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

van Waarden, J.A.

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Letter 5

‘Marshalling Help for Bourges’

Introduction

1 Overview

We now come to the heart of book 7: three letters on the appointment by Sidonius of Simplicius as bishop of Bourges, in 470 AD, nos. 5, 8 and 9, which frame another two on the surrender of Clermont and the negotiations leading up to it, in 475 AD, nos. 6 and 7. These two, apparently unrelated, events at closer scrutiny constitute a statement about Sidonius’ awareness of two crucial turning points in his life, the fact that he unexpectedly, and possibly involuntarily, became a bishop, and the surrender of Clermont against his will. The framing of these episodes makes it plausible that Sidonius wanted to see a parallel in the consecration of Simplicius, only months after his own, to what he had lived through himself, a parallel which was intensified by the fact that both bishops were exiled by Euric.

This interpretation is generally accepted nowadays. However, I draw attention to the fact that there is a caveat: the order of the letters in book 7 is not absolutely certain. This does not mean that the interpretation is wrong, but, rather, that it might be a simplification to base it on the ‘frame’ around letters 6 and 7, which, after all, exists only in the traditional order. For this issue see General Introduction, sect. 5.2 Manuscripts and 5.4 The structure of book 7.

Bishop Agroecius, the letter’s addressee, in all probability, was present in Bourges at the decisive moment of the nomination of Simplicius (see sect. 4 invitare, and 7.9.6 oram sacrosancto et pontificatu maximo dignissimo papa). He fulfilled the role of the metropolitan bishop required to evaluate the procedure and to give his final blessing to the ordination (see below ‘Consecration’). Probably because of his active involvement, this letter is put first in order. The other two bishops who backed Sidonius, are honoured in the letters 8 and 9.

This introduction contains a section on the procedure of the election and consecration of bishops.

2 Date

Loyen opts for ‘the end of 470 or rather the beginning of 471’. PLRE 2: 39 has 470 AD. Loyen 3: 214 n. 5 argues that the letter was written after Sidonius’ consecration\(^ {163}\), but prior to the first attack of the Visigoths on Clermont, spring 471. Bourges was occupied by the Visigoths in 469, but it seems to have been temporarily liberated from them at the time of the election (ibid. and Loyen 2: xviii). Indeed, Sidonius takes the opportunity to recommend Simplicius because of his experience with being a captive of the Goths, and therefore his usefulness in dealing with them to keep them at bay (Ep. 7.9.19 f.).

\(^ {163}\) See Loyen’s approximation of the date of consecration between 469 (Mommsen, Stevens) and 472, situating it, with a margin of uncertainty, in the last part of the year 470 (Loyen 2: xiv f.).
Nobody has as yet accounted for the fact that Sidonius in the introductory letter to the address in Bourges, sect. 7.9.4, says, that he wrote it in a few hours unius noctis aestivae, ‘of one summer night’. In the traditional dating of the proceedings in Bourges, the winter period is proposed instead. The ‘summer night’ could be a piece of evidence for a somewhat earlier date for Bourges – spring and summer 470 – and consequently for the start of Sidonius’ episcopate (469?).

The opening words imply that the letter was written in Bourges (cf. sect. 1 Biturigas … adveni, ‘I have arrived in Bourges’).

3 Addressee

With this letter, as with no 8 to the bishop of Autun and 9 to the metropolitan of Tours, we find ourselves in the circle of Sidonius’ northern connections

Agroecius was bishop of Civitas Senonum (now Sens, dept. Yonne in present-day Burgundy) and consequently metropolitan of the province of Lugdunensis quarta, also called Lugdunensis Senonia, which comprised Chartres, Auxerre, Troyes, Orléans, Paris and Meaux 164. The little information we have about him comes from Sidonius: metropolitan of Senonia, Ep. 7.5.3 Senoniae caput es; older than Sidonius and his senior in office, 7.9.6 tempore, aetate praestantior (if indeed Agroecius is the metropolitanus mentioned there, which is probable; it means that Agroecius accepted the invitation of letter 7.5 to come and assist at the nomination of a new bishop in Bourges).

The name Agroecius is also spelt as Agrecius, Agrycius, Agricius, Agritius. It is common enough in the Gallic region.165 For our Agroecius there are several possible, though speculative identifications.

One is with bishop Agrycius, the addressee of the third letter by Salvian of Marseille. This is advocated by Lagarrigue in the first volume of his edition of Salvian166, and is supported by Kaufmann, mainly because the chronology fits tolerably well, if one supposes that it was written not long before Salvian’s death, ca. 480 AD.

A further candidate is one Agroecius who is the author of an Ars de Orthographia (Keil 7: 113 ff.), which is dedicated to bishop Eucherius of Lyon (died 449 AD). The identification, made by Keil 7: 91, was taken for granted by Wes 1992: 261, and also adopted without comment by Hecquet-Noti in the first volume of her edition of Avitus’ De spiritualis historiae gestis167. One is left to guess at their arguments. Heinzelmann 1982 provides the identification with a question mark.


165 See e.g. Stroheker 1948: 144 # 12, Griffe 3: 350 and DHGE 1: 1014 f.

166 Sources Chrétiennes 176, Paris, 1971 (1: 18 n. 1).

167 Sources Chrétiennes 444, Paris, 1999 (1: 30). The preface of De orthographia explains why it is not strange for a bishop to be interested in orthography: ut, qui nos in huius vitæ actibus corrigere vis, etiam in scribendi studiis emendares.
Finally we have the Agroecius of an inscription from Narbonne dated 445 AD (CIL 12: 5336). PLRE 2: 39 s.v. ‘Agroecius 2’ thinks the identification worth considering. Kaufmann, however, argues that he will have been a layman rather than a bishop, because the bishops in the inscription are expressly designated as such. However, this argument is not decisive, because of the lacunae in the inscription at exactly this point.

DHGE 1: 1017 s.v. ‘Agrice ou Agroecius (Saint)’ uncritically mentioned a death date ca. 487 AD, evidently on account of the unwarranted date mentioned by the Bollandists, Acta Sanctorum, Jun. II, d. 13, S. Agricius, who also toyed with the idea that he was in office for forty-two years.

Duchesne, in his treatment of the diocese of Sens, sensibly preferred not to speculate, and acquiesced in the lack of information about both his identity and his lifespan (Duchesne 2: 393 ff., esp. 415).

Our addressee Agroecius is not to be confused with the Agroecius of Ep. 5.10.3 Agroecii disciplina, who was a rhetorician from the school of Bordeaux, remembered by Ausonius in his obituaries of professors, Auson. Prof. (= 11) 14, cf. Loyen 1943: 87.


4 The election and consecration of bishops

It comes as no surprise that the election of a new bishop in Bourges was a hotly debated issue, and that public discord led to the intervention of Sidonius. ‘By far the most common cause of large-scale public disorder in the late empire was religion, and within that, the most common occurrences seem to take place around the appointment of a bishop’, says Norton 2007: 6 (see further 68-70).

Did rules exist for the election and subsequent consecration of bishops? And if so, how did they relate to actual practice?

- Election

‘The history of episcopal election in the fourth and fifth centuries is that of a continually fluctuating struggle between the congregations and the bishops’, says Stevens 1933: 123 at the outset of his discussion of these elections. The equilibrium suggested by e.g. HKG 2/1: 291-93 ‘Wahl und Weihe des Klerus’, viz. the local clergy agree upon a candidate, who is then accepted by the people and consecrated by the bishops of the church province, esp. the metropolitan, is, in fact, only one of the many different compromises reached between the parties involved. These parties were the local clergy (clerici), the local leadership (from privileged senatorial landowners, honorati, to the relatively modest members of the town council, the ordo), the populace (plebs), and the metropolitan and other bishops of the church province.

As a matter of fact, detailed and binding rules did not exist, but the basic principle was clear enough. The nomination had to be brought about on condition that nullus invitis detur episcopus and qui praefuturus est omnibus ab omnibus eligatur, that ‘no bishop should be ordained to those who do not want him’ and that ‘he who is to be at the head of all must be chosen by all’. These are citations from two important letters about the matter, the first from pope Celestinus, 428 AD, to the bishops of Vienensis and Narbonensis (Ep. 4 ‘Cuperemus
quidem', PL 50: 430a ff.), the second from pope Leo the Great, 445 AD, to the bishops of Viennensis (Ep. 10 ‘Divinae cultum religionis’, PL 54: 628b ff.). Celestinus enjoins (sect. 7): cleri, plebis et ordinis consensus et desiderium requirantur, ‘let a consensus be reached between clergy, people and town council, and let their wishes be taken into account’, thereby stressing unanimity and respect for everybody’s preferences. This does not help much towards an understanding of the procedure. Leo, however, seems to indicate three specific stages (sect. 6): teneatur subscriptio clericorum, honoratorum testimonium, ordinis consensus et plebis, ‘let a list be drawn up by the clerics, let the honorati submit recommendations, let the ordo and the townspeople reach consensus’: the clerics prepare the ground by bringing forward one or more candidates, the nobility has its say, and the common people decide in harmony with the town council. This is one option.

The same principle, but a different procedure is found in Cod. Iust. 1.3.41 (528 AD). Three candidates of irreproachable conduct have to be put forward by the community, from whom the best is selected. The selection is made by the metropolitan and other bishops, as the context suggests. As we will see, this procedure closely resembles the one followed in both cases described by Sidonius in his letters, Chalon and Bourges.

Finally, an entirely different compromise is found in the canons (# 54) of the so called Second Council of Arles. Three candidates are put forward by the bishops, and one of them is chosen by the congregation, clerics and laymen (Conc. Gall. 1: 125): ut ... tres ab episcopis nominentur, de quibus clerici vel cives erga unum eligendi habeant potestatem.

Thus we now have three lines of approach: (1) the clerics propose one or more candidates, the people, together with the local elite, make the final decision, (2) the congregation proposes three candidates, the bishops choose one, (3) the bishops propose three candidates, the congregation chooses one.

Modern research tends towards an increasing dominance of bishops to the detriment of popular influence in the procedure, starting in the fourth century (Gryson 1980, Hess 2002, Rapp 2005; e.g. the latter on p. 200: ‘In practice, the election was normally made by the metropolitan, with a group of local clergy and notables, and approved by acclamation of the local laity.’). The objective of Norton 2007 is to show that this conclusion is not supported by the evidence, and that popular will remained crucial throughout. It is worthy of interest to note that precisely the case of Bourges had been adduced by Liebeschuetz 2001: 131 to prove that ‘decision-making was ... not monopolized by comes and bishop’, underpinned with examples from Angoulême, Tours and Poitiers.

- Background of the candidates

Ideally candidates came from the ranks of the experienced clerics, or else from those of the monks. This much is clear from Leo the Great’s letter cited above. Separate rules had been laid down for lay candidates as early as the councils of Nicaea (325 AD, can. 2) and Serdica (342 AD, can. 16). These had been forced to cope with the fundamental change in position of the church, and its greater attractiveness as a career path for laymen. Serdica had stipulated that, si forte aut dives aut scholasticus de foro aut de administratore episcopus fuerit postulatus, ‘if it

168 These are not the fruit of a specific council, but a compilation of ecclesiastical regulations AD 442-506 (‘Collectio Arelatensis’), CC SL 148, pp. 114-25. On this collection and ‘the spirit of compilation and codification in late Roman Gaul’ see Mathisen 1997.
happens that any wealthy man, or a lawyer from the courts or the civil service is requested as bishop, he had to hold the offices of a lector, a deacon and a priest first. Two centuries later, in Justinian’s legislation, it was stipulated that a layman had to spend a period of three months up to fifteen years as a clerical trainee before he could enter upon the episcopate – if, indeed, he was allowed to enter it at all. (Cod. Iust. 1.3.52, Novell. 123.1.praef). See Norton 2007: 46-51.

Rich lay candidates often simply had more prestige and power than clerics or monks, and hence were felt by the electorate to be a greater asset to their town and province. In Gaul the development towards aristocratic bishops in the fifth century had a dynamic of its own (see Harries 1994: 179-81, and General Introduction, sect. 4.3 The role of the bishop.

• Elections in Sidonius

What about Sidonius? In Bourges basically the same procedure was followed as in that other election of a bishop described by him, the one in Chalon-sur-Saône in the year 469/70 (Ep. 4.25). It is of the second type, but matters are complicated because the townspeople do not succeed in doing their part of the job. In Chalon there are actually three nominees, though of insufficient quality. Consequently the bishops decide to overrule the shortlist and they nominate a saintly outsider. In Bourges the community has not even succeeded in drawing up a list of nominees. The result is ‘more than two benches full of candidates’ (Ep. 7.9.2), which compels Sidonius to let the people swear an oath that they forfeit their right and will abide by his decision (Ep. 7.9.25). Sidonius then chooses one of the candidates. See Stevens 1933: 126-29, Norton 2007: 178-80.

• Consecration

Once a candidate has been selected, it is a colleague’s task to consecrate the new bishop. The first council of Arles (314 AD) prescribed the consent of seven other bishops, or at least three: de his qui usurpant sibi solis debere episcopum ordinare, placuit ut nullus hoc sibi praesumat, nisi assumptis se cum aliis septem episcopis; si tamen non potuerit <septem>, infra tres non audeant ordinare (can. 20; Conc. Gall. 1: 13).

Probably the influence of the metropolitan increased in the course of the century, because the ‘second’ council of Arles ordained, that, if the metropolitan could not be present, it was not possible for one of the other bishops of the province to take over his task without his written consent or the consent of three colleagues: episcopo sine metropolitano vel epistula metropolitani vel tribus comprovincialibus non liceat ordinare, ita ut alii comprovinciales epistolis admonentur, ut scripto responso consensisse significant (can. 5; Conc. Gall. 1: 114 f.). For the crucial position of the metropolitan, see also later councils, such as Clermont 535 AD (Conc. Gall. 2: 106 l. 24) and Orléans 538 (Conc. Gall. 2: 115 l. 31).

It is clear that, in the case of Bourges, Sidonius acted in the spirit of these regulations, although the deplorable state of the clergy made it impossible to follow them to the letter. See Griffe 2: 138 and Harries 1994: 233 on the special situation.

A comprehensive treatment of episcopal elections can be found in Griffe 2: 213-35 and, recently, in the monograph Norton 2007, entitled Episcopal Elections 250-600. Hierarchy and Popular Will in Late Antiquity, with bibliography and a useful selection of relevant canons. Among encyclopedic items, see HKG 2/1: 291-93, GC 3: 231-37, and LA 341-43 s.v. ‘Bishops’.
5 Manuscripts

Sections 1 and 2 up to ut sacrosanctam sedem figure in MFPC only, as did the letters 1 – 4. Starting with ut sacrosanctam sedem the text is also represented in LNVTR. For the manuscript tradition, see General Introduction, sect. 5.2 Manuscripts.

6 ‘You’ and ‘I’

In this letter Sidonius writes about himself in the first person singular, including the personal and possessive pronouns. The recipient is addressed both in the second person singular and plural, verb and pronouns. There is a conspicuous concentration of tu in the Petitio section (end sect. 2, beginning sect. 3). It can be interpreted as a direct and strong appeal to the addressee, who for the rest of the letter is vos, which I take to be more ceremonious, in accordance with the character of the sections 4 and 5. The exception – sect. 4 censurae tuae – comes at the crucial moment when the addressee’s active involvement in the procedure is expressly vouchsafed. Note that it follows the phrase honoris vestri, which is more ‘passive’. Note the generalizing use of consulas (sect. 1).

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

7 Epitome

To Agroecius, bishop of Sens.

Sect. 1 – 2a: ‘I have arrived in Bourges. I have been requested to help solve the argument the church is labouring under, because the vacant episcopal see has caused a fierce election campaign, which has released the basest instincts of party strife, egoism and insincerity. Many do not hesitate to offer money for the sacred office. As a matter of fact, had there been a chance, it would have been sold already.’

Sect. 2b – 4: ‘This is why I beg you to help me. You are experienced and higher in rank. It is true, you are the number one in Senonia, not in Aquitania. But please, feel responsible for our province, too. We here have seen a serious reduction in the number of bishops in office. Only the town of Clermont still sides with the Romans. Therefore we need your authority as a metropolitan to comply with the regulations as best we can. You can be sure I have not yet decided on anything. The initiative is up to you. I will be glad to carry it out.’

Sect. 5: ‘I do not think anybody will, out of spite, advise you not to go. Even if they did, it would not be a good excuse, although I might understand it. Of course, your prime responsibility is your own diocese, but I am convinced you will prove, by coming here, that your friendship exceeds all boundaries.’ 169

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169 Fernández López 1994 assigns this letter to subcategory 3.2.3.1 ‘Ecclesiastical salutatio publica, with a request for help’, as also 7.1, 7.6 and 7.8, and analyses it on pp. 124-34. For her method, see General Introduction, sect. 5.3 Classification and analysis.
Commentary

Section 1

Biturigas decreto civium petitus adveni:
The very first phrase is significant. It immediately states the where, what and who of the letter. Sidonius is in Bourges on official business for the community, at their request. For a discussion of the opening sentences of the letters, see General Introduction, par. 5.5.2.

Biturigas, ‘Bourges’: This was ancient Avaricum, capital of the Bituriges Cubi, captured and destroyed by Caesar (Gal. 7.13 ff.), later called Biturigae (Amm. 15.11.11), capital of Aquitania Prima, nowadays Bourges (dept. Cher). Aquitania Prima was a very large province. It extended from Bourges in the north to Albi in the south, comprising also the towns of Limoges, Cahors, Rodez, Javols, St. Paulien and Clermont. Sidonius, as bishop of Clermont, was called upon to take care of the nomination of his own superior, the metropolitan bishop of Bourges.


Legend has it that its first bishop was Saint Ursin, ordained and sent to Bourges a discipulis apostolorum (Greg. Tur. Glor. Conf. 79). He was one of the seven great bishops, among whom are also St. Saturnin of Toulouse and St. Denis of Paris, who were said to have been sent by the Holy See to spread the faith in Gaul. Local pride loved to believe that Gaul had been christianized in early apostolic times. However, the earliest known Christian community, Lyon, cannot be dated before the mid-second century, and the movement of christianization, which is represented by the legendary mission of the seven bishops, is connected with the persecution of Decius (249-51 AD). Cf. Greg. Tur. Franc. 1.30 f. Gregory does not mention Ursinus, but states that in Bourges evangelization was taken in hand by an anonymous trainee of this first generation of Gallic bishops: de horum ... discipulis quidam. He goes on to say that the first church of Bourges was a rebuilt private mansion, dedicated to St. Stephen.

Christianity further spread here in the fourth century, notably under the influence of Martinus of Tours. See the discussions in Griffe 1: 109 ff. and Mullen 2004: 239.

decreto civium petitus, ‘being called upon by a decree of the people’ (Anderson): The wording suggests broad public support for Sidonius’ mission. The inhabitants, by decree, have made an appeal to him to come and decide on the choice of a new bishop. With it they have accepted the obligation to abide by his choice, as Sidonius does not fail to point out right at the outset of his speech on the occasion: 7.9.6 quod mihi peculiari paginae decretalis oblatu pontificis elegendi mandatis arbitrium, ‘that to me of all people you have given the right to decide on the choice of your bishop by handing me the written resolution’. The decretum is there called pagina decretalis, ‘official mandate’ (Anderson).

Note that in the Justinian regulations concerning episcopal elections the word decretum (ψῆφισμα) returns to indicate the resolution the inhabitants make about the shortlist of three candidates (see Norton 2007: 34 f.).
Decretum occurs only here in Sidonius, and decretum civium actually nowhere else, except in Lucius Septimius’ fourth century (?) translation of Dictys Cretensis 5.4 decretum civium cunctis narrant. As the assembly of the people had by now long ceased to function (LRE 1: 722), it is best to think of a decision by the city council, decuriones, incorporating the clerical and lay points of view. For the phrase decretum decurionum, cf. e.g. Cic. S. Rosc. 25 itaque decurionum decretum statim fit. Cf. Cod. Iust. 1.4.19 curialium decreto. For the classical situation see Meyer 1964: 39; for the functioning of the council in Late Antiquity see Bowersock et al. 1999: 397 ff. s.v. ‘Councils’.

adveni, ‘I have arrived’: For the use of the first person singular, see Introduction, section 6 ‘You’ and ‘I’.

causa fuit evocationis titubans ecclesiae status,
evocationis, ‘summons’: The character of the decretum civium was an evocatio, the formal summons to fulfill a legal obligation. The verbs devocare/evocare/vocare indicate the call to appear in court as a defendant or a witness, or to fulfill a public office. See e.g. Dig. 5.3.20.6d (one had to reckon with the confiscation of an inheritance) cum primum ... litteris vel edicto evocatus esset, Cod. Iust. 7.62.6.2 (the travelling expenses of witnesses have to be paid) ab eo ..., qui evocandi personas sua interesse crediderit, Cod. Iust. 7.62.7 qui ad civilia munera vel decurionatum vel honores devocantur. See Heumann-Seckel s.v. evocare.
titubans ecclesiae status, ‘the precarious state of the church’: For titubare metaphorically of uncertainty cf. e.g. Apul. Met. 5.21 Psyche ... incerta consilii titubat, ‘Psyche wavers, uncertain what to do’. Sidonius plays on the literal meaning by combining it with status, which makes for an illustrative oxymoron (against the general tendency which is for status to become inexpressive; see my comment on 7.1.3 statu urbis exinanito). A similar conceit is used in Ep. 4.17.2 etsi apud limitem Latina iura ceciderunt, verba non titubant, ‘though Roman law has fallen down at the border, the Latin language does not stagger’, i.e. ‘is kept up’. For Sidonius’ preference for ‘drastic’ images, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style: ‘‘Realistic’ metaphors’.

quae nuper summo viduata pontifice utriusque professionis ordinibus ambiendi sacerdotii quoddam classicum cecinit.

summo viduata pontifice, ‘deprived of her bishop’: The deceased bishop was Eulogius or Eulodius, who was in all probability the father of Simplicius, who succeeded him. See for this question my discussion on 7.9.20 tam socero quam patre postpositis. Eulodius figures as the fourteenth on the ancient list of the bishops of Bourges: Eulodius annos IX. As Duchsne 2: 24 ff. has shown, up to the ninth century the list is dubious with regard to the numbers of years in office it provides. For Eulodius and his predecessor together the list has twenty-two years, which is twice as many as a careful assessment of the chronology allows.

Viduare in the sense of ‘to deprive of’ + abl. initially is poetical, found since Verg. A. 8.571 (Mezentius) tam multis viduasset civibus urbem. In ecclesiastical language it is used of a vacant see, e.g. Aug. Coll. c. Don. 1.14 viduatae episcopis cathedrae, Conc. Chalced. can. 25 reditus viduatae ecclesiae, ‘the revenues of a church without a bishop’. Only here in Sidonius.

utriusque professionis ordinibus, ‘the ranks of both professions’ (Anderson): A professio can be any of the classes in society and church, lay, cleric, monk. In his later speech to the people
of Bourges, Sidonius will mention all three classes as providing possible candidates (7.9.9 quempiam ... monachorum, 12 clericum, 14 militarem ... personam, ‘civil servant’). Here, however, we have the main distinction between laymen and clergy, which is customary. Cf. 7.8.4 (about the same question) omnia ... disponentur sacerdotibus, popularibus manifestabuntur, ‘the final decision will be prescribed for the priests and laid down for the laity’, q.v. for more examples. For the rules regarding episcopal elections, see the Introduction, section 4 The election and consecration of bishops.

Professio, ‘occupation’, ‘profession’, ‘class’, is frequent in Sidonius, often of the clergy, e.g. Ep. 3.1.2 nostrae professionis fraternitatem, ‘the community of my profession’, viz. the clerics, 7.9.6 cui ... professionis huiusce pondus impactum est, viz. the burden of the episcopate which weighs Sidonius down. Cf. 7.9.14 Sidonius ad clericatum quia de saeculari professione translatus est, ‘... transferred from the lay ranks’.

ambiendi sacerdotii, ‘to canvass for the episcopate’: Ambire is the t.t. for the winning of gratia, especially by a candidate for the election (Hellegouarc’h 1963: 208 ff.). Here it may have a slightly pejorative ring of worldly concern, which is incompatible with the holy office, as in Hier. adv. Rufin. 1.32 neque enim ambimus ad sacerdotium, qui latemus in cellulis, nec humilitate damnata episcopatum auro redimere festinamus (a monk does not canvass for the episcopate), Conc. Gall. 2: 40 l. 34–36 (Lyon AD 518–523) ut nullus in locum viventis ad ambiendum sacerdotii gradum audeat adspirare (it is forbidden to canvass for the episcopate when the bishop is still alive). See also my comment on 7.4.3 ambientibus rigidum.

quoddam classicum cecinit, ‘gave as it were the signal’, ‘sounded the trumpet’ for battle: Quoddam is used for toning down a metaphor, like quasi, velut (OLD s.v. quidam 3). The same e.g. 6.12.4 quodam venatu apostolico, ‘an apostolic hunt as it were’. Ep. 2.2.12 has both: quadam quasi pinguedine.

Classicum cecinit as at Ep. 8.6.13 asseveravit nuper vos classicum in classe cecinisse (addressee Namatius has sounded the trumpet of war with a fleet against the Saxons).

An abstract subject for this phrase (instead of the person who sounds the trumpet) – ecclesia in this case – is rather unique, cf. e.g. Cic. Mur. 30 motus novus belicum canere coepit, ‘a fresh upheaval sounds the alarm’, Cassiod. Var. 9.21 hinc oratorum pugna civilis iuris classicum canit. Cf. e.g. Cic. Tusc. 3.33 (ratio) cecinit receptui. See TLL 3: 265.60 ff. and 267.51 ff.

fremit populus per studia divisus;

fremit populus, ‘the people buzz with excitement’: Fremere is the characteristic sound of a crowd, e.g. Ov. Met. 15.606 f. sed per confusa frementis / verba tamen vulgi vox eminet una 'quis ille est?', ‘amid the blurred words of the buzzing crowd ...’, Liv. 30.24.10 (the senate is assembled; meanwhile) populus in curiae vestibulo fremere ne tanta ex oculis manibusque amitteretur praeda, ‘the people in the porch of the curia protested that such a haul ... should not be allowed to escape’.

The populus is the third party in town, next to the leading laymen and the clerics. Its behaviour is as unpredictable as it can be decisive. For the role of the people, see the Introduction, section 4 The election and consecration of bishops. In 7.8.2 episcopum sibi flagitat populus Biturix ordinari, Sidonius will appear to have got things right (see my comment ad loc.).
Populus in Sidonius primarily is an unspecific ‘population’, ‘inhabitants’. Depending on the context the focus can be on the element of ‘populace’ (= plebs; as here, cf. 7.8.2), of ‘lay’ (= cives; see 7.8.4 sacerdotibus, popularibus) or of ‘Christian community’ (see 7.6.7 populos … orbatos).

per studia divisus, ‘split into different factions’ (Anderson): Studium indicates passionate personal or political support arising from free choice, according to Hellegouarch 1963: 174 ff. See also my comment on 7.3.1 affectu studioque parenidi. For the phrase compare e.g. Verg. A.2. 41 scinditur incertum studia in contraria vulgus, Tac. Ann. 2.43.5 divisa namque et discors aula erat tacitis in Drusum aut Germanicum studiis.

The clause Stat. Theb. 5.147 f. nec varius fremor, aut studia in contraria rapti / dissensus, ut plebe solet has both elements.

pauci alteros, multi sese non offerunt solum sed inferunt.

‘while only a few are ready to propose others, there are many who do not so much propose as impose themselves’ (Dalton)

**sesse non offerunt solum sed inferunt** is a climax, with Sidonius’ usual predilection for a detailed play of words (a paronomasia, Hagendahl class 2). Its origin from the study of lexicological niceties is apparent from Isid. Diff. 416 offerre est altero praebere, inferre importare. A similar wordplay, without climax, is Caes. Arel. Serm. 60.2 ingerunt se enim et offerunt quodammodo duo isti quasi hospites ad ostium cordis tui.

For the general idea compare Sidonius’ description of the same situation in 7.9.2 omnes placebant sibi, omnes omnibus displicebant, ‘everybody was pleased with himself, everybody was displeased with everybody else’.

**si aliquid pro virili portione secundum deum consulas veritati,**

‘if – to the best of one’s ability and according to God’s will – one is concerned about the truth, be it ever so little’

**si aliquid** is found four times in all in the correspondence (also 4.22.6, 6.7.1, 8.11.3) against si quid 51 times. This makes for emphasis; see LHS 2: 194: ‘aliquis stand nach diesen Konjunktionen [= si, nisi etc.] nur bei Fernstellung und wenn es den Hauptton trug, im Spätlestein bei weniger sorgfältigen Stilisten auch sonst’ - the addition of course does not apply to Sidonius.

**pro virili portione,** ‘as far as man can’, ‘to the best of one’s ability’, is found since Tacitus, e.g. Ag. 45.3 constans et libens fatum exceptisti, tanquam pro virili portione innocentiam principi donares. It replaces classical pro virili parte, e.g. Liv. praef. 3. In Christian authors since Lact. Inst. 2.7.2 dedit omnibus deus pro virili portione sapientiam. Charisius Ars p. 407 l. 22 (Barwick-Kühnert) has it in his list of Latin idiom.

**secundum deum,** ‘following God’ , ‘according to God’s will’: The phrase balances pro virili portione, God and man. For its meaning cf. e.g. Ambr. Parad.15.75 secundum deum, non secundum saeculum, ‘according to God, not according to the world’, Aug. Ep. 220.9 si autem secundum deum me consulis, ne anima tua pereat, ... habeo plane, quod dicam, ‘if you consult me sincerely lest your soul should perish … I can definitely tell you something’. Sidonius himself has Ep. 9.8.2 secundum promissa caelestia.
**consulas** is a generalizing second pers. subj. praes., see LHS 2: 419.

**veritati** M'(ut v. ex veritatēq;):FP: veritatemque C edd. The constitution of the text has been discussed thoroughly by Mossberg 1934: 46 ff. He decided on veritati, and he must be right. C is generally considered as fanciful and unreliable (Mohr praef. iv, Loyen 2: lii), so why trust it here against MFP? There are many parallels to support the construction of consule with the dat. of an abstract noun, ‘to take care of’, ‘fight for’, e.g. Tac. Ann. 1.75 dum veritati consulitur, libertas corrumpatur, ‘though it did encourage honesty, it also infringed on independence’ (viz. of the judges), and Cic. Div. Caec. 48 consulent laudi et exstimationi tuae, ‘he is going to boost your name and reputation’. *Aliquid* is an acc. resp., as in Cic. Att. 11.25.3 cui si qua re consulere aliquid possum.

*Veritas* means ‘truthfulness’, ‘honesty’, cf. e.g. 8.14.6 sinceritas et veritas, ‘innocence and truth’, and is opposed to the notion of things being sham and counterfeit which follows in *levia, varia, fucata*. Of course, *veritas* in its several connotations is ‘according to God’s will’, cf. Aug. Civ. 14.4 cum itaque vivit homo secundum veritatem, non vivit secundum se ipsum, sed secundum deum. For a juridical side to veritas, see my comment on 7.6.3 causam ... veritatis.

**omnia occurrunt levia, varia, fucata, et (quid dicam?) sola est illic simplex impudentia.**

**occurrunt** sc. oculis or animo, ‘present themselves’, ‘confront one’: Cf. e.g. Tac. Ag. 2.2 omni bona arte in exilium acta, ne quid usquam honestum occurreret, ‘they exiled every noble pursuit, that nothing good might anywhere confront them’ (transl. Church and Brodribb).

**levia, varia, fucata**, ‘unreliable, untrustworthy, insincere’: The adjectives are virtual synonyms, and are nowhere else found in this triple combination. Sidonius suggests calculation, and nothing but calculation, in everybody concerned. For this meaning, cf. e.g. Cic. Fam. 13.7.4 neque aliqua levi ambitione commotum, ‘not motivated by cheap ambition’, Verg. A. 4.569 varium et mutabile semper femina, Cic. Amic. 95 secerni ... blandus amicus a vero ... tam potest ... quam omnia fucata et simulata a sinceris atque veris, ‘a grovelling friend is as different from a real one as insincere and fake differ from honest and truthful’. As for Sidonius, cf. 1.11.4 levis turbæ facilitatem, ‘the suggestibility of the fickle crowd’, and 2.2.7 abrupta purpurea genuino fucata conchylio, ‘purple precipices faked with genuine murex’ (the only other occurrence of *fucare* in the correspondence). This is the only instance in the letters of *varius* used in this way.

For tricola and synonyms, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 *Style*.

**quid dicam?**, ‘how shall I say it?’: Rhetorical questions are among the characteristics of colloquial language and epistolography, see LHS 2: 425. This one is used to attenuate a bold enunciation, cf. e.g. Cic. ad Brut. 1.17.1 (Brutus writes Atticus about Cicero:) sed quaedam mihi videtur - quid dicam? - imperite vir omnium prudentissimus (i.e. Cicero) an ambitiose fecisse.

**sola est illic simplex impudentia**, ‘the only genuine thing left is impudence’ (Dalton): *Simplex*, ‘honest’, is opposed to *levia, varia, fucata*, and by creating a paradox results in an effective oxymoron with *impudentia*. 

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et nisi me immerito queri iudicaretis, dicere auderem tam praecipitis animi esse plerosque tamque periculosi,

et, ‘indeed’ (Anderson): For et introducing a next step in the argument, see my comment at 7.1.4 et vere.

nisi .. iudicaretis, ... auderem, ‘were it not that you would think …, I would dare …’: Note the polite use of the irrealis. The author says he should spare the addressee his complaint (which he does not), because it would be deemed unfounded (which it is not).

tam praecipitis animi ... tamque periculosi, ‘in such a reckless and dangerous temper’ (Anderson): For the adjectives, compare the synonymous collocation temerarius and periculosus in Ep. 7.1.2 animositati nostrae tam temerariae tamque periculosae. For this variation technique, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

For praeceps in this sense, ‘rash’, ‘impetuous’, cf. e.g. Suet. Cl. 15.1 inconsultus ac praeceps. For periculosus in the sense of ‘reckless’, ‘rash’, cf. e.g. Cic. Att. 13.27.1 in nosmet ipsos ... paene periculosi, ‘almost a danger to ourselves’. Both adjectives are not attested in combination outside Sidonius.

ut sacrosanctam sedem dignitatemque affectare pretio oblato non reformident,

sacrosanctam sedem, ‘the sacred see’: For this circumlocution of the episcopacy, cf. Ep. 6.1.3 in apostolica sede, ‘in the office of bishop’. The combination with sacrosanctus/sanctus/sacer for the bishop’s see is rare, cf. e.g. Ambr. in Luc. 9.295 sacrosanctae sedis tribunal, ‘the platform of the bishop’s throne’ (in an exalted context of the earth being God’s vineyard: the Christian stands on ‘holy ground’, where the eucharist is celebrated), Prosp. c. Coll. 5.3 (fifth cent.) erravit sacrosancta beati Petri sedes, Conc. Carth. a. 525 (CC SL 149 p. 279 l. 293) de hac sede sancta Carthaginensis ecclesiae, Conc. Aurel. a. 541 (CC SL 148 A p. 132 l. 11) a sede apostolica sacra (of the metropolitan). It is mainly reserved for God (e.g. Psalm. 46.9 Deus sedet super sedem sanctam suam) and holy places. Only in the Middle Ages is it common for the Holy See. For sacrosanctus, see my comment on 7.1.6 sacrosanctae informationis.

affectare, ‘to strive after’, is classical. In Sidonius cf. e.g. 1.7.11 qui non adefectasset habitum purpuratorum, ‘although he had not aspired to the purple’ (Anderson), 8.13.3 municipatum caelestis illius civitatis adefectans, ‘aiming at the citizenship of the Heavenly City’ (Anderson).

pretio oblato, ‘by offering money’: Cf. already Tert. Apol. 39.4 (in the Christian community) praesident probati quiunque seniores, honorem istum non pretio, sed testimonio adepti, ‘leaders … who have got that position not by paying money, but on account of their reputation’. Simony became widespread in the church after the age of the persecutions. Several councils took measures against this tenacious evil. The council of Chalcedon (451 AD), with all the authority it had as an oecumenical synod, forbade ordination to any order with the help of money. Gregory the Great made the combat against simony a central issue of his papacy. For reference, see LexMA 7 (1995): 1922-25 and RGG 7 (2004): 1328 f., and Norton 2007: 177-91 (level-headedly on pp. 177 f.: ‘In fact, it would have been extremely surprising if what was common practice in late antiquity – the purchase of office or the use of influence to obtain it –
had not found its way into what was, after all, another late-antique institution'; the case of Bourges on p. 188; Sidonius’ own son was to buy the see of Clermont, p. 189)

Further on in the procedure, in the speech in which he announces and defends his decision, Sidonius will take an oath that he is not biased by money, swearing on the Holy Ghost, qui Petri voce damnavit in Simone mago cur opinaretur gratiam benedictionis pretio sese posse mercari, ‘who by the lips of Peter condemned the error of Simon the sorcerer in thinking that he could buy with money the grace of benediction’ (Anderson) (Ep. 7.9.15).

remque iam dudum in nundinam mittere auctionemque potuisse, si quam paratus inventur emptor, venditor tam desperatus inveniretur.

‘and it might already have been put up for sale and auction, if there had existed as unscrupulous a seller as there does exist a willing buyer.’ The potential seller is the responsible bishop, i.e. Sidonius himself, who had scrupulously resisted the pressure of the ‘willing buyers’.

**in nundinam mittere auctionemque:** *Nundinae* pl.t. means ‘market day’, ‘market’, and is often used in a pregnant sense of the dealing in things that are too valuable to be made the subject of trade, e.g. Cic. *Phil.* 2.35 *vectigalium flagitiiosissimae nundinae*, ‘the infamous sale of taxes’, Plin. *Nat.* 29.21 *avaritiam ... rapacesque nundinas pendentibus fatis*, ‘greed and rapacious selling out as the patient is dying’ (of doctors, who seize their opportunity, when their patients are in extremis). *Nundinae* and *auctio* are found together in Cic. *Phil.* 5.11 *calebant ... totius rei publicae nundinae; mulier ... auctionem provinciarum regnorumque faciebat*, ‘there was a lively selling out of the entire state: his wife put up to auction provinces and kingdoms’.


**quam paratus inventur emptor, venditor tam desperatus:** For *desperatus*, ‘reckless from despair’, cf. e.g. Cic. *Catil.* 2.10 *desperatorum hominum flagitiiosi greges*, Apol. *Apol.* 77 *adversum eius desperatum avaritiam*. For *inventor emptor*, cf. Sal. *Jug.* 35.10 *urbem venalem et mature perituram, si emptorem invenerit*.

Note the chiasmus. The same wordplay *paratus – desperatus* is found, but less conspicuously, in Cassiod. *in Psalm.* 105 l. 256 (CC SL 98) (the Israelites in the desert) *prius conceperunt desperationem, quam eius parata beneficia provenissent*. 
proin quaeso, ut officii mei novitatem, pudorem, necessitatem exspectatissimi adventus tui ornes contubernio, tuteris auxilio.

**officii mei novitatem, pudorem, necessitatem**, ‘the strangeness, the embarrassment, the constraint of my office’: Note the use of abstract nouns to say: ‘Please help me, who am a novice to this office and am feeling embarrassed and am unable to back out.’ On the preference of later Latin for abstracta, see my comment on 7.1.2 animositati nostrae.

**Officii … necessitatem**, ‘the constraint of my office’, as in Ep. 9.12.3 ante praeSENTIS officii necessitatem (not being allowed to write poetry as a bishop), cf. 2.13.5 te, Damocles, qui non uno longius prandio regni necessitatem toleravisti, ‘you, Damocles, who could not bear the pressure of ruling for longer than one meal’. **Officium** is one of Sidonius’ designations for the office of a bishop, e.g. 6.7.1, 7.8.1.

**Pudor** ‘denotes a displeasure with oneself caused by vulnerability to just criticism of a socially diminishing sort’, according to Kaster 1997: 4 in a lecture entitled ‘The Shame of the Romans’. What is striking, he says, is the interiority of pudor, and its crucial link to the concept one has of oneself. See also Robert A. Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome*, Oxford, 2005.

In 7.9.6, in the exordium of his speech in Bourges, Sidonius will mention the *pondus pudoris* which has been imposed on him by the task to nominate a bishop. The uncertainty of someone new to a job (and the opposite) is similarly expressed in Plin. *Pan. 24.1* iunxiSTI ... seCurITatem olIM inPerantIS et inCIPientIS pudorem, ‘you unite the self-confidence of an old hand at reigning and the wariness of a novice’.

**exspectatissimi adventus tui**, ‘your longed-for arrival’ (Anderson): Luetjohann’s correction for spectatissimi of all codices except P (spectantissimi P) has been adopted by all later editors. It is nice and idiomatic, cf. e.g. Cic. *Att. 4.4.3 mihi tuum adventum suavissimum exspectatissimumque esse*, Fam. 5.19.1 *superiores litterae tuae ... quibus ... exspectatum meum adventum abs te amanter videbam*. The phrase suggests the proud arrival of an official, as in Cic. *Arch. 4* post in ceteris Asiae partibus cunctaque Graecia sic eius adventus celebrabantur, ut famam ingenii exspectatio hominis, expectionem ipsius adventus admiratioque superaret, ‘… the expectation of the man surpassed his fame, and the admiration at his arrival the expectation’. Compare Clermont waiting anxiously for the arrival of Ecdicius, Sidon. *Ep. 2.1A* te exspectat palpitantium civium extrema libertas. Spectatissimus in Sidonius is ‘most distinguished’ of persons, 3.3.9 spectatissimus quisque, 6.5.1 *inter spectatissimos quoque numerari*.

**ornes contubernio**, ‘to honour with companionship’: For this meaning of ornare, cf. 1.11.10 qui duabus dignitatibus et ipse decursis pariter ornaverat proconsulatum patris, ‘… had added fresh lustre to his father’s proconsulship’ (Anderson). *Contubernium* is a favourite with Sidonius (seventeen instances) to express goodfellowship in intercourse, e.g. 7.9.22 *in contubernio aequalis*, ‘never putting himself forward among his friends’ (Dalton), 7.14.10 delectaris contubernius eruditorum, ‘you relish the company of learned men’. It is one of the subdivisions of amicitia, see Hellegouarch’ 1963: 63, often used to express close collaboration in office, as e.g. Cic. *Brut. 105* contubernalem in consulatu fuisse, Tac. *Dial. 5.2* quis enim nescit neminem mihi coniunctorem esse et usu amicitiae et adsiduitate contubernii quam Saleium Bassum. Also see TLL 4: 792.50 ff.

The link between adventus and contubernio, ‘the companionship of your arrival’, is a harsh one. Wouweren (Paris 1598) and Savaron (Paris 1599 and 1609) had at their disposal a *liber*
Nanzii’, called ‘optimus’ by Wouweren, which, among other variae lectiones, offered three additions to the text of all the other codices. See Leo in his introduction in Luetjohann 1987: xxiii f. One of these belongs here. It reads, inserted in its context:

Proin quaeso, ut officii mei novitatem ... adventus tui <muneres indultu et inter tantos motus partium factiosarum laborantem me fluctuantemque consilio confirmes collegio informes> ornes contubernio, tuteris auxilio.

‘Therefore I beg you to reward me, as a novice ..., with the favour of your arrival and, as I am labouring and wavering amidst such great turmoil of the parties at odds with each other, to strengthen me with your advice, to encourage me with your fellowship, to honour me with your companionship, to protect me with your help.’

Neither Mohr nor Loyen ventured to admit it into their text, but they considered it favourably, ‘fortasse recte’. Mohr p. ix added that, ‘though lost in the archetypus of the manuscripts we possess, it could have been inserted later in some manuscripts from a different archetypus’. In my opinion, besides the fact that the addition makes excellent sense, it is also quite defendable on grounds of language and style. The choice of words fits in with Sidonius’ known vocabulary, cf. 2.4.3 benignitate responsi … munere, 9.11.10 veniae clementis indultu, 9.3.1 gentium motibus, 7.9.2 partium seditiones, 1.11.8 turba factiosorum, 5.8.3 sit posteritas laboratur, 3.10.2 fluctuantem ... responsi salubritate fulcite, 8.6.9 confirmor assensu, 5.16.5 non infirmatur aevum sed informatur ingenium. Long commatic sequences, with paired members, with or without chiasmus and soundplay, abound, e.g. 1.2.7 tesseras colligit rapide, inspicit sollicita, volvit argute, mittit instanter, ioculanter compellat, patienter exspectat, and 2.1.3 in concilio iubet, in consilio tacet, in ecclesia iocatur, in convivio praedicat, in cubiculo damnat, in quaestione dormitat.

I follow the methodical rigour as advocated by Loyen 2: liv f.: Admit nothing into the text, unless it is attested by a specified consensus of the manuscripts and with as few corrections as possible. At the same time, I share the regret Mohr felt.

Section 3

nec te, quamquam Senoniae caput es, inter haec dubia subtraxeris intentionibus medendis Aquitanorum,

quamquam Senoniae caput es, ‘although your are the leading figure of Senonia’: For Sens and its province Lugdunensis IV or Lugdunensis Senonia, see Introduction, ch. ‘Addressee’.

For quamquam + ind./subj., see my comment on 7.3.1 quamquam.

Caput, ‘head’, ‘leader’, since the Augustan era, always with a metaphorical connotation. See TLL 3: 421.38 ff. Cf. e.g. Liv. 6.3.1 caput rei Romanae Camillus, 25.16.5 Flavus Lucanus fuit, caput partis eius Lucanorum. In the speech in Bourges, the metropolitan who is present, most probably Agroecius himself, is designated by Sidonius in the same way, 7.9.6 suae provinciae caput. Cf. Ep. 4.25.5 personam, quae caput est civitati nostrae per sacerdotium, provinciae vero per civitatem, ‘... who is the number one of our city on account of his priesthood, and of our province on account of the city’. What is said there about Patiens, bishop of Lyon, is the same as is said here about Agroecius and Sens. Further cf. 8.6.4 studiorum omnium caput est litterarumque, 8.14.2 in illo quondam coenobio Lirinensi spectabile caput.
inter haec dubia, ‘in this tricky situation’: Dubius, ‘doubtful’, ‘poised’, ‘tricky’ (of situations), e.g. Sen. Ben. 7.35.1 1 et in dubiis et in adversis et in laetis sapienter geris, ‘in times of uncertainty, of adversity, of prosperity …’, Sidon. Ep. 7.9.22 in adversis constans, in dubiis fidus, in prosperis modestus. Inter dubia is not frequent, but cf. e.g. Tac. Hist. 3.73.1 quippe Vitellianus miles neque astu neque constantia inter dubia indigebat.

intentionibus medendis Aquitanorum, ‘to settle the dispute of the Aquitanians’: In Sidonius the meanings of intentio range from ‘attention’ to ‘urge/pace’, ‘direction/aim’ and ‘effort’. This wide range is completed by the juridical meaning we have here, ‘dispute’, ‘quarrel’, see TLL 7/1: 2122 52, attested since Ambr. Ep. extra coll. 14.1 mihi ascribitur vestra intentionis, ‘I have to cope with your controversy’, in exactly the same situation: a region has no bishop, cannot decide on the successor and invokes Ambrose’s help, who says it is a nearly impossible task, cum sint in vobis dissensiones, ‘as there is a difference of opinion among you’.

Mederi + dat., ‘remedy’, ‘assuage’, ‘amend’, takes with it a negative situation (difficulty, danger etc.) to adjust, as e.g. Rhet. Her. 2.48 in commodo, Tac. Ann. 6.18 periculis.

quia minimum refert, quod nobis est in habituatione divisa provincia, quando in religione causa coniungitur.

in habitacione … in religione, ‘concerning our residence … in the sphere of religion’: For this use of in see TLL 7: 783.31 ff. ‘in relativum et limitativum’; see also OLD s.v. in 41. Cf. e.g. Aug. in Evang. Ioh. 6.10 hoc significavit spiritus sanctus divisus in linguas, unitus in columba, Nupt. 2.6.16 deus vero, inquit, divisit in sexu, quod in operatione coniungeret. See also 7.1.4 in illo ardone, ‘in spite of …’, 7.9.15 in Simone mago, ‘in the case of …’.

Sidonius himself in other cases prefers per: 9.5.1 per regna divisi, 9.8.2 per locorum distantiam dividemur.

Again parallelism (with inner rhyme), in habitacione provincia – in religione causa, and chiasmus, est divisa provincia – causa coniungitur, concur to round the sentence off neatly.

his accedit, quod de urbibus Aquitanicae primae solum oppidum Arvernum Romanorum reliquum partibus bella fecerunt.

The provincia Aquitanica prima comprised the metropolitan see of Bourges, and the sees of Albi, Rodez, Cahors, Javols, Saint Paulien, Limoges and Clermont. From the next letter we know that Rodez, Javols and Limoges were vacant. We do not know whether the other sees were also vacant, or whether their bishops could not come because of the Visigothic occupation. Anyhow, Sidonius argues that his town Clermont, oppidum Arvernum, is the only one still under Roman rule, and therefore he is available to supervise the election in Bourges, but there are not enough colleagues in the province to complete the prescribed number.

Loyen 2: xviii in his reconstruction of the events describes how Euric’s first offensive in 469 had been curbed north of the Loire by comes Paulus. He had been forced to retire to his winter quarters in Aquitaine and, in all probability, to release Bourges. Then, in 470, with the connivance of the vicarius VII provinciarum Seronatus, he overran almost all of Aquitaine, with the exception of Clermont, possibly also sparing Bourges. In any case, the Visigoths did not interfere with the election of the new bishop in 471. See also Stevens 1933: 112.
Romanorum ... partibus, ‘the side of the Romans’: The MSS read as follows: romanorum NT (romanunum L): romanis MCFP. In cases such as this one the general preference for the LNVT family is decisive. Grammatically speaking, either is possible, cf. Tac. Hist. 2.16.1 in partibus Othonis, with Front. Strat. 7.32 in partibus Pompeianis. In Sidonius cf. Ep. 5.6.2 tuo praecipue machinatu oppidum Vasionense partibus novi principis applicari, ‘that by your scheming in the first place the town of Vaison was attaching itself to the party of the new emperor’. For a different, geographical, denotation of partes + gen., see 7.1.7 in partibus orbis occidui.

reliquum ... fecerunt, ‘have left over’: Cf. e.g. Cic. de Orat. 3.144 cum de duabus primis (partibus) nobis quidem satis ... dixisses, duas tibi reliquas feceras, ‘... you had two items left to discuss’. It is the only occurrence in Sidonius.

The chiasmus oppidum Arvernum - Romanorum ... partibus (notice the hyperbaton!) brings out the close connection between Clermont and Rome by their juxtaposition.

quapropter in constituendo praefatae civitatis antistite provincialium collegarum deficimur numero, nisi metropolitanorum reficiamur assensu.

in constituoendo ... antistite, ‘in appointing a bishop’: Sidonius does not elsewhere use constituiere of the appointment of a bishop, but it is well attested, e.g. Sulp. Sev. Mart. 9.3 ad constitutendum antistitem, cf. Tert. Praescr. 32 ab apostolis in episcopatum constitutos.

praefatae civitatis, ‘the town mentioned’: I.e. Bourges. Praefatus, ‘above-mentioned’, is post-classical (third cent. and later, e.g. Paul. Dig. 10.3.19.4 praefata iura) and is repeatedly found in Sidonius, as an adjective as well as a noun, e.g. Ep. 7.6.6 praefatum regem Gothorum, 4.4.2 remeante praefato. He writes supradictus as an alternative, e.g. 2.13.4.

provincialium collegarum deficimur numero, ‘we are short of provincial colleagues’, ‘we do not make a quorum’: Deficior + abl., ‘to be left without’, ‘lack’, cf. e.g. Cic. Clu. 184 mulier ... consilio ... deficitur, Quint. Inst. 5.7.23 et si deficietur numero pars diversa, paucitatem ... oportebit incessere, ‘if the other party has few witnesses ...’. In Sidonius it is a hapax. The reading deficimus M&T can scarcely be right in view of the usual idiom.

Numerus, ‘the proper number’, often with suus, is found e.g. Cic. Ver. 5.133 si suum numerum naves haberent. As mentioned in the Introduction, section 4 The election and consecration of bishops, at least three bishops were required for a consecration to be valid.

The words provincialium collegarum deficimur numero go side by side with the following metropolitanorum reficiamur assensu.

nisi metropolitanorum reficiamur assensu, ‘unless we are backed by the consent of metropolitanans’: As it was precisely the metropolitan who had to be replaced, Sidonius called in the help of a neighbouring metropolitan. The bad times did not allow him to follow the regulations literally, but he tried to act according to their spirit. That is why, apart from the metropolitan of Lugdunensis IV, Agroecius, he also consulted the nearest bishop in Lugdunensis I, Euphronius of Autun (Ep. 7.8).

Metropolitanorum is used in a generalizing way, equivalent to the singular ‘a metropolitan bishop’.

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Refici, ‘to be restored’, ‘recover’, ‘brighten up’, here only in the correspondence, undoubtedly prompted by the preceding *deficimur* (paronomasia, Hagendahl class 2).

The classical use of the medio-passive is with an inanimate subject, e.g. Nep. *Ham.* 1.4 *si paulum modo res esset refectae*, Liv. 9.27.13 *conspectu ducis refectus miltum est animus*. Its application to persons seem to be a later development (fourth cent.), e.g. Lucif. *Non parc.* 29 *si torquesas, magis curamur; si crucias, magis reficimur*, Ambr. *Psalm.* 118 14.2 *verba sunt scripturarum caelestium ... in quibus recreamur ac reficimur*. One feels it comes close to the meaning ‘to help’, ‘support’, like *consolari*, for which see my comment on 7.6.9 *solacii*, and *mederi*, see 7.6.1 *ut mederi ... vix ... queat*.

*Assensu* has a slightly official overtone, as *adsentire* is the t.t. for one senator agreeing with the *sententia* of another (Hellegouarch 1963: 122 f.). Cf. *Ep.* 2.4.2 *nisi assensum tuum ... adipiscatur* (approbation for a marriage), 8.6.9 *si supradicti confirmor assensu* (approval of style). The latter example is a variant of our phrase *nisi metropolitanorum reficiamur assensu*. For Sidonius’ variation technique, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 *Style*.

**Section 4**

de cetero quod ad honoris vestri spectat praerogativam,

de cetero, ‘for the rest’, ‘it only remains to say’ (Anderson), is found also *Ep.* 4.15.3, 5.9.4, 7.14.12, 7.16.2, 8.6.9, and 8.13.4. It is attested since Cic. *Fin.* 1.7.26 *de cetero vellem equidem*.

*quod ad ... spectat*, ‘when it comes to ...’, also *Ep.* 4.3.1, 6.2.1, and 8.11.7. Alternatively *quantum ad ... spectat*, e.g. 2.4.2.

*honoris vestri praerogativam*, ‘the precedence belonging to your rank’ (Anderson): Cf. e.g. (but always of a worldly career) *Ep.* 2.3.1 *honorum tuorum ... fastigium*, 3.5.1 *honoris vestro hic quoque cumulus accedit, quod etc.* Here specifically of the office of bishop, cf. e.g. Aug. *Ep.* 167.18 *honores ecclesiasticos*, Leo M. *Ep.* 14.4 *presbyterali honore*. On *honor* in the fifth and sixth centuries, see Gradowicz-Pancer 1996.

The noun *praerogative* occurs no fewer than nineteen times in the correspondence, e.g. *Ep.* 6.1.3 about Lupus’ *praerogativa* as the senior bishop *par excellence*. Here of Agroecius’ canonical right as metropolitan concerning the designation of bishops. For episcopal hierarchy, see Mathisen 1990.

nullus a me hactenus nominatus, nullus adhibitus, nullus electus est;

nullus, ‘nobody’, instead of *nemo*, also *Ep.* 8.11.4 *nullus illi ita inimicus, qui ...; et tamen nullus sic amicus, qui ...*, 9.7.2 *et enim rarus aut nullus est, cui ...* It is already found in Pl. *Mer.* 897 *amicior mihi nullus vivit*, and then from Sen. *Dial.* 11.14.2 onward. See TLL 2: 204 f.

*nominatus ... adhibitus ... electus*, ‘named ... introduced ... chosen’: The verbs might seem to suggest a certain progression in time in the procedure, but in fact cannot be sharply distinguished. Compare the speech to the community in Bourges. There in 7.9.9 ff. *nominare* and *eligere* are used by Sidonius as synonyms for *proferre* and *dicere*. All indicate the process of selecting and proposing a candidate: 9 *si quempiam nominaveram monachorum ... 10 si eligimus humilem ... 12 si clericum dixeram ... 14 si militarem dixeram forte personam*. See also my discussion of 7.8.2 *Simplicium ... episcopum sibi flagitat populus Biturix ordinari*, and 3 *neque quippiam nominata ... inlicitum opponi*.
Likewise, *adhibere* (‘to introduce’, ‘bring on stage’, e.g. Hor. *Ars 227 quicumque adhibebitur heros*) and *eligere* are *de facto* synonyms, as is apparent from *Ep. 5.5.3* (you, addressee Syagrius) *novus Amphion ... eligeris adhiberis*, ‘a new Amphion, you are picked out, you are invited’ (Anderson). On this variation with regard to the choice of words, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 *Style*.

The function of the triple synonym, with its forceful anaphora and parallelism, is undoubtedly to underline that the situation is absolutely open to any intervention Agroecius might wish to make, which is further emphasized by the, again, triple affirmation that everything is still in abeyance (*salva inlibata solida*) and that Sidonius believes he has only task namely to applaud Agroecius’ decision (*invitare ... expectare ... laudare*).

The basic idea of the procedure was a nomination by the laymen and the clergy, followed by the consent and consecration by the college of bishops. As has been explained in the introduction, the most probable reconstruction of the situation in Bourges is, that the congregation could not agree on a candidate, whereupon Sidonius forced them to promise that they would accept his nominee. By calling in Agroecius he probably wanted to assure himself beforehand of a *nihil obstat* regarding the eventual consecration. A metropolitan’s vote was decisive, therefore Sidonius, with ceremonial modesty, effaces himself and stands aside for his superior. For the procedure, see the Introduction, section 4 *The election and consecration of bishops*.

*omnia censurae tuae salva inlibata solida servantur.*

**censurae tuae**, ‘for your judgment’: *Censura* is the authoritative judgment attributed to a bishop in letters such as *6.1.3* (to Lupus) *cum censurae tuae adtremat etiam turba collegii*, as even the members of your own provincial college tremble before your judgment’, and *6.2.4* (to Pragmatius) *pacificate certantes, et pontificalis auctoritate censurae suspectis sibi partibus indicite gratiam*, ‘… enjoin conciliation by the authority of your episcopal verdict’. Otherwise it means ‘literary criticism’, often in the epistolographic topos of submitting one’s letter or another literary work of art to the *amicus* for assessment, e.g. *7.9.1 illa, quae maxume tuarum scilicet aurium minime digna sunt occupare censuram*, ‘…which do not deserve to be heard by your critical ears’.

**salva inlibata solida servantur**, ‘are reserved entire, unimpaired and sound’: *Salva inlibata solida*, three from a number of possible synonyms, such as *inlibatus, incolumis, intactus, integer, salvis, sincerus, solidus*. Cf. e.g. Apul. *Met.* 2.24 *“ecce”, inquit, “nasus integer, incolumres oculi, salvae aures, inlibatae labiae, mentum solidum”* (in the same order as in our phrase!). For once the author refrains from an increasing number of syllables (i.e. instead of *salva solida inlibata*), see my comment at 7.2.7 *solus tenuis peregrinus*.

*Salvus* and *inlibatus* can be found together with *servare* elsewhere, e.g. *Col. 8.11 inlibatam servant integritatem*, Cato *Agr.* 141.2 *pastores pecuque salva servassis*. The juxtaposition of *censura, illibatus* and *servare* (or synonyms) is an example of official language, causes to be left open for the magistrate or the emperor to decide on, e.g. Cod. Theod. 12.12.4 *integrae atque illibatae civitatum petitiones ad magnificentissimae sedis tuae notitiam perferantur, ut sit examinis tui, quenanam ex his auxilio tuo implenda … videantur, 12.12.10 ita, ut nullum finem capiat ordo gestorium illibataque rerum decisio singularum nostro auditis sententiaeque servetur*. In Sidonius cf. 3.12.3 *ceterum nostro quod sacerdoti nil reservavi etc., ‘in not reserving anything for our bishop, etc.’* (Sidonius has already imposed a punishment himself).
tantum hoc meum duco, vestras invitare personas, expectare voluntates, laudare sententias,

invitare, ‘invite’: In all probability, Agroecius accepted the invitation to be present at the election. See 7.9.6 coram sacrosancto et pontificatu maximo dignissimo papa.

vestras ... personas, ‘your person’, ‘your presence’: As Anderson has rightly remarked in his note ad loc. this is no real plural, but rather a ‘grandiose reference’ to Agroecius alone. There are two other instances of this phrase, both real plurals: Optat. (fourth.cent) 2.21.6 and Greg. Tur. Franc. 5.18. The singular of persona is standard, e.g. Avit. Ep. 1.12 cum duce Christo vestram meruerint videre personam, Ennod. Ep. 3.33 quia sicut personam meam pro supra dictae voluntate petitio, ita vestram effectus aspiciet. The plural in our case is evoked and supported by the plurals voluntates and sententias. Compare 7.6.6 armis ... animis ... annis.

voluntates, ‘your purposes’: Voluntas, ‘what one means to do’, ‘one’s intention’, is found three more times in Sidonius, each time as a real plural of more than one person, e.g. Ep. 4.2.1 quarumpiam personarum aut voluntates aut necessitates. Thus it has more or less the same ‘grandiosity’ as personas.

sententias, ‘your decisions’.

et cum in locum statumque pontificis quisque sufficitur, ut a vobis praeeptum, a me procedat obsequium.

et was omitted by Wilamowitz and Luetjohann. Quite unnecessarily, because, if one is prepared to allow for a certain variation in the phrasing (meum duco + inf. changing into ut), meum est ut is correct, cf. e.g. Sen. Ep. 93.7 quamdiu sim, alienum est: quamdiu ero, ut sim, meum est, ‘how long I live, is not in my power; but, as long as I live, it is my responsibility to live (well)’. It has been rightly retained by subsequent editors.

locum statumque, ‘position and standing’, to all practical purposes are synonyms, cf. e.g. Ep. 3.6.3 statum celsitudinis, ‘the rank of your highness’ (congratulating Eutropius on his promotion), and 6.3.1 cum nostra mediocritas ... privilegio loci ... facile vincatur, ‘for my poor insignificance pales easily before your exceptional standing” (to bishop Leontius; transl. Anderson). We find both in Cic. Att. 2.23.2 Sampsiceramum (nickname for Pompey) nostrum amicum vehementer sui status paenitere restituique in eum locum cupere ex quo decidit. For the use of synonyms, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

quisque = aliqui(s), ‘somebody’, ‘someone or other’: Rare in archaic and classical Latin, it is regularly attested in later Latin, e.g. Aug. Civ. 1.8 l.45 tantum interest, non qualia, sed qualis quisque patiatur. Among the examples in Sidonius are Ep. 7.6.9 cum clericus quisque defungitur, 7.14.11 lacrimas omnes ... quas quisque profuderit. See LHS 2: 199 and Blaise s.v. aliqui 2. Differently 7.9.5 ut eosdem ... quisque audire coeperat, where see my comment.

sufficitur, ‘is elected’, ‘succeeds’, cf. Ep. 7.6.7 nec ullis deinceps episcopis in defunctorum officia suffectis, ‘as no bishops have been appointed to succeed to the office of those who have died’.

praeeptum ... obsequium, ‘instructions ... obedience’: The usual terminology in the patronus-cliens relationship, cf. e.g. 6.9.3 qui, ut praeeperatis, naviter morem gessit inunctis, ‘who diligently obeyed the instructions, as you had ordered’, 8.16.1 ut ... perveniret ... in manus vestras volumen istud ... obsequio meo, ‘that this book should reach you as a respectful dedication by me’.

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sed si, quod tamen arbitror minime fore, precibus meis apud vos malesuadus obstiterit interpres,

One might ask why the author reckons with possible opposition to his request, and why he thinks it important to underline that it will almost certainly not be effective. Unfortunately, one can only guess. We have two plausible options. One is the Arvandus affair, which somehow or other harmed his cause, and may have made him persona non grata in certain Gallo-Roman circles, especially at the beginning of his episcopacy. The second is his isolated position in Clermont, which is surrounded by territory occupied by the Visigoths, and the precarious position of Bourges, where he is going to interfere. It would, perhaps, not have been wise for other bishops to support him, because Euric might take reprisals against them.

The phrase quod tamen arbitror minime fore is an appeal to Agroecius not to give way to these forces, phrased as a compliment: ‘I am sure you won’t be a coward’.


Interpres, ‘intermediary’, ‘spokesman’, ‘interpreter’, is used by Sidonius in a very similar, politically hazardous, context in Ep. 5.7.6 sed quid faciat unus, undique venenato vallatus interprete?, ‘… hemmed in on all sides by experts in poisoned misrepresentation’ (Anderson). The addressee, Sidonius’ uncle Thaumastus, has been endangered by elements in the Gallo-Roman nobility because of the charge against his brother of siding with the new emperor, Iulius Nepos. In the corpus of this study we have 7.6.3 etsi carpat zelum in me fidei sinister interpres, ‘even if a malign critic runs down my religious zeal’, possibly about an Arian antagonist of Sidonius in Clermont (see my comment ad loc.). Significant for the competitive literary climate are such utterances as 7.12.4 neque te sacerdotibus potius admixtum vitio vertat malignus interpres, where a ‘malicious interpreter’ might find fault with Sidonius because he has inserted Ferreolus in the book of letters to bishops.

Note the variation technique in the adjectives in the three successive instances: malesuadus, venenatus, malignus. See General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

poteritis praesentiam vestrâm potius excusare quam culpam;

Not to visit an amicus is a culpa, see e.g. Ep. 7.11.1 culpam rarae occasioris, ‘the fault of visiting rarely’, cf. 7.10.1 (I cannot come. If only it was not the war which prevents it, but something less deplorable) ut minus excusabiles iudicaremur, ‘so that you would think me less pardonable’. The letter is rounded off in the best epistolographic tradition.

Sidonius means: ‘I might understand your reasons for not coming, but that would not really take the blame away’, i.e. au fond there is no excuse for not coming. The difficulty is in thezeugma which is involved in the artful formulation: excusare with praesentiam means excuses for not doing, not accepting etc. something (TLL 5/2: 1306.61 ff., e.g. Tac. Ann. 1.44.1 reditum Agrippinae excusavit), while with culpam it means excuses for what one actually does.
sicut e diverso, si venitis, ostenditis, quia terminus potuerit poni vestrae quidem regioni, sed non potuerit caritati.

There may be a limit to Agroecius’ diocese, his concern for relations does not end there.

**sicut**: For the alternation *sicut* and *sicuti*, see my comment on 7.3.1 *sicuti iniungis*.

**e diverso**, ‘on the other hand’: Is in general use since the fourth century; before that it occurs especially in Pliny the Elder, e.g. Plin. *Nat.* 12.102 et passim. Sidonius uses it in *Ep.* 2.13.4, 5.7.1, 7.9.8, and 9.14.7.

**quia terminus potuerit poni**, + dat., ‘that a limit could be put on …’: *Quia* instead of a.c.i. in later Latin, see *LHS* 2: 586 f. For Sidonius, cf. *Ep.* 3.7.1 *aut nescis, quia garrulo non respondere convicium est?, 3.13.8 taceo, quia decidit honor amorus; with subj., like here, 8.9.4 persuadebis mihi, quia cantuum similes fuerint orlororum.*, ‘you will convince me that they (viz. my verses) were like swan songs’. There, as here, the subjunctive may be thought of as a subjunctive of indirect speech, reflecting, in our case, the words Agroecius may be supposed to say on arrival. For the use of modi with *quia, quod and quoniam*, see *LHS* 2: 577 f. For *quia* in Sidonius, see Grupe’s *Index verborum et locutionum* in Luetjohann’s edition, p. 475 (where also *quod* instead of a.c.i.).

*Terminus ponere* is found since Seneca, e.g. Sen. *Dial.* 2.15.2 *sapientis patientiae paulo ulteriorum terminum ponitis*. In Sidonius it figures – with synonyms like *modum* and *admittere*, etc. – in the topoi of boundless friendship and unlimited reputation. Cf. 5.3.4 *nos sub ope Christi numquam admissuros amoris terminum, 6.6.1 (of the love of the Creator) quia bonitas conditoris habitationem potius hominum quam caritatem finalibus claudit angustiis, 9.1.3 quia qui modus potest paginis, non potest poni ipse amicitias, 2.9.10 nisi terminum nostrae loquacitatis, quem aerecum non adhibet, charta posuisset, 7.9.23 non tam parvos terminos posuit famae natura quam patriae, 8.14.1 quia bonae conscientiae modus non ponitur, nec bonae opinionis terminus inventur. For the variation technique of the formulation, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 *Style*.

*Potuerit* figures in both members of the clause, at variance with Sidonius’ usual *ἀπὸ κοινοῦ* constructions in case like this; see Mossberg 1934: 52 f., and cf. e.g. above in sect. 4 *ut a vobis praeceptum, a me procedat obsequium*. Most probably this is done to conclude the whole of the letter with more emphasis and rhythmical equilibrium.

**caritati**, ‘love’, ‘friendship’: Significantly the last word of this letter. The foundation for the appeal to Agroecius for assistance is the social obligation of *caritas*. For *caritas* in social relations, see my comment on 7.4.4 *ut non habeat vestra caritas finem*. For its overstepping boundaries, see on 7.4.3 *qui etiam longe positorum incitare in se affectat affectum*. 