. 5 nostri ordinis, Sidonius and Mamertus). On balance, Mamertus has the initiative, signalled by the second person singular: there is no first person singular for the ‘I’ to match it.

For a comprehensive discussion of the use of the first and second person, see General Introduction, section 5.6 ‘You’ and ‘I’.

10 Epitome

To Mamertus, bishop of Vienne.

Sect. 1-2: ‘They say that the Goths have again entered our Roman territory. As a matter of fact, we in Clermont are the last to resist their ambition to reach the Loire and finally reign from Ocean to Rhône. But our resistance is as desperate as it is reckless. Our only hope is in the Rogation ceremony we have borrowed from you, because we know how successful it was when you invented it.’

Sect. 3: ‘Your town was panicking, the people fled. The town hall had collapsed because of an earthquake, fires had broken out, wild animals had been seen roaming the streets. You alone faced the danger fearlessly. You saw God’s finger in it, and resorted to a new form of the approved measure of prescribing penance.’

Sect. 4: ‘You had experienced God’s help before, when the town at one time had caught fire, and you – with all the people timidly looking on – had withstood the fire and it had miraculously faded out.’

Sect. 5-6a: ‘So now you told the priests to fast and do penance. Fire and earthquake would surely disappear through prayer and contrition, in short, through faith. When the people saw the priests’ example, they took heart and came back, followed by the town council. And God had mercy on you, so the panic stopped and life became manageable again.’

Sect. 6b: ‘We here are impressed by all that. We thank you for your example, and we hope you will pray that our undertaking to follow it will prosper.’

Sect. 7: ‘I have one request to make to you. Like St Ambrose, you possess the relics of no fewer than two martyrs, Ferreolus and Julian. Julian was once beheaded here, his head then brought to Vienne. So please, extend your patronage somewhat further, and return to us our patron’s relic.’

141 Fernández López 1994 assigns this letter, along with 7.5, 7.6 and 7.8, to subcategory 3.2.3.1, ‘Ecclesiastical salutatio publica with a request for help’, and analyses it on pp. 124-34. For her method, see General Introduction, sect. 5.3 Classification and analysis.
Rumor est Gothos in Romanum solum castra movisse:

The letter, and with it the whole of book 7, starts out on a note of poignant alarm. The never-ending Visigothic raids, the misery they caused among the population and the desperate resistance organised by Sidonius himself dominate a number of dramatic letters in this book (see General Introduction, sect. 5.4 The structure of book 7).

The direct way in which the opening sentence is formulated brings the dangerous wartime situation into stark relief. Its immediateness provides a touch of drama and invites sympathy. For an analysis of opening sentences in Sidonius’ correspondence, see General Introduction, par. 5.5.2 Opening sentences. Cf. also Köhler 1995 on Ep. 1.3.1 i nunc, and 1.7.1 angit me. For the correspondence of Pliny, Sherwin White 1966: 6 ff. has a survey of opening sentences which establish the subject of the letter.

Rumor est, ‘reports are coming in’: This phrase is found only twice elsewhere, in Ter. An. 185 meum gnatum rumor est amare, Cic. Att. 11.25.2 illum <iscessisse Alexandria rumor est non firmus ortus ex Sulpici litteris. Sidonius himself uses only quantum rumor est in Ep. 2.1.4. Hence rumor est appears to be the less common variant of fama est, which is frequent from Lucretius onward (but does not occur in Sidonius).

An echo of the sentence as a whole might be seen in Rumor ad nos magnus pervenit administrationem vos Secundae Belgicae suscepisse, the first sentence of a letter of Remigius, bishop of Reims, to Clovis to congratulate him on his accession to the throne in 482 AD (or possibly on occasion of his victory over Syagrius, 486) (MGH AA 3, p. 113).

huic semper irruptioni nos miseri Arverni ianua sumus.

miseri Arverni, ‘poor Arvernians’: In Ep. 3.4.1 he calls his townspeople a lacrimabilis praeda of the warring nations around. Ep. 7.7.1 describes the misera … condicio of the Arvernians’ infelicis anguli. For the people of the Arverni, and their capital, originally Augustonemetum, present day Clermont(-Ferrand), see DNP 2: 69 s.v. Arverni.

ianua, ‘gateway’: The metaphor is first found in Cicero, Mur. 33 cum ... eam ... urbem sibi Mithridates Asiae ianuam fore putasset. It is characteristic of Sidonius’ style, which has a strong and constant tendency towards drastic, metaphorical usage, in the vein of Old Testament biblical language. Cf. the two remaining instances of ianua in 1.9.1 rebus actitandis ianuam ... patefecit, and 3.7.2 ianuam securitatis aperuit, as discussed by Gualandri 1979: 117, among other examples of, what she calls, ‘concrete’ metaphors. This section also has fomenta and devoravit. For this phenomenon, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

In the parallel passage in Lucan (see the Introduction), the idea is expressed as follows, when the inhabitants of Rimini think: nos praeda furentum / primaque castra sumus (1.250 f.; cf. primi 254); their fate is Latii ... claustra tueri (253); and hac iter est bellis (257).
namque odiis inimicorum hinc peculiaria fomenta subministramus,

**namque**,'namely', provides subsidiary information as to why the invasions concern especially Clermont. The particle *namque* is frequent in Sidonius.

Some general information first: a) The relative frequency of *namque* as an alternative to *nam* varies considerably between authors. b) It is generally preferred to *nam* before vowels and *h*, especially in poetry. c) Unlike *nam*, it may occupy the second or third position in the sentence. d) As to its function, it seems to be more grammaticalized and less marked than *nam*. See the forthcoming article by Josine Schrickx, ‘Namque als Variante von nam?’ (Schrickx 2009).

I now compare some of Schrickx’ data (based on BTL 3 up to and including Apuleius) with the frequency statistics of CLCLT 6 and the occurrences of *namque/nam* in Sidonius. The proportion *namque* : *nam* is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>BTL 3</th>
<th>CLCLT 6</th>
<th>Sidonius</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- 200 AD</td>
<td>1 : 7.9</td>
<td>1 : 7.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 – 735 AD</td>
<td>1 : 10.1</td>
<td>1 : 11.0</td>
<td>1 : 2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 – 735 AD</td>
<td>1 : 7.4</td>
<td>1 : 2.2</td>
<td>1 : 4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*) Compared with BTL 3, CLCLT 6 contains also Gregory the Great and Bede. Without these prolific authors, the ratio in CLCLT 6 is 1 : 7.4, as in BTL 3; if they are included it is 1 : 3.1.

What catches the eye is the high relative frequency of *namque* in Sidonius in general, and in his prose (in the same category as Nepos, Vitruvius, Curtius and Pliny the Elder; see Schrickx sect. 3.2): 60 occurrences of *namque* against 106 of *nam*. As Schrickx has demonstrated, the choice for *namque* instead of *nam* is in the first place a question of the stylistic preference of an individual author. We may conclude that it is a characteristic and distinctive element in Sidonius’ prose style.

Concerning the question of the occurrence of *namque* before vowel or *h*, in Sidonius’ prose the percentage is 65% (39 times out of 60, against 21 before consonant). *Nam* on the other hand is followed by vowel or *h* in less than 5% of cases (5 times out of 106). Schrickx’ corpus in prose has a percentage of 60% for *namque*, and 39% for *nam*, with considerable variance between authors. None, however, has less than 15% for *nam* (ibidem). We may conclude that Sidonius in his prose was extremely sensitive to the possible effect of elision of *nam* before vowel or *h*, and tried to avoid it.

For the position of *namque* in the sentence I refer to the discussion at 7.8.2 *huius es namque … dignationis*.

**hinc ... quia**: The collocation is also found in Ep. 9.3.5 *hinc parum factitantem desiderio nostro, quia iudicio satisfeceras*. For *hinc*, occurring as early as Lucilius fr. 94 to introduce a consecution, see LHS 2: 512 and 515. Probably the earliest example of *hinc ... quia* is Lucr. 5.597 *f. nam licet hinc ... / ... erumpere lumen, / ex omni mundo quia sic elementa vaporis / undique*
conveniunt (although Bailey in his commentary, Oxford 1947, prefers to interpret it locally: ‘hinc, i.e. from the sun’). Macrobius was particularly fond of this turn of phrase: he used it no fewer than sixteen times, e.g. Somn. 1.3.5 and Sat. 1.17.4.

fomenta subministramus, ‘we provide the fuel’, ‘we kindle’: Alongside its original medical meaning ‘compress’, ‘remedy’, the word fomentum developed a secondary meaning, ‘wood for kindling’ (coll. sg. (rare) or pl. = fomes), which is first found in S. Clod. Gram. 1 (d. ca. 60 BC), then incidentally in Seneca and Apuleius (who is the first to use it figuratively, Met. 8.2 flamma saevi amoris ... fomentis consuetudinis exaestuans), and then in later Latin. Sidonius has one more occurrence, 4.11.6 sed quid dolorem nostrum moderari causa potius fomenta sufficimus?, ‘but why, hoping to calm my grief, do I go on supplying fuel to the flame of it?’ (Anderson). Note the ‘concrete’ metaphor.


quia, quod necdum terminos suos ab Oceano in Rhodanum Ligeris alveo limitaverunt, solam sub ope Christi moram de nostra tantum obice patiuntur.

‘because, with regard to the situation that they have not yet managed to extend their territory, which ranges from the Ocean to the Rhône, towards the river Loire, they feel that the one and only delay they suffer - with Christ’s help – is due to the barrier we interpose.’

Under king Theodoric II (453-66) the Visigothic ‘kingdom of Toulouse’, on the whole, had adhered to the conditions of the treaty with Rome, although in 462, after several abortive moves into Provence, they had entered Narbonne, not to leave it again. But Theodoric’s successor Euric (466-84) developed an overtly expansionistic policy, envisaging a territory which, in the north with the Loire, would border on the Franks and the Burgundians, and in the east would comprise the whole of Provence, to the detriment of the Romans and the Burgundians. For the history of the Visigoths, see the General Introduction, sect. 3.1 Visigoths and Burgundians.

We are now in 473 AD, as stated in the Introduction. Already in 471 Sidonius used a similar formulation for this political constellation: Ep. 3.1.5 etsi illi (= Visigothi) veterum finium limitibus effractis omni vel virtute vel mole possessionis turbidae metas in Rhodanum Ligerimque proterminant, ‘although they have broken through the frontier of their original territory, and are advancing the borders of their violent appropriation towards the Rhône and the Loire with great valour or brute force’.

necdum = nondum: See OLD 2 (adv.) ‘not yet’, with examples since the first century AD, and LHS 2: 449. Sidonius prefers it to nondum, 19 vs. 4 occurrences. Fundamental on neque/nec as a simple negation (= non, haud) is Löfstedt 1956, 1: 338 ff.: it occurs in archaic and late Latin, and has ‘meistens eine energische Nuance’ (338).
terminos suos ... limitaverunt, ‘have established their borders’, ‘have extended their territory’: These words from land surveying jargon are never found in this specific combination. Cf. Hyg. Agrim. p. 78 cum adhuc nihil limitibus terminaretur, and Liv. 36.17.15 quid deinde aberit quin ab Gadibus ad mare rubrum Oceano fines terminemus? The way in which Sidonius combines words is highly idiosyncratic; see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style. It is from a series of such slight touches that the sentence as a whole derives its carefully stylized character.

sub ope Christi, ‘with Christ’s help’: The expression occurs nine times in Sidonius' correspondence. He uses it in different situations in life, to promise a visit (2.9.10, 4.4.2), to say he will remain a true friend (5.3.4), thankfully, for his promotion to prefect (1.9.8) or for someone’s talent to teach (4.1.2), between hope and fear concerning the education of his son (5.11.3), humbly, to say he needs to atone for his sins (7.6.3) or has to live up to the task of nominating a bishop for Bourges (in his speech, 7.9.7; the speech is ‘genuine Sidonius’, too!), and here thankfully and proudly, to emphasize the steadfastness of Clermont.

Outside Sidonius the spread of the expression is limited, cf. the Gallic writers Julianus Pomerius (d. after 498), De vita contemplativa 2.1 (PL 59: 444b), and Remigius of Reims, Ep. 4, and an auctor incertus in the appendix to the works of Isidorus (PL 83: 1215d).

In Sidonius cf. sub ope dei (Ep. 1.5.1), sub divina ope (Ep. 7.4.2) and post open Christi (Ep. 5.1.3, 8.3.1). Other related expressions like praevio Christo and praesule deo are also frequent in Sidonius’ correspondence. See Cugusi 1983: 82, who discusses si deus vult, dis adiuvantibus and similar expressions, in the context of epistolography, Köhler 1995: 217 ad 1.6.1 Christo propitiante, Amherdt 2001: 79 ad 4.1.2 sub ope Christi, and General Introduction, sect. 5.1 Epistolography.)

moram ... patiuntur, ‘they suffer a delay’: The usual meaning of moram pati in pagan authors is ‘to tolerate, admit a delay’ since Ov. Met. 4.350. In Sidonius however it means to ‘undergo, suffer a delay’, here and in Ep. 4.24.8 si moram patitur ‘if you keep him waiting’ (Anderson). In pagan literature this meaning is only found in Apul. Met. 3.25 ne moram tales pateriris vel noctis unius, ‘so that you would not have had to wait even one night’, whereas Ov. Fast. 2.721 (Ardea) patitur longas obsidione moras, ‘Ardea endures a long siege’, is similar. In patristic literature both meanings occur, e.g. Ambr. Luc. 6.64 and Ep. 43.4.

de nostra tantum obice, ‘due only to the barrier we interpose’: The same feeling is expressed by Sidonius in a letter from 471/72, when Clermont is almost crushed between the Visigoths and the Burgundians: oppidum siquidem nostrum quasi quandam sui limitis obicem circumfusarum nobis gentium arma terrificant (Ep. 3.4.1), ‘the armed forces of the tribes which surround us are terrifying our town, as if it were a kind of barrier to their expansionism’. For the phrase as a whole, cf. Luc. 1.100 sola futuri Crassus erat belli medius mora.

Note the use of the preposition de. Pati de occurs also Ep. 1.7.3 with de instead of an abl. causae: pati de occurrentum raritate suspicionem, ‘if only few sought to accost him he nursed suspicion’ (Anderson). It is an illustration of the well known spread of de in late antiquity. LHS 2: 261 ff. describe its increasing functionality - present from the very beginning in everyday language - and how it gradually superseded ex and ab. It is treated at length by Löffstedt 1911: 103 ff. See also Köhler 1995 ad Ep. 1.7.3, and my comment on 7.10.1 desiderio de vobis, and 7.11.1 periculum de vicinis.
circumiectarum vero spatia tractumque regionum iam pridem regni minacis importuna devoravit impressio.

**spatia tractumque regionum**, ‘the length and breadth of the country’, has its closest parallel in *Ep. 2.11.1 si nobis pro situ spatiisque regionum vicinaremur*, cf. *Ep. 9.4.1 spatium viae regionumque, quod oppida nostra discriminat*. It could be an echo of Stat. *Theb. 4.173 f. at laterum tractus spatosaque pectora servat / ... thorax*. For Sidonius’ technique of imitation, often an intricate borrowing of purely verbal *spolia*, enigmatic and meant for the initiate, see Gualandri 1979: 84-104, and the General Introduction, sect. 6.1 Intertextuality. For the variation technique demonstrated in these citations from Sidonius (*spatium-tractum-regionum, situ-spatiis-regionum, spatium-viae-regionum*), see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style, where there is also a discussion of the doublets (as here *spatia tractumque, situ spatiisque, viae regionumque*), which in most cases are scarcely differentiated as to their meaning. They belong to the same category of Sidonius’ ‘bipolar’ way of writing.

**regni minacis**, ‘the threatening kingdom’, of the Visigothic realm, as in *7.6.4 limitem regni sui* (viz. of Euric). In *7.11.1 conflictantium procella regnorum*, the Visigothic and the Burgundian kingdoms are addressed. In *7.6.10 regni utriusque pacta* the Visigothic and the Roman states are meant. See my comments on the respective passages.

*Minax* is not very frequent in Sidonius’ correspondence (five times), of which two are in the current letter (also 7.1.5, q.v.), and is not associated elsewhere with the wartime situation, no more than *minae* and *minari*. In *Carm. 2.245*, however, *gens animis membrisque minax* is said of the Huns. For the current letter it has thematic significance: the threat to Catholic Roman Gaul comes from the enemy (here) and from nature (in 7.1.5).

**importuna devoravit impressio**, ‘has been swallowed up by the insatiate aggression’ (Anderson): *Importunus* (two occurrences in the correspondence, also 3.13.2 *importunus petendi*, ‘shameless beggar’), together with *devoravit* and *impressio* (here only), make for an unusual and expressive conclusion of the initial description of the threatening situation.

*Importunus*, ‘oppressive’, ‘grim’, elsewhere accompanies such nouns as *libidines* (*Cic. Ver. 4.111*) and *dominatio* (*Flor. Epit. 1.2*). *Devoravit*, in the metaphorical sense of ‘to engulf’, ‘absorb’, ‘swallow up’, is found in contexts as widely different as death swallowing beauty, the sun absorbing water and sound being muffled by sand (OLD s.v. 2). Plin. *Nat. 6.1.1* has it of the sea engulfing the land: *non fuerat satis oceano ... per Hellespontum Propontida infudisse iterum terris devoratis*. It is, however, attested nowhere else of the conquest of a territory. Sidonius makes the ordinary sound original by subtly but constantly deviating from the beaten track, moulding an idiom which is as strange as it is recognizable. This is once more a ‘concrete’ metaphor (see above on *ianua*). *Impressio* is military terminology, ‘assault’, ‘onslaught’, found from *Var. R. 2.4.1* onward.

**Section 2**

sed animositati nostrae tam temerariae tamque periculosae non nos aut ambustam murorum faciem aut putrem sudium cratem aut propugnacula vigilum trita pectoribus confidimus opitulatura;
In the cities of Gaul, the walls surrounded only a limited area, the most populated and the easiest to defend (the *castrum*), and did not include the less densely inhabited outskirts of the town (the *suburbium*). The walled town of Clermont was very small, comprising only three hectares, seven hundred inhabitants at the most. It is highly probable that a considerable part of its citizens lived outside the precinct. For urbanization in Gaul and the town of Clermont, see General Introduction, par. 3.2.1 *The town, with literature.*

*animositati nostrae tam temerariae tamque periculosae*, ‘our courage, so reckless and so dangerous’: Compare the variation in 7.5.2 *tam praecipitis animi ... tamque periculosi*, said of the shameless pretenders to the episcopal see of Bourges.

While the adjective *animosus* is classical, the noun *animositas*, ‘boldness’, ‘courage’, ‘vehemence’, is Christian and later Latin. It occurs three times in Sidonius, in *Ep.* 3.2.1 of a person, in 4.3.9 of a horse. The suffix *-tas* is well attested in the classical period, but is especially frequently found in later Latin, because of the tendency of these authors to make extensive use of abstracta, more specifically described as ‘Übergang von abstrakter zu konkreter Bedeutung’ by Löfstedt. See LHS 2: 743 f., Löffstedt 1911: 110 ff., Mohrmann 3: 213 ff., and for *-tas* Mannheimer 1975: 98. An additional benefit of abstracta is that they admit of more attributes, see Den Boeft et al. 1995: 43 ad Amm. 22.4.5 *ambitiosa ornatarum domorum ... spatia*. The abstract *animositati nostrae ... opitulatura* is equivalent to the personal *animosis nobis ... opitulatura*, see esp. LHS 2: 746 f., and cf. below nostram sciscitationem.

*ambustam murorum faciem*, ‘the scorched surface of the ramparts’: *Ambustus* is applied one more time in the correspondence, 2.9.8 *lapidum cumulus ambustus*, ‘a pile of hot stones’, to heat the bathwater. Notice the enallage.

*Facies* is classified in TLL 6/1: 51.38 f. under ‘superficies, forma, figura’, cf. *Ep.* 2.2.5 *interior parietum facies*. It is a t.t. for the outer layer of stucco on a wall, cf. Vitr. 2.8.8 *quae sunt e molli caemento subtili facie venenustatis*, ‘those which are of soft rubble with a thin and pleasing facing’ (transl. Granger, ed. Loeb). *Murorum facies* is not found before Sidonius; after him it occurs in Cass. *Var.* 49 *licentiam vobis eorum (viz. the stones of the decrepit amphiteatre] in usus dumtaxat publicos damus, ut in murorum faciem surgat*, the stones of the amphitheatre re-used ‘to erect walls’. A peopigraphic fragment of Maximus of Turin (ca. 380 - post 465, *Hom.* 78 (PL 57: 422a, see CPL 200) has *parietum facies* of a *paterfamilias* having his walls painted by an artist: *(ut) iam docta manu transferat in parietum faciem personarum viventium dignitatem.* Sidonius characteristically makes this piece of technical language function in an artificial context. Leo’s conjecture *murorum maceriem* for one thing ignores the parallels, but above all it mars the exciting combination of the ordinary and the artificial.

Gualandri 1979: 45 n. 34 signals Sidonius’ elaborate diction here, featuring an emphatic paraphrase and a trenchant enallage. The whole of the sentence, with its pathos, mirrors the ruin and despair of the city and its defendants.

*putrem sudium cratem*, ‘our palisades of rotting wickerwork’: This is an allusion to Luc. 1.241 (*clipeos*) *nuda iam crate fluentes*, ‘their shields which are falling to pieces with the wickerwork exposed’. The tattered defences of Clermont and the tattered weapons in Rimini both are a sorry sight, in tricola with the adjectives: (Sidonius) *ambustam, putrem, trita*, ‘walls scorched, palisades rotting, battlements worn-out’; (Lucan) *fluentes, curvata, scabros*, ‘shields falling to pieces, javelin-points bent, swords corroded’.
Gualandri 1979: 45 n. 34 additionally suggested it might be a recreation of Luc. 3.494 f. et sudibus crebris et adusti roboris ictu / percussae cedunt crates, ‘the wickerwork gives way under the assault of a rain of stakes and the blows of hardened oaken poles’.

Constructions of wickerwork for a wall are obviously inferior to stone, cf. Tac. *Ann.* 12.16 moenia non saxo sed cratibus et vimentis ... adversa inrumpentis invalida erant. It is telling that the town of Narbonne, after the attacks of the Visigoths (the one of 437 might be meant, or else a possible final blow in 462), had nothing left for its defence, not even a simple moat and mound: *Carm.* 23.51 f. non te fossa patens nec hispidarum / obiectu sudium coronat agger. The city was completely at the mercy of the enemy. That situation, however, is still a long way off in Clermont. It has been rightly pointed out by Griffe 3: 8 n. 10, that the walls of the *castrum* remained intact at all times. It was the *suburbium* that suffered from the attacks which made its inhabitants flee. The buildings described in *Ep.* 3.2.1 aedes incendio prorutas et domicilia semiusta, damaged in the Visigothic raid of 472, were located outside the city walls.

The genitive *sudium*, ‘the wickerwork of the poles’, is somewhat strange. It might be thought of as a daring gen. identitatis. It is probably dictated by the parallel construction with *murorum faciem* and the genitive of *vigilum ... pectoribus.*

*Propugnacula vigilum trita pectoribus,* ‘our battlements worn by the breasts of many a sentinel’ (Anderson): Cf. 3.7.4 *ut tantisper a pervigili statione respirent quos a muralibus excubiis non dies nunguidus, non nox inlunis et turbida receptui canere persuadent,* ‘that our guards may get some little respite from their persistent watch; for at present neither snowy days nor moonless or stormy nights persuade them to beat any retreat from their posts on the walls’ (Anderson), 5.12.1 *ad arbitrium terroris alieni vos loricae, nos propugnacula tegunt,* ‘compelled by a foreign menace you have donned your armour, and we are fortified by our fortifications’.

At first sight this simply means that the parapets are worn breast-high because the sentinels have always been leaning against them. But we should also bear in mind that the *pectus* is the place of sleep. Waking up one ‘arouses one’s breast/heart’, see e.g. *Acc.* Trag. 140 f. *heus, vigiles, properate, expergite / pectora tarda sopore, exsurgite!,* and, for being on the alert, *Stat.* *Ach.* 1.543 *tende animum vigilem fecundique erige pectus,* ‘let your mind be watchful, wake up your heart and let it be inventive’. Hence, in the current phrase a second layer of *vigilum (= vigilantium) pectoribus,* approx. ‘the attention of sentinels on the alert’.

Notice the greater length of the last of these three cola (3, 3, 4 words), according to Behaghel’s ‘Gesetz der wachsenden Glieder’. Also the change from adjective-genitive-noun (twice) to noun-genitive-adjective.

*solo tamen invectarum te auctore rogationum palpamur auxilio,*

*tamen,* ‘though’, expresses a weak contrast to the preceding sentence, and by doing so reinforces *solo* (*auxilia*): ‘the situation is hopeless; your support, actually, is our sole comfort’.

For this weakened concessive denotation of *tamen* (*approx. autem*) which belongs to later Latin usage, see Spevak 2005: 208. She adduces as an example Claud. *Rapt.* *Pros.* 3.136 *i tamen et nullo turbata revertere casu,* ‘pars cependant et reviens sans qu’aucun malheur ait affligé ton cœur’. A contemporary example with *solus* is Ruric. *Ep.* 1.4 *qui cum omni dictionis et rationis arte praemineant, solo tamen a se discrepare videntur iudicio,* ‘your letter is perfectly balanced in form and content, though I am afraid its judgement, actually, lags behind’. Already Löfstedt 1911: 27 ff. had registered the uses of *tamen* available in later Latin, among them ‘abgeschwächt’ and ‘anknüpfend’. The unanimous reading *tamen* of the codices had been
questioned by critical editors: *iam* Luetjohann, *tantum* Mohr, but was restored by Loyen - rightly so. Hence, the defence of Mohr's emendation by Brakman 1904: 15 is superseded, despite its plausible argumentation from palaeography, the close resemblance of the abbreviaturae *tm* (= *tantum*) and *tn* (= *tamen*).

**rogationum**, 'Rogations': These are the typically Gallican three days of fasting and prayer preceding Ascension Day. See the Introduction to this letter, section 6 Rogations.

**palpamur**, 'we are comforted', 'our backing is': Sidonius has *palpare* only here and *Ep. 3.7.4 palpate nos prosperis*, 'comfort us with good news'. There, too, the context describes being constantly on guard on the walls of the town, and longing for help: *ut tantisper a pervigili statione resipirent quos a muralibus excubis non dies nunguidus, non nox inlunis et turbida receptui canere persuadent*. This is an instance of what I have styled Sidonius' variation technique (see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style): *palpare auxilio — palpate prosperis*, evoked in a similar context. The verb occurs in early authors like Plautus and Lucilius (though mostly as a deponens, *palpari*) and then from silver Latinity onward. For details see Floret 1975: 648.

**quibus inchoandis instituendisque populus Arvernus ... coepit initiari**, 'by inauguration and institution of these prayers we are already new initiates' (Dalton).

**inchoandis instituendisque**: A doublet again, see above at *spatia tractumque regionum* (sect. 1), and General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style. In this case the components can be differentiated. The verbs *inchoandis — instituendis — initiari* represent the three phases of the introduction: first there is the invention, then follows the formal introduction and finally the innovation is internalized. It is a variation of the same set of three which Sidonius uses in *Ep. 5.14.2* for the introduction of the selfsame Rogations: *quarum nobis sollemnitatem primus Mamertus pater et pontifex reverentissimo exemplo, utilissimo experimento invenit, instituit, invexit*.

Sidonius' predilection to think in units of three in our case takes on the form of a rather complex syntactical construction which has puzzled translators. Loyen and Bellès take *quibus inchoandis instituendisque* as a dative, dependent on *initiari*. Anderson remains ambiguous. Now, what is the sense of being initiated in the beginning of something (if that is what Anderson means)? Or of being initiated in something in order to introduce it (Bellès)? Not to mention the grammatical problem to account for the gerundiva in this case. Therefore, we should take *quibus inchoandis instituendisque* as an ablative of the gerundivum construction, 'by introducing and establishing them'.

**coepit initiari**, 'has begun its initiation', or 'has been initiated': *Coepit + inf.* in later Latin is common as an alternative for the perfect tense, more specifically as a paraphrase of its ingressive *actio*. It originally belonged to colloquial idiom, and is attested since Plautus (e.g. *Cas. 650 f.* malum pessimumque ... / tua ancilla hoc pacto exordiri coepit, 'your servant has messed about in this way'). See LHS 2: 319 and 796, Löfstedt 1911: 209 f. and Löfstedt 1956, 2: 450 ff. The most recent discussion of *coepit*, along with other verbs which lose their lexical function and become grammaticalized, is Fruyt and Orlandini 2009. Especially frequent is *coepit velle*, e.g. *Petr. 9.4 coepitque mihi velle pudorem extorquere*.

Sidonius conforms to this idiom, cf. Köhler 1995 ad *Ep. 1.11.14 coepit consulere*. In book 7 we also have *7.1.4 conflagrare coepisset, 7.2.8 coepit ... velle proponere, 7.7.4 coepistis esse, 7.9.5 audire coeperat*. Nevertheless, it is for the reader to decide whether in a specific case *coepit* has its full force, or not. Word order does not seem to be decisive.
Cf. my comment on 7.6.3 *incipit imminere* (periphrastic future).

**etsi non effectu pari, affectu certe non impari**

The citizens of Clermont try hard to follow the example of Vienne. They may not be as good and effective at it, but their zeal is beyond all doubt.

A bicolon, one of the characteristics of Sidonius’ ‘bipolar’ style, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 *Style*. It contains parallelism (*effectu pari - affectu impari*), antithesis (*non effectu - affectu, pari - non impari*), homoeoteleuton (*effectu - affectu, pari - impari*) and paronomasia (*effectu - affectu*).

The same wordplay on *effectus - affectus* is applied by Sidonius in Ep. 3.14.1 *non operis effectus ... sed auctoris affectus*, and Ep. 9.2.2 *affectus vestri cordis ... nostri operis effectus*. In the latter case chiasmus is added to the internal structure.

**et ob hoc circumfusis necdum dat terga terroribus.**

*circumfusis ... terroribus*, ‘the terrors that close them in’, and *dat terga*, ‘take to flight’: These expressions are particularly appropriate in a letter which is characterised by the state of war and begins with the theme of an advancing army: *Rumor est Gothos ... castra movisse*. Ep. 3.7.4 *non ... receptui canere* is in the same mood, describing the tenacity of Clermont’s defenders. Cf. 3.4.1 *circumfusarum nobis gentium arma* (also above on sect. 1 *de nostra tantum obice*). For *circumfusis terroribus* cf. Liv. 34.38.7 *circumfuso undique pavore*.

*necdum* = *nondum*, see above, sect. 1, on *necdum*.

**Section 3**

We are now told the first part of the story of earthquakes and other terrifying incidents, which made the people of Vienne panic, and inspired Mamertus to react with a manifestation of faith. It extends over the sections 3, 5 and 6a. In between, by way of a flashback, Sidonius tells of a fire which once broke out in Vienne and which the bishop had withstood with uncommon courage (sect. 4). In Avitus and Gregory the latter episode will be merged into the story proper, to represent the phase when the community was assembled in church on the Vigil of Easter after the portentous incidents.

**non enim latet nostram sciscitationem:**

*latet nostram sciscitationem*, ‘escapes our attention’: When used transitively, *latere* initially prefers a personal accusative (e.g. Verg. *A*. 1.130 *nec latuere doli fratrem Iunonis*, Plin. *Nat*. 2.82 *latet plerosque*). Later it is also found with impersonal complements, Var. *R*. 1.10.1 *latet nostrum sensum* providing an early example. See e.g. Apul. *Met*. 10.24 *haec ... feralem Fortunae nutum latere non potuerunt*, and Prosp. in *Psalm*. 141.4 *scientiam tuam non latet*.

The noun *sciscitatio*, ‘investigation’, ‘question’, is first attested in Petr. 24.5, and in Christian writers in Tert. *Marc*. 2.25, then from the fourth century onward. In our author it is found one more time: Ep. 4.11.3 *ne idiotarum quidem imperitorumque sciscitatio repudiabitur*. For *nostram sciscitationem*, an abstract noun with a pron. poss. to describe the person in question, see LHS 2: 746 f.; cf. above my comment on sect. 2 *animositati nostrae*.
primis temporibus harumce supplicationum institutarum

Before primis Luetjohann inserted <quod> to join the subject clause primis temporibus ... vacabatur to non enim latet nostram sciscitationem. His conjecture has been accepted by all later editors (although Mohr suggested quia before civitas). I propose, with earlier editors like Sirmond, to follow the manuscript tradition which, though scant for this letter, is nevertheless represented by two different families, M as well as CFP. I print a colon after sciscitationem. Sidonius elsewhere employs the same loose construction, viz. 6.12.9 ilicit scias volo: per omnen fertur Aquitaniam gloria tua. Cf. 7.4.3 accipe confitentem: suspicio quidem nimis severos ..., sed ... facilius humilitate submittimur quam familiaritate sociamur. This is a special case of the easy-going, asyndetic way which Sidonius employs repeatedly in his narrative, like 1.11.16 vix post haec alia paucu: surreximus. Engelbrecht 1898: 294 likewise retains the manuscript tradition, but eschews the asyndeton because of a different interpretation of cuiuscemodi (see below).

harumce: ‘these’: The deictic part –c(e) in hic, in classical Latin only admitted in a restricted number of cases, is in later writers an archaizing revival of the practice in early Latin, where it is used in all cases. See Köhler 1995: 118 ad 1.1.4 et hisce deliremantis. For the archaizing tendency of later Latin literature after Fronto, see Loyen 1943: 5, 174 f. The point here, however, which has so far been missed, is that Sidonius uses the archaism for euphonic (and possibly rhythmic) reasons, viz. because of the consonant with which the ensuing word begins. This is apparent when we compare huiusce (ten times), horumce (once), hisce (six times), hasce (once), hosce (once, in verse) - all before a consonant. Horum occurs four times, always before a vowel, whereas for huius, his, has and hos the next word is irrelevant. Compare my comment on 7.8.2 huiuscemodi votis.

civitas caelitus tibi credita per cuiuscemodi prodigiorum terriculamenta vacabatur.

civitas caelitus, ‘the town entrusted by heaven’: For civitas, ‘town’, see my comment on 7.2.7 municipioli.

Caelitus is late Latin for divinitus or caelo, and is first attested in Apul. Pl. 1.12 and in Christian writers in Cypr. Ep. 1.4. It occurs three times in Sidonius, also Ep. 3.1.3, and 8.15.1. Adverbs on –(i)tus are among the favourites of the archaizing and late antique authors. Sidonius uses cordacitus 4.6.1 (q.v. Amherdt 2001), antiquitus 4.22.1, divinitus 7.9.20, humanitus 7.14.8, naturalitus 8.1.2 and 9.11.2, medullitus 8.7.4 (for which see Mannheimer 1975: 166).

The words civitas caelitus ... credita form an alliteration, which may have determined the choice of caelitus instead of divinitus. In 7.9.20, turning it round, Sidonius avoids a threefold alliteration by preferring divinitus to caelitus: obserata barbarici carceris divinitus claustra.

Creditus is the usual word to indicate that his flock is entrusted to the bishop by God, e.g. Ambr. Conc. Aquil. 3 (CSEL 82, 3: 328) convenire in Aquileiensium civitatem ex diocesi meritis excellentiæ tuae credita episcopos iusseramus. Often with populus, e.g. Ps. Ambr. Dign. sacerd. 4 (PL 17: 567 ff.) sic polleat episcopus sapientia, ut non solum creditum sibi populum sufficienter doceat.

cuiuscemodi, ‘of every sort’: Cuisque modi, proposed by Luetjohann, rejected by Mohr, but followed by Anderson and Loyen, is an unnecessary change in the reading of MPF. It is found in Apul. Flor. 15.2 pociulis et cuiuscemodi utensibus, Fronto, Gellius, often in Augustine,
etc. Engelbrecht 1898: 294 prints cuiusce modi, and considers cuiusce as an interrogative pronoun, on the analogy of huiusce modi, misunderstanding -ce. As he adduces no specific parallels, I think this idea is hardly tenable.

**prodigiorum terriculamenta**, ‘alarming prodigies’: Terriculamentum, ‘alarm’, is an Apuleian neologism (Apol. 64.2 omnia sepulchorum terriculamenta, Soc. 15 (Larvae) inane terriculamentum bonis hominibus). Sidonius’ wording is very close to Apuleius’ in the Apologia. The word has remained rare. Claud. Mam. Anim. 2.3.1 wrote ironically about terriculamenta quaedam ... scientiae profundioris. See also Engelbrecht 1886: 452.

The pairing of *prodigium* and *supplicatio* is entirely in accordance with traditional pagan Roman religion; take its omnipresence in Livy, e.g. Liv. 27.23.4 *horum prodigiorum causa diem unum supplicatio fuit*. The *prodigia* Sidonius has chosen come from the same tradition, viz.:

- Earthquakes: Liv. 4.21.5 *curae erat ... maxime quod crebris motibus terrae ruere in agris nuntiabantur tecta*, ‘they were concerned ... especially because in the countryside houses were reported as collapsing due to repeated earthquakes’, Tac. A. 12.43.1 *crebris terrae motibus prorutae domus ... frugum quoque egestas et orta ex eo fames in prodigium accipiebatur*, ‘due to repeated earthquakes houses collapsed ...; further portents were seen in a shortage of corn, resulting in famine’.

- Strokes of lightning on temples, public buildings, town walls and gateways: Liv. 24.10.9 *tacta de caelo atrium publicum in Capitolio, aedem in campo Vulcani, arcem in Sabinis publicamque viam, murum ac portam Gabiis*, ‘the Atrium Publicum on the Capitol was struck by lightning, as were the temple of Vulcan in the Campus Martius, a citadel and a public road in the Sabine region, and a wall and a gate at Gabii’, 27.37.2/7, 28.11.1 et passim.

- Fires: Liv. 27.4.12 *iisdem ferme diebus Anagniae terram ante portam ic tam diem ac noctem sine ullo ignis alimento arsisse*, ‘at Anagnia about the same time the ground in front of the gate was struck by lightning and burnt for a day and a night without anything to feed the flames’, 30.2.12 *Anagniae sparsi primum ignes in caelo, dein fax ingens arsit*, ‘at Anagnia first scattered fires were seen in the sky, then a huge comet flared’.

- Wild animals in the town, esp. wolves: Liv. 3.29.9 *lupos visos in Capitolio ferunt a canibus fugatos; ob id prodigium lustratum Capitolium esse*, ‘they report that wolves were seen on the Capitol chased by hounds; that because of this portent the Capitol was purified’, 21.46.1, 32.29.1.

In her analysis Gualandri 1979: 46 has pointed out two more parallels for the specific collocations in Sidonius: Verg. G. 1.485 f. (wild beasts in the town) *et altae / per noctem resonare lupus ululantibus urbes*, and Ov. Met. 15.796 ff. (animals and earthquake) *inque foro circumque domos et templ a deorum / nocturnos ululasse canes umbrasque silentum / erravisse ferunt matamque tremoribus urbe m*. Finally Claud. in Eutrop. 1 (= 18).2 *moenibus et mediis auditum nocte luporum / murmur* might have been present in Sidonius’ mind. The topos, however, is so widespread that to speak of direct borrowings without a larger context seems problematic to me.

Each of the three scenes which now follow, has a different structure:

- The first *nam modo ... concutiebantur* is straightforward. We are shown the buildings, then earthquakes occur which damage them.

- The second *nunc ... tumulabant* leaves out all causal connections, its primary concern is *visual*: the fires, the collapse of the roofs, the heaps of ash.
The character of the third nunc ... cervorum is primarily psychological, it aims at driving the perplexity home to the reader by creating a labyrinthine sentence full of hyperbata.

nam modo scaenae moenum publicorum crebris terrae motibus concutiebantur;

nam, ‘that is’: This is so-called ‘backward-linking’ nam, which provides subsidiary information with regard to another, more central discourse unit, in this case the preceding phrase, civitas ... per cuiusque modi prodigiorum terriculamenta vacuebatur. Here it introduces instances of the ‘alarming prodigies’, followed by a more detailed account of the flight of the citizens. For this use of nam, see Kroon 1995: 144 ff., esp. 148 f. (There is a printing error, name, in Anderson’s Loeb text.)

scaenae moenium publicorum, ‘the outer walls of the public buildings’: Scæna is the ‘face’ or ‘skin’ of an object, esp. the outside appearance of a building, cf. Vit. 1.2.2 scaenographia, the perspective drawing of a building. Sidonius has no other instances of it. Sirmond ad loc. already rightly interpreted it as facies exterior. For this technical use of the noun, cf. Symm. Or. 2.20 scaena murorum, ‘the face of the bastion’ (see Gualandri 1979: 46 n. 37), and Greg. Tur. Mart. 1.9 in scaena montis aquosi, of a ship in a storm, high up against a wave. The plural scaenae is all Sidonius’ own.

Moenia, ‘buildings’, ‘houses’, to be distinguished from murus, ‘town wall’, cf. e.g. Verg. A. 2.234 dividimus muros et moenias pandimus urbis, Vitr. 8.3.24 (Zama) cuius moenia rex luba dupli ci muro saepsit. As to the moenia publica, Savaron took this to be the town hall of Vienne, which Avitus called the aedes publica. I believe he was right in implicitly rejecting the meaning ‘city walls’. Sidonius means ‘public building(s)’, probably the town hall alone - the plural creating a rhetorical effect. This denotation ‘public building’ (TLL 8: 1328, 30 ff. ‘i.q. aedificia specialia: de aedificiis publicis’) emerged in late Latin, and is quite common there, cf. e.g. Hier. Is. 2 ornamenta urbium in plateis et porticibus, foro atque gymnasii et moenibus publicis, and such ‘technical’ texts as Cod. Theod. 15.1.39 publicis moeniiis (V1, -bus V2) vel privatis, and CIL IX 2956 restauratoris moenium publicorum. Among ancient scholars the need was felt to be precise about this use of moenia, cf. e.g. Serv. auct. 1.2 ‘per moenia’ per domos ...: ‘moenia’ enim et publica et privata dicuntur. Yet moenia does occur in a similar context, but with the meaning ‘city walls’, in Amm. 22.9.2 moenia ... in favillas miserabiles consedisse (see commentary Den Boeft et al., Groningen 1995: 158). For Sidonius see 7.7.2 populo ... clauso intra moenia, ‘the people [of Clermont] confined to the city walls’.

An aside. In view of the above, Kortekaas (G.A.A. Kortekaas, Historia Apollonii Regis Tyrii, Groningen, 1984) rightly retained the manuscript reading menia publica in Hist. Apoll. rec. A 51, which had been the object of an emendation in Riese’s edition (Leipzig, 1893). In Sidon. Ep. 1.5.1 urbes moenium situ incitas, the word moenia is best interpreted in the same sense: ‘towns renowned for their impressive (public) buildings’ (for situ cf. Hor. Carm. 3.30.2 regalique situ pyramidum altius). Cf. somewhat differently Köhler 1995: 186 f. ad loc.

crebris terrae motibus, ‘frequent earthquakes’: As already indicated, Avitus has terrae motus assidui and Gregory terrae motu frequenter quatiebatur (sc. urbs). The shocks are all the more terrifying, and significant, because of their frequent occurrence. This is topical in the context of prodigies, e.g. Liv. 4.21.5 crebris motibus terrae, cf. Cic. Div. 1.35, Tac. Ann. 12.43.1.
concutiebantur, ‘were shaken’: The imperfect tense (to be followed by tumulabant and collocabat further on) paints the background situation of serious and repeated calamities, with which Mamertus’ brisk resolution will be contrasted effectively, in the perfect tense, tu … decurrísti; see there.

nunc ignes saepe flammati caducas culminum cristas superiecto favillarum monte tumulabant;

ignes saepe flammati, ‘fires often flaring up’: Gualandri 1979: 46 n. 39 thinks it possible that these mysterious fires come from Claud. Bell. Get. (=26) 241 f. (Alaric is approaching) passimque crematas / perbacchata domos nullis incendia causis, ‘fires with no apparent cause’. Indeed, neither Sidonius, nor Lucan for that matter (tecta nefandas / corripuisse faces), appear interested in the cause of these fires. Avitus and Gregory, however, realize their divine origin. Avitus (quid enim in crebris ignibus imbres Sodomiticos non timeret?) suggests they might be comparable to the rain of sulphur and fire which descended on Sodom (Gen. 19.24), Gregory ascribes the fire in the night before Easter to God’s intervention (palatium regale intramuraneum divino igne succenditur). A level-headed fireman would undoubtedly have thought of these ignes as smouldering fires, which flare up every time one thinks the situation is under control.

The attention which is paid to the fires themselves, instead of lightning strokes or other possible causes, differs from the ‘classical’ portents as found in Livy, who usually mentions the signs in the sky without paying much attention to the resulting fires (see examples cited above at per cuiusque modi prodigiorum terriculamenta).

Sidonius has flamnare four times in the correspondence, in a literal as well as a figurative sense, and three times in his poetry. Before him it was mainly poetic. Apuleius has Mun. 5 ignes ... flammantur, ‘the fires glow’.

There is no reason to accept Luetjohann’s conjecture sulpure for sepe MSS. The repetitive element is characteristic of this type of portent; see words like passim and creber in the above cited passages.

caducas culminum cristas, ‘the tiles of the roof tops which have come down’: The cristae are the round ridge tiles which cover the tops of the roofs. In Ep. 2.2.5 they are called dorsa cristarum. Sidonius testifies to a new technical use of the word, which TLL 4: 1210, 62 ff. defines in too generic a way as ‘culmen, cacumen’. It is found in medieval usage, cf. Niermeyer s.v. crista, 5 ridge tile, s. XIV. The alternative is to interpret culminum as a gen. identitatis, ‘the tiles on the roof’, in the spirit of Avitus’ decidua culminum. Culmina should not be weakened into a poetical pars pro toto, ‘building’, here (Loyen: ‘palais’), because the description is meant to have a pre-eminently visual character, highlighting details such as the wall surfaces, scaenae moenium, and the ridge tiles high on the roofs.

Note the alliteration which accentuates the event.

Avitus in his homily has retained decidua culminum for the collapse of the houses. Cf. Sidon. Ep. 7.6.8 putres culminum lapsus, of crumbling parish churches.

superiecto favillarum monte tumulabant, ‘would bury under an incumbent mountain of ashes’ (Anderson): Cf. Amm. 29.5.18 favillarum ... acervos. The fact that the heaps of ashes rise
above the roof ridges is a hyperbolic finesse. To this Sidonius adds the image of ashes as a burial mound, which is an innovation.

The whole of the phrase nunc ignes ... tumulabant is reminiscent of Ep. 3.3.8 raptim succensis conclusa (sc. corpora) domicilis culminum superlabentum rogalibus fragmentis funerabantur. There the enemy, thrown back from their attack on Clermont, are burying their dead in houses, which are then set on fire and result in as many burial mounds over them. This is an example of Sidonius’ variation technique, for which see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

nunc stupenda foro cubilia collocabat audacium pavenda mansuetudo cervorum:

The shy deer enter the town and make their lair in the market place. The word order of the sentence is as intricate as the event is puzzling. Combining audacium with cervorum, ‘reckless deer’, and pavenda with mansuetudo, ‘terrifying meekness’, in two intertwined oxymora, the author heightens the unreal effect of this nightly scene. He even outdoes Lucan’s feras audaces by introducing the deer. If these shy creatures venture into the town, then the world is really topsy-turvy.

Shanzer and Wood 2002: 382 n. 3 have remarked that, although this looks like a mere topos, in times of famine wild animals do search for food in centres of population in which they would not normally be found, cf. D. Keys, Catastrophe. An Investigation into the Origins of the Modern World, London, 2000: 25. For comparison one might think of e.g. Apul. Met. 8.15 where famished wolves prowl around roads and farmhouses.

stupenda ... cubilia, ‘bewildering … lairs’: Stupendus is not found before the end of the fourth century, e.g. Ambr. Ep. 9.62.10 stupenda facinora. Sidonius also uses it in a complimentary way, Ep. 1.9.2 stupendi ... mores, ‘extraordinary characters’, of two important men in society.

Here the animals seek refuge in the town. It is interesting to see how the direction can also be the other way round: humans fleeing to the lairs of beasts: Paneg. 11.10.2 (escaping on Hannibal’s approach) omnes familiae rusticanae silvas et ferarum cubilia petivere.

collocabat audacium pavenda mansuetudo cervorum, ‘numbers of deer alarmingly bold in their tameness … making (their lairs)’ (Anderson): The wording collocabat ... mansuetudo cervorum is daring, but conforms entirely to Sidonius’ use of abstract nouns. Not only does the author say mansuetudo cervorum instead of mansueti cervi, but the abstract mansuetudo is at the same time made into the subject of collocabat, and thus takes action ‘in person’. For the use of abstract nouns in later Latin see my comment above on sect. 2 animositati nostrae. For examples of their application as subjects in Sidonius, see Mossberg 1934: 29 f. Add to these Ep. 7.3.2 dabis ergo veniam praesumptioni ... quae ... deblaterat.

To the deer Gregory added wolves. Ado in his turn, in his Chronicon, thought fit to add bears as well: 102 c lupi, ursi, ac cervi naturaliter pavidi.

The verb pavere is found four times in the correspondence, against timere eighteen times (1 : 4.5). For comparison I have consulted CLCLT-6, which for the present stems pave- versus time- in the period up to 200 AD furnishes a ratio of 1 : 6, and for the ensuing period 200 to 500 a ratio of 1 : 20. Pavere being the rarer choice, it may be considered more forceful than timere, especially in Sidonius who uses it in a ‘classical’ proportion, against overwhelming
odds of timere. See also 7.4.1 insinuare quoscumque iam paveo. Notice the rhyme stupenda – pavenda.

cum tu inter ista discessu primorum populariumque statu urbis
exinanito

cum (...) decurristi, ‘whereas you resorted’: After the descriptive imperfects concutiebantur,
tumulabant and collocabat, the ensuing action is rendered in the perfect tense with cum
inversum (LHS 2: 623).

Gualandri 1979: 47 n. 40 felt a stylistic leap from the complex sentences which precede to the
relative simplicity of the continuation of the narrative in this phrase. To my mind, however,
the wording in statu urbis exinanito and ad nova ... veterum Ninivitarum exempla remains on the
same high stylistic level.

dissessu primorum populariumque, ‘by the departure of the notables as well as the
common people’: The distinction here is between the upper class, more specifically the ordo
decurionum, and the ordinary people, but in 7.8.4 sacerdotibus, popularibus, and 7.9.11
popularium ... clericorum, popularis means ‘lay’ vs. ‘clerical’.

statu urbis exinanito, ‘after the strength of the town was impaired’: As in Lucan volgus and
patres leave the town. The verb exinanire (‘to drain’, ‘weaken’, ‘despoil’), already attested in
Plautus, and cf. e.g. Caes. Civ. 1.48.5 civitates exinanitae (towns robbed of their corn supplies),
is also found Ep. 7.12.2 and 8.11.12. The situation of the town, its strength, is weakened by
the departure of the citizens, because they are the decisive element, as in Ep. 7.9.23 si urbiu
status non tam murorum ambitu quam civium claritate taxandus est, ‘if the strength of towns is to
be judged not by the circumference of their walls, but the eminence of their citizens’.

Sidonius uses status often, nine times in the corpus of this commentary alone, with its
meaning ranging from ‘social/legal status’ (7.2.1, 7.7.5), ‘body/community’ (7.6.7), and the
visualizing ‘stand’ (7.5.1), to the bland ‘position/situation’ (7.5.4, 7.7.1); sometimes it is little
more than a circumlocution of the person or thing in question (7.8.1, 7.9.15). See comments
ad loc.

ad nova celer veterum Ninivitarum exempla decurristi,
‘you immediately resorted to a new application of the example set by the old people of
Nineveh’

The story of Nineveh is from the book of Jonah. There it is said of God that he commissioned
Jonah: ‘Go to the great city of Nineveh, go now and denounce it, for its wickedness stares me
in the face’ (Jon. 1.2). Jonah goes to Nineveh and proclaims its imminent destruction. The
people of Nineveh take on mourning, they fast and pray and try to mollify God. ‘God saw
what they did, and how they abandoned their wicked ways, and he repented and did not
bring upon them the disaster he had threatened’ (3.10).

The story of Nineveh is often mentioned by Christian writers, e.g. Ambr. Luc. 97 namque
Ninivitarum exemplo et denuntiatur supplicium et remedium demonstratur. Another example is its
elaborate poetic recasting in Prudentius’ hymn on fasting, Cath. 7.81 ff., where, in line 176,
after having told the story, the poet puts the rhetorical question: sed cur vetustae gentis
exemplum loquor?, and changes from the Old Testament to a more essential spiritual level,
Jesus’ fasting in the Gospels. On this, and similar, passages Gualandri 1979: 48 has based the argument for a denigratory sense of the phrase *veterum Ninivitarum* here in Sidonius: ‘l’età nuova è età di maggior vigore spirituale rispetto ai modelli dell’Antico Testamento’. Hence, *nova* is thought to denote the deeper spiritual value of the Rogations when compared to the repentance of Nineveh, and the even greater difference when compared to the pagan world (the expiatory rites in Lucan).

I, however, prefer to consider the adjective *veterum* as complimentary here, the opposition *nova* – *veterum* as (at least in part) rhetorically determined, and the parallel with Lucan as being of a literary, not a spiritual, character.

As regards the pagan parallel, Gualandri seems to misinterpret the character of the intertextuality between Sidonius and Lucan. Sidonius is not entering into a discussion with Lucan. It is not his aim to contrast the pagan world of Lucan with his own Christian values (moreover, in his time this is an antiquated discussion). Lucan provides him with a literary model, a framework for his account, a mould for his expression. Sidonius is not embarrassed at all by linking pagan and Christian lore. That is why I do not hesitate to extend the parallel to Luc. 1.584 f., where after the portents have taken place the priests are summoned following ancient tradition: *haec propter placuit Tuscos de more vetusto / acciri vates*. In the same way a bishop is needed to find a solution.

As regards the *nova* – *veterum* question, it would hardly be a compliment to Mamertus to make him surpass any obsolete rites. Indeed, in cases like this *vetus* is always positive in Sidonius, e.g. 7.6.1: we enjoy a long-standing friendship, which actually has a special significance, *novo nostrorum temporum exemplo amicitiarum vetere iura*, and 7.11.1: our correspondence is all the more valuable as it has ancient precedents, *veteribus annuit exemplis*. The present is sanctioned and enhanced by the venerated past. Sidonius feels the same respect towards the Old Testament precursors. He expresses it, using the adjective *priscus*, in Carm. 16.6 f. where the Holy Spirit is called upon, *qui pectora priscae / intrasti Mariae* (Aaron’s sister, cf. Exod. 15:20). In Ep. 7.6.4 the allegorical sense of Old Testament Egypt and Babylon is combined with New Testament Lazarus. To cite one random parallel for this – in fact very common – reverential actualization of the Jewish past, cf. Ambr. Fid. 1.1 *tu quoque sancte imperator Gratiane, veteris imitator historiae*, etc., ‘you too, Venerable Majesty Gratianus, follower of ancient history’, after which the Emperor is compared to the Queen of Sheba, who came to hear the wisdom of Solomon (= Ambrose!).

In addition, the opposition *novus* – *vetus* is a recurrent element in Sidonius’ way of writing (see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style: ‘Word play, sound and rhythm’). Rather than suggesting a profound issue, the opposition is chosen primarily for its rhetorical effect, almost as an automatism. Among examples, cf. in this book, apart from 7.6.1, 7.9.25 *novam sententiam meam … vestram veterem*, with commentary.

To complete this survey, I will briefly discuss the other side of the theological issue. Of course the Pauline opposition of Law (Old Testament) and Grace (New Testament) pervades the whole of patristic literature. It is also there in Sidonius: in Ep. 8.13.3 (about a converted Jew) and 8.14 (the material offerings of the Old Testament are inferior to the spiritual ones of the New) – to which Bellès 3: 24 n. 7 adds Ep. 6.12.6 (to put Triptolemus and a priest on a par is offensive).
A closer look at the passage from Prudentius cited earlier reveals an interesting parallel – not mentioned by Gualandri - with the texts under consideration. In Cath. 7.143-45 the townspeople and the senate (Sidonius: *primorum populariumque*) panic:

>cursant per ampla congregatim moenia
plebs et senatus, omnis actas civium, 
pallens iuventus, heilantes feminae.

‘Commons and councillors, citizens of every age, pale youths and wailing women rush in crowds all about the spacious city.’

It is worthwhile to end with a summary of the discerning analysis by Harries 1994: 108 and 113 f. of Sidonius’ habit of avoiding direct scriptural quotations in favour of references and paraphrases, ‘the Late Roman literary technique of employing a single phrase or even a word to evoke a whole context to give added depth and intricacy’ (113), in this case employed to the effect of promoting a New Nineveh: Vienne. See also General Introduction, sect. 6.1 Intertextuality.

celer, ‘immediately’, implies both boldness and wit; see TLL 3: 750.71 ‘de mentis celeritate’. Cf. 7.9.5 celeriore … ingenia.


ne divinae admonitioni tua quoque desperatio conviciaretur.


quoque, ‘also’, in addition to the reproach to God which resulted from the unbelief and the flight of the other inhabitants of Vienne.

conviciaretur, ‘should revile’: *Conviciari*, ‘to utter abuse against’, ‘revile’, is found since Var. *R.* 2.5.1; with dat. e.g. in Quint. *Inst.* 3.8.69 and Ulp. *Dig.* 49.1.8. In Sidonius it occurs only here. It is the abusive counterpart of *accusare*: Liv. 42.41.3 ut accusare potius vere quam conviciari videantur.

**Section 4**

This flashback is not paralleled in Lucan. Together with sections 5-6a it is fused into the crowning episode of the vigil of Easter in Avitus’ and Gregory’s adaptation of the passage. To visualize this story compare Raphael’s painting of pope Leo IV appearing and warding off the fire near St Peter’s (847 AD), in the Stanza dell’incendio di Borgo in the Vatican.

There is an illuminating parallel between this thaumaturgical episode and the *Vita* of Martin of Tours. Sulp. Sev. Mart. 14.2 narrates how, on St Martin’s arrival, the flames drew back:

>quod ubi Martinus advertit, rapido cursu tectum domus scandit, obviurn se advententibus flammis inferens. tum vero, mirum in modum, cerneres contra vim venti ignem retorqueri, ut compugnantium
inter se elementorum quidam conflictus videretur. Compare how he once survived amid the flames in his room: Ep. 1.13 scutum fidei et orationis arripiens mediis flammis totus ad Dominum conversus incubuit. tum vero divinitus igne submoto, innoxio sibi orbe flammarum, orabat. Maybe Sidonius consciously inserted Mamertus in the great tradition of St Martin. Thus Rousseau 1976: 364. To corroborate this further, one might want to compare how Sidonius participated in the furthering of the cult of St Martin together with Perpetuus of Tours, ‘administrateur zélé de la mission’ (Duval and Barral i Altet 1991: 39). See the introduction to letter 9, and General Introduction, ch. 4 The church.

et vere iam de deo tu minime poteras absque peccato post virtutum experimenta diffidere.

et vere, ‘well, really’, ‘yes, truly’: The words et vere, beginning a confirmatory clause, are found twice more in Sidonius’ letters, viz. 4.1.3 and 5.10.2. They are first attested in Cic. Arch. 24 atque is …: ‘o fortunate’ inquit ‘adulescens, qui tuae virtutis Homerum praeconem inveneris!’ et vere. See further e.g. Aus. Ep. 13.15 tu recita; et vere poterunt tua dicta videri, and many times in the homilies of Ambrose and Augustine, e.g. Ambr. Psal. 118.13 dixisti: ‘favi mellis, sermones boni.’ et vere bonus favus, quem manuducat ecclesia, which testifies to the colloquial nature of the phrase. It can be ranged with the examples of colloquial language in letter writing given by Cugusi 1983: 78 ff. Cf. for this confirmatory use phrases like Cic. Tul. 39 et recte, and Ov. Met. 9.585 et merito.

The connector et has its ‘presentational’ function in these cases: it introduces a new element in the discourse, i.e. the flashback to an earlier proof of God’s help. See Kroon 1995: 106 f.

Once assessed, this might settle an editorial problem. Ruricius of Limoges, who is among Sidonius’ correspondents (Sidon. Ep. 4.16, 5.15, 8.10; Carm. 10 and 11; Ruric. Ep. 1.8 and 1.9) has a sentence which is strikingly similar: Ruric. Ep. 2.3.6 et (?) vera non minimum potestis capere de Christi voluntate solacium, and also 2.39.8. Krusch in his edition MGH AA 8 (1887) both times leaves out et, writing: moderarer. vere (moderarer ends the preceding sentence). I propose reinstating et. It can be seen to have left a trace in the confused MS readings: in Ep. 2.3.6 moderare vere G: moderarem & vere corr. G; in 2.39.8 moderare revere G.

iam … tu minime, ‘you absolutely least of all’: iam gives further emphasis to the very special position Mamertus is in. Man has a tendency not to trust in God. A priori Mamertus might be expected not to be different from his fellow men. Yet, because of the miracles God has made him perform, the opposite is the case: he least of all can afford to have doubts about God. iam marks a state of affairs which is different from what the reader presupposed (‘counter-presuppositional focus’), see Kroon and Risselada 1998: 436 f., who provide, among others, the following example: Sen. Ep. 90.44 sed quamvis egregia illis vita fuerit et carens fraude, non fuere sapientes, quando hoc iam in opere maximo nomen est, ‘but no matter how excellent and guileless was the life of the men of that age, they were not wise men; for that title (hoc, i.e. sapiens) is reserved for the highest achievement’ (my italics).

absque peccato, ‘without sinning’: Absque, which is a conjunction in Plautus and Terence, is found as a preposition since Quint. Inst. 7.2.44 absque sententia. In Sidonius’ correspondence it occurs ten times, against twenty times sine. Absque peccato belongs to Christian idiom, e.g. Hier. Ep. 3.69.8 quis est ille qui absque peccato, id est sine reprehensione, versetur in hoc mundo?, and in the Vulgate, e.g. Deut. 23.22 si nolueris polliceris absque peccato eris.
post virtutum experimenta, ‘after you had experienced his miracles’: In Christian idiom virtutes (mostly plur.) means ‘the power to perform miracles’, hence ‘miracles’. See, from different periods, e.g. Act. 2.22 Iesum Nazarenum, virum approbatum a Deo in vobis virtutibus et prodigis et signis, quae fecit Deus per illum in medio vestri, Tert. Pud. 10 si virtutum documenta vidissent, ‘if they had seen the proofs of the miracles’, and Sulp. Sev. Chron. 1.21 (Moses was not allowed by God to enter the promised land) quod eo tempore quo saxum ferire et aquam producere praeceptus est, post tot virtutum suarum experimenta dubitaverit. See Mohrmann 3: 55 (‘vulgarisme légitimé par l’usage biblique’) and 113 (among semantic Christianisms). Already rightly understood by Semple 1930: 39, adducing the Greek δυνάμεις, ‘God’s mighty works’, e.g. Matth. 14.2.

An example of the phrase virtutum experimenta in a non-Christian, military context is Vell. 2.94.4 praecipuis omnium virtutum experimentis in eo tractu editis, ‘proofs of all sorts of excellence’. Cf. also Sidon. Ep. 7.7.4 devotionis experimentis, with comment.

nam cum vice quadam civitas conflagrare coepisset,

nam, ‘namely’: For this use of nam, introducing subsidiary information, see above in sect. 3 nam. Here it introduces a flashback.


fides tua in illo ardore plus caluit;

Notice the play on the literal and figurative sense of the verb ‘to burn’, conflagrare, caluit. Avitus, in his account, combines calorem fidei suae ascendens with the oxymoron flumine lacrimarum permisssam ignibus potestatem ... compescuit. Sidonius reserves the motif of the tears for sect. 5, and there applies it to the faithful: their aqua ... oculorum will be more effective when extinguishing the fires than ordinary water.

No less miraculous is the effect of a burning faith in winter: Opusc. 3, p. 369 l. 7 Hartel, (Epiphanius defies cold and ice) mortiferum frigus et concretas algore glebas fidei ardor exuperat (cf. Hier. Ep. 108.7).

The metaphor of a burning faith is found in patristic literature as early as Tert. Ieiun. 17 apud te ... fides in culinis calet (of a glutton), Cypr. Eleem. 25 credentium fides novo adhuc fidei calore fervebat. Fidei ardor is used repeatedly by Jerome, e.g. Ep. 77.2 and 130.1. One finds fidei ignis in Caes. Arel. Serm. 6.7.

in illo ardore, ‘in the middle of that heat’, ‘in spite of that heat’: In is to be interpreted here as a case of OLD s.v. 40c, ‘where the action is surprising in the light of circumstances mentioned’. The heat of the fire did not discourage Mamertus; on the contrary, despite the danger, his faith burnt even brighter. Cf. e.g. Stat. Theb. 2.640 cui vita recens et adhuc in vulneri vires, ‘whose life still lingered and who retained his strength despite his wound’. Cf. related cases like 7.5.3 in habitacione ... in religione, ‘concerning ...’, and 7.9.15 in Simone mago, ‘in the case of ...’, with my comment.

For comparison (the burning faith of the three men in Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace extinguishes the blaze) see Sedul. Carm. 1.202-205:
tantoque ardores calentes
cordis, imagineae vincunt incendia poenae
igne animi. o quanta est credentum gloria: flammis
ardentis fidei restincta est flamma camini.

‘Burning with so much warmth in their hearts, they overcame the fire of their presumed punishment by the glow of their spirit. How great is the glory of the believers: the fire of the oven is extinguished by the flames of their ardent faith.’

et cum in conspectu pavidae plebis obiectu solo corporis tui ignis recussus in tergum fugitivis flexibus sinuaretur,

objetu solo corporis tui, ‘the mere interposition of your body’ (Anderson): Notice the parallel of the bishop confronting the fire with the town confronting the enemy in sect. 1 moram de nostra tantum obice patiuntur. The attitude which is evoked by Sidonius in this letter, and in the letters 1-11 as a whole, is one of tough resistance.

ignis recussus in tergum ... sinuaretur, ‘stopped short, the fire writhed back’: The verb *recutere*, ‘to strike so as to cause to vibrate or recoil’, is found in poetry since Verg. A. 2.52 *uteroque recusso*, and was introduced in prose by Apul. Met. 4.25, and 5.26. Sidonius applies the verb in Ep. 2.2.15 *arborum imago ... recussa*, for the shadow of the trees reduced to a minimum at midday, and Carm. 2.427 f. *de noce recussa / excepti ... rores*, of the night being driven away by dawn.

I believe there may be an allusion here to the description of Camilla in Verg. A. 11.653-54:

*illa etiam, si quando in tergum pulsa recessit,
spicula converso fugientia derigit arcu.*

‘And sometimes too, when compelled to fall back, she would aim sharp arrows in her retreat, turning her bow to shoot behind her’ (transl. W.F. Jackson Knight, Harmondsworth, 1956).

The fact of being driven back (*recussus, pulsa*), the (almost) pleonastic wording of the retreat (*in tergum ... sinuaretur, in tergum ... recessit*) and the expressive enallage of recoiling and shooting backward (*fugitivis flexibus, spicula ... fugientia*) are all there.

The same movement, this time of a snake which avoids a stone thrown at it, is sketched by Stat. *Theb*. 5.562 *iam mollia colla refusus / in tergum serpens venientem exhauserat ictum*. Further, there is a distant echo of passages with writhing snakes like Verg. A. 2.208 *sinuat ... immensa volumine terga*, and Ov. *Met*. 9.64 *postquam flexos sinuavi corpus in orbes*. See General Introduction, sect. 6.1 *Intertextuality*.

As to the content, flame and serpent form a significant pair. Ravaging fire and devilish threat are one and the same thing, as has been demonstrated by Knox 1950 in his analysis of the coherent imagery of the second book of the Aeneid: ‘The serpent stood … for the destructive flames of Troy’s fall’ (397).

miraculo terribili, novo, inusitato affuit flammae cedere per reverentiam, cui sentire defuit per naturam.

Paradoxically dead nature behaves as though it were sensible. The point is underlined by the carefully antithetic formulation. It emphatically rounds off the flashback of section 4.
miraculo terribili, novo, inusitato, ‘by a startling miracle, never known or seen before’

(Anderson): The wording is thoroughly rooted in classical usage. *Novus* and *inusitatus* are often combined, in most cases with little or no difference in meaning, as a reinforcement only, e.g. Caes. *Civ.* 3.47.1 *nova et inusitata belli ratio*. *Inusitatus* is less forceful than *inauditus*, see Cic. *Caec.* 36 *novum est, non dico inusitatum, verum omnino inauditum*. *Novus* and *terribilis* come together in Liv. 21.20.1 *nova terribilisque species*, who often combines *novus/novitas* with *miraculum*, e.g. Liv. 1.47.9 *novitate ac miraculo attoniti*. Also Sen. *Nat.* 7.1.1 *ubi novum aliquod e caelo miraculum fulsit*. *Rhet.* *Her.* 1.4.7 *de rebus magnis, novis, inusitatis*, resembles our phrase as a whole.

Sidonius himself uses *inusitatus* in a similar enumeration and also in the last position in *Ep.* 7.12.3 *affatu tuo melelo, gravi, arguto, inusitato*. Our phrase presents the more usual tricolon (see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 *Style*: ‘Sequences’).

Summing up, there is no reason whatsoever to depart from the MS reading *inusitato* and replace it by Haupt’s conjecture *invisitato*, ‘unseen’, as did Luetjohann, Mohr and Anderson. See also Mossberg 1934: 36 ff.

affuit, ‘managed to’: The maximum is wrung from *affuit* to make *affuit … cedere* parallel to *sentire defuit*, ‘the fire, which lacks a mind, had the presence of mind to recoil’. *Adest* refers to the quality one has or the means at one’s disposal, e.g. Apul. *Plat.* 2.13 *nec constantia illis adsit et diuturnitas desit*, Aug. *Civ.* 6.10 *libertas adfuit … scribenti, viventi defuit* (*TLL* 2: 921.12 ff.).

Another, less probable, interpretation might be: ‘it is possible’, which emerges in later Latin. See *TLL* 2: 925.61 ff. ‘seq. inf. πάρεστιν, ἔξεστιν, licet’.

More than once Sidonius seizes the opportunity to play on *abesse - adesse*: *Ep.* 1.7.10 *dum haec, et qui procerum defuerant adfuerunt, 4.1.5* *tibi etsi sede absumus, adsimus affectu*, 9.9.2 *parere properanti adsunt vota, causae absunt*. See General Introduction, sect. 6.2 *Style*.

Section 5

After the flashback of section 4 we now return to the main story of the invention of the Rogations. Mamertus proceeds to the *procuratio prodigii*. The clerics (*paucis*), to begin with, have to endorse the most restrictive regime through fasts and an impeccable conduct. The whole of the population (*omnibus*) is advised to pray, mourn for its sins and show an ardent faith. In the next section the laity reacts immediately and enthusiastically (*confestim sequax consilii*), the humble people first and then the authorities.

igitur primum nostri ordinis viris et his paucis

primum, ‘for a start’: Mamertus begins with his own environment.

nostri ordinis viris, ‘the men of our order’: These are the clerics, as in *Ep.* 4.14.3 *in nostri ordinis viris*. The context there is comparable, one of humility and contrition, especially associated with the clergy, diametrically opposed to the ways of the world. For *ordo* see Nemo 1998: 534 n. 1: ‘désigne en droit romain les classes sociales (sénateurs, chevaliers …), … en droit canonique les types de clercs … ou les grandes catégories de vie chrétienne (moines, clercs, laïcs), ou de status plus particuliers (veuves, vierges…’). For my corpus see the respective entries at 7.5.1 *utriusque professionis ordinibus*, 7.6.7 *minorum ordinum ministeria*, 7.9.3 *non minus suum quam reliquis ordines*, 7.9.16 *nostri … ordinis comes*. Sidonius does not use *ordo* as t.t. for the town council, *ordo decurionum*, although it must have played an important
role in, e.g., the procedure for the episcopate in Bourges (letters 5, 8 and 9; see the Introduction to letter 5, section 4 The election and consecration of bishops). Instead, he uses more ceremonious generalizations, like primores (see above, sect. 3 primorum populariumque, cf. e.g. Amm. 22.9.4 ordo … et populus).

et his paucis, ‘and they were few in number’: The meaning of the apposition is either that the clergy of Clermont did not count many members, or that only a few of them were at hand, the others having fled. I prefer the first explanation, with Anderson and Loyen, because Sidonius only makes explicit mention of the flight of the populace together with their (secular) leaders, not of the clergy: sect. 3 discessu primorum populariumque, sect. 6 humilis turba ... maioribus quoque suis fuit incitamento (viz. to repent and come back). Paucis is opposed to omnibus in the next sentence: the small circle of the clergy and the large circle of the city’s inhabitants. Although few in number, the clergy had the full spiritual responsibility for the townspeople.

The MSS branch CFP apparently found the apposition et his paucis difficult, and read et his paucis nostri ordinis viris. All editors prefer the reading I also follow, on the authority of the second hand of M (see General Introduction, sect. 5.2 Manuscripts).

indicis ieiunia, interdicis flagitia, supplicia praedicis, remedia promittis;
Gualandri 1979: 48 n. 48 has rightly drawn attention to the elaborate stylistic care taken here, and in the ensuing sentences. She pointed out:

- Indicis, interdicis, praedicis, promittis with complements according to the scheme ab ab / ba ba, and the use of a verb with its different compounds, which is among Sidonius’ favourites.

- The anaphora doces, mones, mones, with a series of abstracta giving a certain sonority to the diction. One can be even more precise than Gualandri noted: there is a quadruple parallel on ‘you teach them’, exponis ..., doces ..., mones ..., mones ..., with variation, but a deliberately identical conclusion, which gives it a final ring.

- The extravagant image of tears putting out a fire.

For Sidonius’ style, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style; for an appreciation of extravagance also sect. 6.4.1 Mannerism?

indicis ieiunia, interdicis flagitia, ‘you proclaimed fasts, proscribed sins’ (Anderson): Just as in Nineveh: Ion. 3.5 et prae dicaverunt ieiunium, 7 f. homines ... non gustent quidquam ... et aquam non bibant ... et convertatur vir a via sua mala. Gregory, not intent on the same stylistic niceties as here, has indixit populis ieiunium.

supplicia praedicis, remedia promittis, ‘prescribed supplications, and promised remedies’ (Anderson): Together with poena and venia (next member), these are keywords in the Christian theme of punishment and pardon for the sin of men. Cf. e.g. Tert. Paenit. 4 (Deus) qui poenam per iudicium destinavit, idem et veniam per poenitentiam spopondit, Aug. Ep. 140.48 (Deus) supplicia minatur, beneficia policetur, and the above (sect. 3 ad nova) cited Ambr. in Luc. 97 namque Ninivitarum exemplo et denuntiatur supplicium et remedium demonstratur.

The theme will return in Ep. 7.10.2 where the suffering of the Arvernian people is also seen as punishment for their sins: in iustitiae nostrae merita. In the whole of the letters 1 – 11 ‘crime and punishment’ is a note which Sidonius strikes at the outset as well as at the end. See comment on 7.10.2. It played a role of prime importance in the process of the Western
Roman world in coming to grips with the upheaval caused by the barbarian invasions in the fifth century. We only have to mention Augustine’s *De civitate dei*, and Salvian’s *De gubernatione dei*. It was not for nothing that the piety of Lérins stressed the freedom of the will, to make room for man’s responsibility for what befell him. Sidonius stands in the tradition of Lérins. See General Introduction, sect. 4.2 *Theology, monasticism, the saints, and liturgy.*

exponis omnibus nec poenam longinquam esse nec veniam;

**longinquam**, ‘far off’, i.e. ‘long-term’ or ‘difficult to reach’: Sidonius’ use of *longinquus* in this theological context is original. It reminds one of *Deut.* 30.11 where God is introduced saying: *mandatum hoc, quod ego praecipio tibi Hodie, non supra te est neque procul posidum*, ‘the commandment that I lay on you this day is not too difficult for you, it is not too remote’, and 15 *considera quod Hodie proposuerm in conspectu tuo vitam et bonum et e contrario mortem et malum*, ‘today I offer you the choice of life and good, or death and evil’. Forgiveness is always within man’s reach if only he repents. Cf. the use of *longinquus* with *spes* in Stat. *Silv.* 2.1.52, *Theb.* 12.339, *Tac. Ann.* 13.37.5.

doices denuntiatae solitudinis minas orationum frequentia esse amoliendas;

denuntiatae solitudinis minas ... esse amoliendas, ‘the threat of the announced destruction will be averted’: *Denuntiare*, ‘to make known in advance, announce (often by prophesy or sim.)’ (OLD), often takes an object with an unfavourable connotation, e.g. *Cic. Catil.* 3.17 *exiti ac fati diem*, *Verg. A.* 3.366 *tristis ... iras obscenamque fanem*, *Tib. 3.5.5 nigram ... horam*. For *solitudo*, ‘destruction’, ‘devastation’, cf. e.g. *Tac. Ag.* 30.6 *ubi solitundinem faciunt, pacem appellant*, Sidon. *Ep.* 7.6.8 *sed iam nec per rusticas solum solitudo parochias*.

In combining *minae* and *amoliri* Sidonius has chosen a rarely found, but apparently quite usual technical phrase, as appears from the only other instance, *Symm. Ep.* 5.63.2 *sed v.c.* *Minutianus tui securus et legum relationis minas amoliri optat examine*, which is from a businesslike letter about a legal threat: ‘well, trusting in you and in the law, by an investigation senator Minutianus aims to avert the threat of being charged in his turn’. Cf. synonyms in *Plin. Nat.* 32.23 *amoliendis periculis*, *Gel.* 5.12.14 *uti mala ... amolientur*.

For the gerundivum with *esse*, having come to indicate the future tense in later Latin, see LHS 2: 313 f. Although not obligatory (‘you have to pray hard’ might do as well, grammatically speaking), this meaning seems apposite here because of the parallel with the next sentence, which has *posse restitui*, ‘will be extinguished’ (see there). On a theological level, the future meaning stresses that God’s mercy is not hard to obtain.

orationum frequentia, ‘by frequent prayers’: Cf. *Hier. Ep.* 52.3 *orationis ad Dominum lesum frequentia*, *Max. Taur. Hom.* 85.2 *haec (i.e. portia iustitiae) orationum frequentia defenditur*. For the characteristic later Latin usage of the so-called ‘genitivus inversus’ with an abstract noun (*orationum frequentia* = *orationibus frequentibus*) see LHS 2: 152.

Note the opposition *solitudinis – frequentia* in quasi chiastic form.
mones assiduitatem furentis incendii aqua potius oculorum quam fluminum posse restingui;

As stated earlier, the ‘baroque’ image of the tears which extinguish the fire is repeated by Avitus’ *accendens flumine lacrimarum permissetam ignibus poestatem incendio abscedente compescuit*, and Gregory’s *restinxitque domus incendium flumen profluentium lacrimarum*. What, however, in Sidonius is clearly still a metaphor, acquires in his successors a realistic character. Here, gradually, a new, confused sense of reality manifests itself, leading up to the miracles in the medieval lives of the saints, such as the abbot St Furseus (tears extinguish a stake in *Vita* 1.2.10, BHL 3209 ff.) and St Agatha (tears extinguish the flames of Mount Etna in *Vita* 4.24, BHL 133 ff.). But even in these miracle stories a sense of the figurative meaning remains present, e.g. in St Agatha’s *Vita*: *nisi poenitentiae lacrimis ... divini furoris flammas extinguas*.

*aqua oculorum*, ‘water of the eyes’, for ‘tears’, provoked by the parallel with *fluminum*, is not found elsewhere in such a terse way, but cf. Prop. 3.6.10 *illius ex oculis multa cadebat aqua*, Ov. *Tr*. 4.1.98 *inque sinum maestae labitur imber aquae*.

*posse restingui*, ‘are likely to be extinguished’, instead of *restinguenda*, to create a variation between *amoliendas* of the previous sentence and *firmandam* of the next. For *posse* as an auxiliary of the future tense (mainly passive) in later Latin, see LHS 2: 313 f. While the development of the modal verbs *debere*, *posse* and *velle*, and of *habere* + inf. into temporal auxiliaries is taken for granted in the manuals, Pinkster 1985 is very sceptical. *Posse*, he points out, in many cases expresses likelihood (p. 194).

The result is a series of three clausulae: first cretic + ditrochee = *cursus velox* (*esse amoliendas*) then twice cretic + trochee/spondee = *cursus planus* (*posse restingui, -ate firmandam*). See General Introduction, sect. 6.3 *Prose rhythm*.

Sidonius believed in the cleansing power of tears, cf. 7.6.3 *longis ... abluenda fletibus conscientia*. Prévot 1997: 227 thinks it not impossible that he had read Ambrose’s *De paenitentia*, e.g. *Paenit*. 2.5 *qui enim agit paenitentiam, non solum diluere lacrimis debet peccatum suum*, etc., and 2.8 *si aquam non habeo, habeo lacrimas, quibus dum pedes tuos lavo, utinam me ipsum dilaum!*

*mones minacem terrae motuum conflictationem fidei stabilitate firmandam.*

*minacem ... conflictationem*, ‘threatening clash’: For *minax*, which has thematic significance in this letter (threats from the enemy kingdom, threats from nature), see my comment on sect. 1 *regni minacis*.

*Conflictatio*, ‘clash’, occurs since Quintilian, usually meaning ‘struggle’, ‘contest’. In Apul. *Apol*. 43 it has the rare meaning of ‘collision’, ‘shock’, as here (see TLL 4: 235.80). It is nowhere else used of earthquakes. Cf. Sidon. *Ep*. 7.12.4 *absque conflictatione*, ‘beyond question’. An alternative might be the connotation ‘ordeal, ‘torture’, which is pointed out by Georges s.v. for Cyprian, e.g. *Ep*. 11.7.2 *nee a fide qua in eum semel credimus præsentis pressurae conflictatione deficiant*, ‘...the ordeal of the present oppression’, which would bring *conflictationem* close to *minas*.
Instead of *terrae motuum conflictationem*, simply writing *terrae motus* would have done for the sense alone, but the formulation is extended by adding the abstract noun *conflictatio* to create a formal counterpart to *fidei stabilitate*. See General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style. Note also the factual contrast between movement and stability, for which cf. Amm. 26.10.16 (of the seismic activity preceding the tsunami) *tremefacta concutitur omnis terreni stabilitas ponderis*.

Note the soundplay on *m* and *f*: *mones* - *minacem* - *motuum* and *(con)flictationem* - *fidei – firmandam*, which appositely colours the concluding sentence of Mamertus' admonition.

*fidei stabilitate*, ‘an unaltering faith’, is found since Cypr. *Demetr. 20 cultorem Dei, subnixum spei veritate et fidei stabilitate fundatum*. Cf. such variations as Tert. *Bapt. 10 stabilis fides*, Cypr. Ep. 9.1.2 *per firmamentum fidei, Mortal. 1 fides firma*. Note the gen. inversus, for which see above on sect. 5 *orationum frequentia*.

*firmandam*, ‘will be stopped’: *Firmare*, ‘to make steady’, ‘stabilize’, here pregnantly ‘to check’, ‘arrest’, of an earthquake is again a Sidonian invention. This use is found neither in TLL nor in OLD. Forcellini 3: 89, s.v. 6, lists its use in medicine, i.q. *sistere*, in case of diarrhoea, Cels. 1.3.14 *alvum (sc. fusam) firmare*, ‘bind the bowels’, Plin. *Nat. 14.117 (uva Lycia) quae solutam (alvum) firmat*. Cf. for a comparable, but metaphorical use, Sen. *Benef. 6.31.9 fulcire ac firmare labentia, Amm. 17.13.28 labentia firmaturi.*

**Section 6**

cuius confestim sequax humilis turba consilii maioribus quoque suis fuit incitamento,

cuius confestim sequax humilis turba consilii, ‘the lowly people, immediately responding to this advice’: The conversion of the ordinary people (*humilis turba*) is prompt (*confestim*), and incites the upper class (*maioribus*) to do the same. Conversion is characteristically abrupt, cf. e.g. Luc. 18:43 *et confestim vidit et sequebatur illum*, Rufin. *Hist. 11.4 qui (= certain missionaries) talibus exordiis praedicantes eis fidem domini Iesu Christi, in tantam conversionem repente eos perduxerunt, ut statim ... templum ... destruerent et ecclesiam confestim aedificarent*, Aug. Conf. 8.12 *et tali oraculo confestim ad te esse conversum (sc. Antonium)*.

Sidonius here is, as always, innovative with unexpected combinations of often ordinary words, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style. *Consilium sequi* is trivial (from Ter. *Phorm. 461 onwards), but *sequax consilii* is unique. *Turba sequax* is rare, used only once of animals: *Culex 278 f. turba ferarum / ... sequax. Humilis turba* is not elsewhere attested, but cf. e.g. Liv. 1.8.5 *obscuram atque humilem ... multitudinem*, Plin. *Nat. praef. 6 humili vulgo*.

In the mind of the bishop there might be present the underlying idea of Christian humility, cf. e.g. Ambr. *Luc. 5 l. 493 (Jesus descends from to mountain to meet the people) quomodo enim turba nisi in humili Christum videret? non sequitur ad excelsa, non ascendit ad sublimia*, ‘Where else can the people meet Christ, but in the valley? They don’t follow him to the heights, they don’t climb to the summit.’ Christ has come for poor and ordinary mankind.

*maioribus*, ‘the mighty’, ‘the upper class’, opp. to *humilis*. Cf. e.g. Hor. *Sat. 2.61 maiorum*, where Kiessling-Heinze comment ‘steht für potentiorum’. Cf. Sidon. *Ep. 3.3.7 maiorum opibus, 7.2.5 maiorum sodalitatibus*. 
It is characteristic of the time and the situation in Gaul that Mamertus and the other bishops increasingly exploited their ecclesiastical authority (Sidon. Ep. 7.17.1 iure ecclesiastico) to create an influential position all of their own in the city, identifying themselves less with the traditional network of power, and even opposing the maiores in the interest of the humiles.

Sidonius praises bishop Faustus for backing the cause of the lowly who have been entrusted to him: Carm. 17.116 se te commissus populus tenet et minor audet / te medio tumidos maiorum temnere mores. See Rousseau 1976: 363, and General Introduction, ch. 4 The church.

fuit incitamento, ‘prompted’, is only paralleled by Tert. Paenit. 2 si captatio eius ad benefaciendum incitamento est. Esse + dat. finalis (the so-called predicative dative) is the usual phrase, whereas esse + nom./acc. is more emphatic: see Löfstedt 1956, 1: 194 ff. and LHS 2: 98. Sidonius here applies it throughout the section: saluti, imitationi, praesidio, calamitati, formidini.

quos cum non piguisset fugere, redire non puduit

piguisset ... puduit, ‘had resented … were ashamed’: For the difference between piget and pudet, and the greater impact of pudet, cf. Cic. Dom. 29 ut me non solum piget stultitiae meae, sed etiam pudet, cf. Sal. Jug. 95.4. The two are often coupled since Pac. Trag.143 ff. quod iam et mehe / piget paternum nomen, maternum pudet / profari. In Christian literature since Tert. Apol. 2.20 in nobis solis pudet aut piget … pronuntiare?

Note the chiasmus piguisset fugere - redire ... puduit.

qua devotione placatus inspector pectorum deus
devotio, ‘devotion’, ‘piety’, is mainly Christian, e.g. Lact. Mort. 16.8 fidem ac devotionem. Its coverage in TLL 5/1, s.v. 2, almost exclusively concerns Christian usage, though without explicit mention of the fact. In Sidonius, cf. 7.7.3 (there ‘patriotism’) and 7.9.21.

placatus, ‘reconciled’, ‘merciful’, is the language of prayer, pagan as well as Christian, e.g. Ov. Met. 4.31 placatus mitisque ... adis, Sen. Oed. 248 quisquis deorum regna placatus vides, and Miss. Goth. 6.38 hanc eorum passionis memoriae ecclesiam tuam sollemniter celebrantem placatus intende, Corp. orat. 2400 (CC SL 160c) ecclesiae tuae, domine, munera placatus assume.

inspector pectorum deus, ‘God who searches hearts’: God knows what goes on inside man, cf. e.g. Ier. 17.10 ego Dominus scrutans cor et probans renes, Act. 1.24 tu Domine, qui corda nosti omnium, Rom. 8.27 qui autem scrutatur corda, scit quid desideret Spiritus. Inspector pectorum is hapax for the more usual inspector cordis, e.g. Ambrosiast. in Rom. 9.16, Aug. Ep. 262.10. Cf. López Kindler 2003: 843 n. 27.

The story of Jonah in Nineveh continues as follows, after the people have shown remorse (3:10): ‘God saw what they did, and how they abandoned their wicked ways, and he repented and did not bring upon them the disaster he had threatened.’

fecit esse obsecrationem vestram vobis saluti, ceteris imitationi, utrisque praesidio.

obsecrationem vestram, ‘your prayer’: Obsecratio, ‘prayer’, ‘supplication’, is both pagan and Christian, e.g. Liv. 4.21.5, Psalm. 142.1. Vestram indicates the clergy, just like the ensuing vobis (cf. sect. 7 vobis = the people of Vienne).
fecit esse, ‘caused to be’, is postclassical. See Blaise 1955: 144 facio + inf. = facio ut, e.g. Aug. Serm. 52.9 fecit ... nasci, Ambr. Ep. 24.8 fecit decernere. For Sidonius cf. 1.10.2 faciet offerri, 3.5.1 ut ... me faceret postulare.

vobis ... ceteris ... utrisque, ‘you ... the rest ... both’: A comparable tricolon in Ep. 3.13.4 ita vivens paucis voluptati, nullis amori, omnibus risui, cf. 1.4.1 amicis laetitia, lividis poena, posteris gloria. The first two members of the enumeration are contained within the third. This is a special case of the ternary structure so often found in Sidonius, for which see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

saluti ... imitationi ... praesidio, ‘blessing ... imitation ... support’: The dat. fin. saluti and praesidio (see above on fuit incitamento) are found throughout Latin literature, but imitationi is later Latin and rare, viz. Symm. Ep. 1.13.1 id mihi imitationi esse non potuit.

denique illic deinceps non fuere vel damna calamitati vel ostenta formidini.

‘consequently, there, from then on, losses were no calamity and portents no panic’

denique, ‘on account of that’, ‘consequently’: With these words the writer rounds off the account of the events at Vienne and tells us that the people there (illic opposed to iste, ‘the people here’, in the next sentence) managed not to panic at what had befallen them, but to look at the problems soberly.

calamitati ... formidini: Calamitati is reminiscent of the prose of Nepos and Cicero, e.g. Nep. Dat. 6.6 and Cic. Ver. 4.76, and was widely used, but formidini was only introduced by the crisp idiom of Sall. Cat. 20.7 quibus, si res publica valeret, formidini essemus, and remained more exclusive. For Sidonius cf. 7.7.2 non fuit ... formidini.

vel (... vel) comes to the fore as a replacement of et (... et) and is dominant in later Latin, see LHS 2: 501 f.

quae omnia sciens populus iste Viennensibus tuis et accidisse prius et non accessisse posterius

populus iste, ‘the people here’ in Clermont, ‘my people’: Iste from early times encroached more and more on the territory of ille and especially hic, see LHS 2:184, Blaise 1955: 110. Cf. e.g. Hier. Ep. 14.1 istae (= meae) quoque litterae testes sunt. In Sidonius cf. e.g. Ep. 3.3.2 istius (“this”, here in Clermont) tibi reptatas caespitis glaebas. For the opposition with ille cf. e.g. Ambr. Ep. 18.23 ille annus ... iste annus.

For the phrase populus iste, one may compare Aus. Lud. 194 populus iste, where it refers to the public present in the theatre. In our case one hears the bishop in relation to his flock. One might even hear an overtone of the Biblical usage of populus iste, the chosen people, guilty, but still the object of God’s care, e.g. Moses’ confession and God’s answer Exod. 32.31 peccavit populus iste peccatum magnum, 34 duc populum istum quo locutus sum tibi.

et accidisse prius et non accessisse posterius, ‘had indeed happened in the past, but had not repeated itself later’: Stylistic ingenuity remains on a high level. After the series of final datives, now a double paronomasia. Hagendahl in his study of the letters of Sidonius’ correspondent and stylistic soulmate Ruricius (Hagendahl 1952: 71 ff.), has undertaken to establish a classification of paronomasia on the basis of etymology. He distinguishes three
classes: 1. non-cognate words (e.g. *affatus* - *affectus*), 2. compound words (e.g. *declamare – clamare, infert – confert*), 3. words based on the same stem with different suffixes (e.g. *liberum – liberatum*). The wordplay in this phrase belongs to the first class. The play on *accidere – accedere* is unique. The two verbs tended to be confused, *teste* Beda *Orth.* (Keil, *Gramm. Lat.* 7: 265) *accedit per e ab ambulando, accidit per i ab eventu*, and Blaise s.v. *accedo*. *Accedo* here means ‘to come on’, ‘supervene’, ‘become operative’, e.g. Cato *Orat.* 89 *amor*, Cic. *Att.* 7.2.2 *quartanam*, Fat. 24 *causa*, Cels. 3.18.15 *sommus*.

vestigia tam sacrosanctae informationis amplexitutur,
‘kisses the footprints of your eminently holy guidance’

It could not be said more ceremoniously nor in a more sophisticated way. To begin with, the meaning of *vestigia ... amplexitur* is on three intertwined levels. The literal one: ‘to kiss someone’s footprints’, in the expressive vein of Sil. 8.126 ff. *illa (= Dido) ... mutae / oscula, qua steteras (=Aeneas), bis terque infixit harenae; / deinde amplexa sinu late vestigia fovit, / ceu cinerem orbatae pressant ad pectora matres* (Duff, Loeb ed. 1927: ‘and then she fondly embraced all your footprints’).

Then the metaphorical one: ‘to welcome, to adopt someone’s example’. No one else has ever used this daring phrase. For this meaning cf. e.g. Cels. 3.4.10 *praecepta*, Cic. *Att.* 12.35.2 *cogitationem*, V. Max. 7.3.3 *praesidium*. It leads up to the obvious translations of Anderson ‘eagerly follow the lead’, and Loyen ‘s’engage résolument sur les traces’.

The third level has hitherto escaped notice. It is the level of intertextuality with the Scriptures, where in *Luc.* 7.37 f. a woman who was leading an immoral life, approached Jesus and, whilst weeping, kissed his feet: *et ecce mulier quae erat in civitate peccatrix ut cognovit quod accubuit in domo Pharisiæ ad dulcit alabastrum unguinti; et stans retro secus pedes eius lacrimis coepit rigare pedes eius et capillis capitis sui tergebant et osculabatur pedes eius et unguento unguebat*, ‘a woman who was living an immoral life in the town had learned that Jesus was at table in the Pharisee’s house and had brought oil of myrrh in a small flask. She took her place behind him, by his feet, weeping. His feet were wetted with her tears and she wiped them with her hair; she kissed his feet and anointed them with the myrrh’.

The scene is found as follows in Sedul. *Carm.* 65-67:

*tunc mulier quam fama nocens et plurima vitae mordebat delicta suae clementia supplex corruit amplexens vestigia.*

‘Then the woman who was troubled by her bad reputation and her sinful way of life knelt down, imploring him and kissing his feet.’

The main point is the parallel between the ruefulness of the sinful woman and the guilt and remorse of the people of Clermont. One should not be amazed at the fact that Mamertus in the comparison can take the place of Jesus for holiness, and be the cause of all the benefits that befall the Arvernians. Sidonius does not hesitate elsewhere to call bishop Lupus *alter ... Iacobus* (Ep. 6.1.1) and *iunior mage quam minor Moyses* (6), and beseech him as though he were the Lord himself: *exi a me, quia homo peccator sum, domine* (2).

Both the sixth and the seventh book begin with a letter to a colleague of eminent stature, to whom the author declares himself spiritually in debt, Lupus the unattainable grand old man,
dedicatee of the corpus of letters to bishops as such, Mamertus the friend who gives moral and practical advice, dedicatee of the letters which concern the fall of Clermont.

**sacrosanctae informationis:** Sacrosanctus is among the less common epithets used for bishops exclusively, according to O’Brien 1930: 165. Sidonius, however, uses it ten times, only of bishops, in my corpus also in 7.5.2 sacrosanctam sedem, 7.9.6 sacrosancto ... papa, 7.10.1 sacrosanctis ... digitis, 7.11.1 sacrosancta contemplatione. Sidonius further writes sacratissimus (7.6.10 and 9.9.1 only), and often sanctus (in my corpus: 7.2.4 sancti Eustachii, 7.3.2 papa sancte, 7.4.1 sanctae communio, 7.4.2 sanctas ... blanditas, 7.6.4 vobis sanctis). Sacer is not applied to bishops, but to the Scriptures and also to the emperor. Ulp. Dig. 1.8.9 defines: sacer is the opposite of profanus; both are independent of human intervention; sanctus has to do with decisions taken to set something apart, e.g. laws (see Santelia 2002: 72 f.). A notable exception to this rule would be Spiritus sanctus. For sanctus, and the holiness of bishops, see my commentary on 7.2.4.

**informatio:** Niermeyer s.v.: (post-class.) ‘teaching’, ‘instruction’, (ME) ‘guidance’, ‘directive’. Sidonius also uses it in Ep. 4.9.5.

**sedulo petens ut conscientiae tuae beatitudo**

**sedulo,** ‘insistently’, ‘earnestly’: Not before the second half of the fourth century was sedulo combined with verbs meaning ‘to ask’, ‘to entreat’, like Symm. Ep. 2.41 sedulo ... postulo. Sidonius has Ep. 4.7.1 sedulo precatur, 7.8.2 sedulo precor, 7.11.2 sedulo exposcit, 9.13.4 sedulo exposcis. The combination with petere remains a hapax.

**conscientiae tuae beatitudo,** ‘one so blessedly supreme in spirituality’ (Anderson): The phrase ‘the blessedness of your conscience’ is intermingled here with the abstract title for a bishop, beatitudo tua, ‘your blessedness’: conscientiae tuae beatitudo = tu, ut es episcopus bene conscius. For the title cf. Ep. 6.6.2 restat ut vestra beatitudo ... pascat, and see O’Brien 1930: 165, ‘to popes, bishops, and others’, Mossberg 1934: 45 n. 1 and General Introduction, par. 5.5.3 *Modes of address.* For conscientia see my comment on 7.4.3 conscientiae dote.

**mittat orationum suarum suffragia quibus exempla transmisit.**

**mittat orationum suarum suffragia,** ‘grants the support of his prayers’: Mittat ... suffragia, which is very rare in the tradition, is more than an obvious wordplay on exempla transmisit. It is the language of prayer (‘grant us your help’, ‘be graceful to us’) as attested exclusively for Gaul in the *Vetus Missale Gallicanum* 32 (Missa Paschalis VI Feria) *spiritualis gratiae aeterna suffragia mitte nobis per iesum Christum Filium tuum Dominum nostrum.* Hypothetically, Sidonius himself might have written this prayer (cf. the *contestatiunculae* and *missae* of letter 3). However that may be, the wording chosen here by Sidonius, when addressing bishop Mamertus, is typically a communication between clerical colleagues.

*Orationum suffragia* is also found in Ep. 9.3.4 quin potius animam male sibi consciam ... frequentissimis tuis illis et valentissimis orationum munere suffragis. Caesarius of Arles uses it in a letter which is incorporated in the correspondence of Faustus of Riez, Ep. 12.4 orationum ... vestrarum suffragia. It is typical in Ennodius’ letters: Ep. 6.17 quaero ut me orationum suffragio sublevetis, 6.36, 8.26, 9.15, 9.33.
The sentence, and this part of the argumentation, are rounded off with the chiasmus *mittat suffragia – exempla transmisit*, and a clausula which is at the same time quantitative and accentual, *(ex)empla transmisit*. See General Introduction, sect. 6.3 *Prose rhythm*.

**Section 7**

*et quia tibi soli concessa est, post avorum memoriam vel confessorem Ambrosium duorum martyrum repertorem,*

*post avorum memoriam*, ‘since the time of our grandfathers’: After Col. 8.19 *avorum memoria*, there are only three attestations of this phrase in Livy and two in Plinius Maior, but always abl. temp., not acc. + *post*, and apparently referring exactly to the generation of the grandfathers (not ‘forefathers’ in general), e.g. Liv. 27.8.9 *nec patrum nec avorum memoria*. Here also, Sidonius appears to have in mind the horizon of two generations earlier, as he singles out Ambrose, less than a hundred years ago.

*vel confessorem Ambrosium*, ‘or, more precisely, the confessor Ambrose’: A *confessor* is he who testifies to his faith as a martyr (e.g. Tert. *Cor*. 11), later applied to bishops on account of their firmness during persecution or against heresy (e.g. Cassian. *c. Nest*. 7.24, Hier. *Ep*. 15.2), and finally more in general of bishops, abbots and saints, without the connotation of martyrdom (as in the title of Gregory of Tours’ *Liber in gloria confessorum*). See Blaise s.v.

*Confessor* as a title of Ambrose is not at all frequent. It is only attested in Ambrose’s secretary and first biographer Paulinus of Milan, *adv. Cael*. 3 *beatum Ambrosium confessorem* (date 418 AD), Faust. Rei. *Ep*. 17.16 (contemporary with Sidonius), Ennod. *Opusc*. 7 (d. 521), and *Martyrol*. *Hier*. II Non.Apr. (sixth century). In Sidonius’ correspondence *confessor* is used one more time, of Martin of Tours, *Ep*. 4.18.4 *pontificis confessorisque Martini*. Martin was highly venerated by Sidonius and some of his episcopal friends (see introduction to sect. 4 above, and General Introduction, ch. 4 *The church*). Ambrose is put here on the same exclusive level.

It might, perhaps, be advocated that this is an allusion to Ambrose’s prominent role as an opponent of Arianism. As a matter of fact, he had been forced to become bishop of Milan in a violent clash between Catholics and Arians. On that assumption, letter 1 would also appear to be a prelude to the theme of Arianism which is developed in the letters 6 (the threat of Visigothic Arianism to Catholicism in Gaul) and 8 (Sidonius’ nominee for the bishopric in Bourges, Simplicius, rises above the conflict of catholic and Arian candidates). For a discussion of the theory of hidden messages in Sidonius’ correspondence, see General Introduction, par. 5.4.2 *Coded communication and allusive technique*.

*duorum martyrum repertorem*, ‘discoverer of two martyrs’: The two martyrs whose relics where found in 386 by Ambrose were Gervasius and Protasius. On completion of his own basilica in Milan, the predecessor of present day S. Ambrogio, Ambrose was begged by his community to dedicate it ‘as they do in Rome’. ‘If I can find relics of martyrs’, he answered. Then, with unprecedented speed and certainty, sensing that the bodies of these saints were at a nearby *memoria*, he took them to his own church and placed them under the altar, where eventually he was to be buried next to them. Ambrose himself has described the discovery of the bodies and left us a hymn on the subject, *Ep*. 77.1-2 (formerly *Ep*. 22) and *Hymn*. 11, which begins: *Grates tibi, Iesu, novas / novi repertor muneris / Protasio Gervasio / martyribus inventis cano*. Cf. Ps. Ambr. *Serm*. 91, Aug. *Conf*. 9.7, *Civ*. 22.8, Greg. Tur. *Glor. mart*. 1.47. For

Ambrose became exemplary throughout the Latin West, and Sidonius’ account of Mamertus’ *translatio* of Ferreolus and Iulianus is one of many. For the cult of relics see the introduction to this letter, section 7 *The cult of relics.*

**in partibus orbis occidui martyris Ferreoli solida translatio adiecto nostri capite Iuliani**

in partibus orbis occidui, ‘in the Western world’: Cf. Sidon. Ep. 2.2.1 *ut magis vaporibus orbis occidui subiceremur*, words with which he describes the warm climate in the region of his country house Avitacum, exposed to the sunny West. Cf. Luc. 4.63 *in occiduum ... orbem*, Claud. Rapt. Pros. 38 *occiduo ... ab orbe*, Apul. Mun. 6 *occiduarum partium, Amm. 22.3.7 in partes occiduas*. The fusing of the two phrases is Sidonius’ own. For a different denotation of *partes*, see 7.5.3 *Romanorum ... partibus*, ‘the side of the Romans’. It is remarkable that Sidonius expressly limits the comparison to the Western world. For a person who, like him, stood in the monastic tradition of Lérins and was acquainted with the Neo-Pythagorean milieu of Narbonne, the Eastern part of the Empire was surely not an altogether closed book. See General Introduction, sect. 3.4 *Intellectual life.*

**Ferreoli ... Iuliani:** The friends Ferreolus and Iulianus are often mentioned together. Martyrol. Hier. XIII kal. Octob. has: *Vienna civitate, natalis sancti Ferreoli et dedicatio basilicae ipsius, et translatio multorum corporum, cum capite sancti Iuliani martyris de Brivate sub altare posito* (PL 30: 476c). Venantius Fortunatus wrote: *Iulianum Arvernus abundans, / Ferreolum pariter pulchra Vienna gerit* (*Misc. 8.6*). Gregory of Tours, who calls himself an *alumnus* of the couple, while visiting their shrine at Vienne, saw the inscription which read: *Heroas Christi geminos haec continet aula: / Iulianum capite, corpore Ferreolum* (*Iul. 2*).

Ferreolus and Iulianus form a pair, like the above mentioned Gervasius and Protasius, and Agricola and Vitalis. Actually, many late-Roman communities chose to opt for doublets. One only has to think of Peter and Paul in Rome. The function of this phenomenon was essentially political and social: concord. ‘The late-Roman preoccupation with concord can be seen on every level of public life …The feast of a pair of saints was a feast of concord in a potentially deeply divided city’ (Brown 1981: 96 f.).

See encyclopedic entries, with literature, in LTK 3, s.v. Ferreolus v. Vienne, and 5, s.v. Julianus v. Brioude.

• Ferreolus

According to tradition he was a military tribune, martyred in Vienne ca. 304 AD during the persecutions of Diocletian (prefaces AASS V 21 Sept., col. 764, and VI 28 Aug. 5 ff., col. 169 ff.). *Martyrol. Rom. XIV kal Oct. relates: in territorio Vienensi sancti Ferreoli martyris, qui cum esset tribuniciae potestatis, iussu Crispini impiiisiini praesidis tentus et primo crudelissime verberatus, deinde gravi catenarum pondere onustus, in teterrimum carcerem trusus est; unde solutis Dei nutu vinculis et ianuis carceris patefactis, in sequentibus iterum captus, martyrii palmam capitis obturcuatione percepit, ‘in the region of Vienne of the martyr Ferreolus, who, despite the fact that he had the rank of a tribune, was arrested by order of the ungodly governor Crispinus, and first cruelly beaten, then put in heavy chains and thrown into a horrible dungeon; by God’s will the fetters were broken, the door of the jail opened, and he
escaped; his pursuers, however, got hold of him again, and he carried off the martyr’s palm by being decapitated’.

Griffe 3: 162 n. 81 remains sceptical and reminds us that nothing is certain regarding the date of his death (if his existence is not, indeed, completely legendary as a sceptic might want to add; see Pelletier 2001: 171). According to Griffe, one might also surmise the time of Decius (ca. 250), whose edicts were notably applied in the Rhône valley.


There is a fifth century passio of Ferreolus in two versions (AASS V 18 Sept., col. 764a ff. and 766a ff.), which Griffe 1: 155 qualifies as ‘bien insignifiante’. It does not mention Iulianus.

In Iul. 2 Gregory of Tours narrates the translatio of Ferreolus’ body by Mamertus from the old basilica to a newly built one on the opposing bank of the Rhône. He there mentions our passage from Sidonius (whom he calls ‘Sollius noster’) as testimony to the fact.

- Iulianus

Saint Julian was the local Clermontese saint par excellence. The organisation of his cult in Brioude (vicus Brivatensis), some 60 km. south of Clermont, may have begun towards the end of the fourth century. Sidonius increased his influence and used it for the patriotic purpose of strengthening the morale of Clermont. The sanctuary was transformed from a simple cellula into a basilica with columns by comes Victorius, who from 475 AD governed Clermont by order of Euric. See Greg. Tur. Franc. 2.20, and Griffe 3: 277 and Beaujard 1999 passim.

Julian is mentioned in conjunction with Ferreolus as a victim of the persecution in several martyrologia (see AASS VI 28 Aug., col. 171 c-d), e.g. Martyrol. Rom. V kal Sept. Brivate, apud Arvernos, item passio sancti Juliani Martyris, qui, cum esset beati Ferreoli tribuni comes in habitu militari occulte Christo serviret, in persecutione Dioecletiani a militibus tentus est et desecto gutture morte horribili necatus, ‘at Brioude in the Auvergne also the passion of the martyr Saint Julian, who, while accompanying the blessed tribune Ferreolus and secretly serving Christ in military uniform, was arrested by the soldiers and underwent a terrible death, his throat being cut through’; Ado of Vienne specifies (AASS loc. cit.): hortatu beati Ferreoli ex Vienensi urbe clandestino discessu ad territorium urbis Arvernae commigravit, ‘(Julian) had secretly left Vienne on the initiative of the blessed Ferreolus, and moved to the territory of the town of Clermont’.

The cult of the local saint was a favourite with the Aviti and Apollinares. Sidonius’ father-in-law Avitus, after his ill-fated reign, was – according to Gregory of Tours – interred in 456 AD in the family shrine of Saint Julian in Brioude (Franc. 2.11). Sidonius praises his uncle Apollinaris for having put off, on account of the dangers involved in the early seventies, a pilgrimage with female members of the family to what is generally held to be Julian’s sanctuary (Ep. 4.6, q.v. Amherdt). Brioude with Julian’s tomb is one of the stages in the journey which Sidonius’ libellus of poetry is to undertake (Carm. 24.16 ff. hinc te suscipiet benigna Brivas, / sancti quae fovent ossa Iuliani, / quae dum mortua mortuis putantur, / vivens e
As the poem is from 464/65, its reputation dates back before Sidonius’ episcopate. See Harries 1994: 202, Beaujard 1999: 9 f.

The enduring success of the cult is apparent from annual processions like the one Greg. Tur. Vit. patr. 6.6 has recorded, instituted by bishop Gallus in 543 to preserve Clermont from a plague (see Van Dam 1985: 207). Julian’s cult eventually spread over the whole of France. He became known as Saint Julien-le-Pauvre.

There are two Passiones, to be found in AASS VI 28 Aug., col. 173b ff., and 174d ff., MGH SRM 1/2: 427-31 = 879-81 (probably sixth century). Gregory’s second book of Miracula is dedicated in its entirety to him (= Iul., MGH SRM 1/2: 112 ff. = 562 ff.).

Beaujard 1999 and Fournier and Fizellier-Sauget 1999 provide a status quaestionis of the documentary resp. (rare) archæological remains. See also Young 2001, esp. 176 f. on the basilica of Ferreolus and Iulianus. See also General Introduction, par. 4.3.4 Sidonius’ church.

Santelia 1999 and Santelia 2002: 73 ff. present the available material for her commentary on Carm. 24.17 sancti … ossa Iuliani. She stresses the essentially political and aristocratic character of the devotion of Saint Julian, with reference to Van Dam 1985: 167 ff. and Pietri 1988: 25. Perhaps it is better to be cautious when speaking about the presumed ‘aristocratic character’ of the cult. Brown 1981: 12 ff. has based his view of the cult of saints on a rejection of what he called the ‘two-tier model’, the belief that popular religion and that of the upper classes were two different worlds. It is clear from the current letter that Sidonius aims explicitly to unite all classes for the defence of the town. Cf. Palmer 1989: 32 ff., ch. 2 ‘Curiositas and Credulity’, who argues that high and low had in common their curiosity about miraculous matters as well as their naivety to believe them.

solida translatio, ‘the translation of the complete body’: Local tradition in Vienne commemorated the event on 13 December (MGH SRM 1/2: 565 n. 2), though this could also be the date of a later translatio in the eighth century (see the introduction to AASS V 18 Sep. ‘Ferreolus’, col. 762b).


nostri … Iuliani, ‘our own Julian’: He belongs to Clermont, and to the Aviti and Apollinares especially. See above.

quod istinc turbulento quondam persecutori manus rettulit cruenta carnificis

istinc, ‘from here’, i.e. from Clermont/Brioude.

turbulento … persecutori, ‘the high-handed persecutor’: Julian had been advised by his friend Ferreolus to flee to Clermont. There he was overtaken by his murderer (carnifex), who took his head back with him to Vienne, to present it to his superior (persecutor). For turbulentus, see Köhler 1995: 255 f. ad 1.7.12 turbulenti carnificis, who has demonstrated that Anderson and Loyen (note 5 on p. 188) were wrong in taking it as a synonym of truculentus, ‘cruel’. It means ‘self-willed’, ‘high-handed’, cf. e.g. Cic. Fam. 2.13.5 nos nihil turbulenter, nihil
temere faciemus, Sidon. Ep. 2.13.5 turbulentissime rexit (opposed to tranquillissime). Sidonius applies truculentus when he thinks it appropriate: Ep. 5.7.6 Domitianus truculentior, 8.6.14 hostis ... truculentior.

manus rettulit cruenta carnificis, ‘was brought back by the hand of the cruel murderer’: Not to be missed is the drastic expressivity of the spotlight on the blood-stained hand, so to speak à la Caravaggio, which seems to act on its own frightening initiative. See General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

non inuiurium est quod pro compensatione deposcimus

non inuiurium est, ‘is is not unfair’, is found also Ep. 5.4.2 and Ennod. Dict. 8, both with a.c.i.; here with relative clause (id) quod ... deposcimus.

compensation, ‘compensation’, belongs to juridical terminology (e.g. Gaius Inst. 4.63, Ulp. Dig. 2.14.52.1) and hence it constitutes a subtle play on words with iniurium.

ut nobis inde veniat pars patrocinii, quia vobis hinc rediit pars patroni.

The letter ends with a formal parallelism which contains an opposition in meaning. In exchange for the relic of Julian (patronus), Sidonius claims protection from Vienne’s bishop (patrocinium). For the bishop as patronus and the extent of ecclesiastical patronage in this book of letters alone see Ep. 7.2.9 (his patronage of subordinate people), 7.4.4 (his patronage of laymen equal in rank) and 7.6.1-2 (his spiritual patronage, in this case of Sidonius himself; cf. 7.16.1 of an abbot in relation to Sidonius). For the nuance of political protection, apart from the ecclesiastical domain, one may further compare 7.11.1 (the dominant Burgundians safeguarding Clermont) and 7.17.1 (Sidonius subordinate to comes Victorius).

As Vienne was Burgundian territory, and their king, Chilperic, not only its foreign overlord, but also magister militum Galliarum in the name of the emperor, Mamertus’ position was a crucial one, and could be of much use to Clermont. See the role of the Burgundians in the years 469-75 in Loyen 2: xviii ff. and General Introduction, sect. 3.1 Visigoths and Burgundians.

The sort of assistance Sidonius was in need of ranged from goodwill through political and ecclesiastical networking to the sending of food supplies (e.g. bishop Patiens of Lyon in 471, Ep. 6.12; note the formulation there: transit in alienas provincias vigilantia tua, sect. 2), military help (e.g. his brother-in-law Ecdicius intervening in the siege in 472 or 473, Ep. 3.3) and personal moral assistance (e.g. the Lyonese priest Constantius visiting Clermont in the winter of 473-74, Ep. 3.2).

This manifold support was the visible, worldly side of what, to Sidonius and his contemporaries, was one and the same thing, the providential assistance from his patron saints. Sidonius expressed his gratitude for their indispensable assistance as follows in Carm. 41.77-80 (= Ep. 9.16.3):

post Saturninum volo plectra cantent,
quos patronorum reliquos probavi
anxio duro mihi per labores
auxiliatos.

‘After Saturninus I want my lyre to sing the praise of the other patrons whom I have found to be helpers in my hard struggles when I was in trouble.’
He is impressed by the power which bursts from the tomb of St Julian: Carm. 24.19 vivens e tumulo micat potestas. In 467, having fallen dangerously ill on his journey to Rome, he recovers after a visit to St Peter’s and St Paul’s: Ep. 1.5.9 triumphalibus apostolorum liminibus adfusus omnem protinus sensi membris male fortibus explodum esse languorem.

He was buried himself ad sanctos (see his epitaph in MGH AA 8: vi), probably in St Saturnin, where his tomb was still venerated in the tenth century - the church which he may very well have dedicated himself and provided with relics. See Prévot 1997: 226.

To Sidonius the saints were every bit as real as were the men in his web of relations.

pars patrocinii ... pars patroni, ‘a share in your patronage … a fragment of our patron saint’: For this phrase, compare Carm. 30.4 (Ep. 7.17.2) dat partem regni portio martyrii, ‘your portion of martyrdom gives you a part in the Kingdom of Heaven’. Cf. also 4.21.3 Arverni si portionem tui .. iure sibi vindicant, ‘if the Arvernians rightly claim a share of your presence’. The opposition plays on the meanings of pars and the paronomasia patrocinii – patroni (type 3, according to Hagendahl’s classification, see above on sect. 6 accidisse … accessisse). The stylistic balance is further enhanced by nobis inde veniat – vobis hinc redivit. The clausula brings this tour de force of letter writing to an entirely satisfying conclusion.