Writing to survive: A commentary on Sidonius Apollinaris, Letters Book 7, volume 1: The episcopal letters 1-11
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Letter 6

‘The Death Agony of Catholicism’

Introduction

1 Overview

Building up the tension towards the cataclysm of Romanitas in letter 7, Sidonius here paints with singular virtuosity the complementary cataclysm of the Catholica in Gaul. Three times he takes a run-up, each time to reveal the purport of his letter more clearly and to get hold of the addressee, bishop Basilius, more firmly. Then he describes the deplorable situation of Nicene Christendom in terms of the end of religion tout court. The reader is shown the bleak landscape of Gaul, plagued by Arian heresy, deprived of its spiritual leaders, its places of worship overgrown with moss and thorns, its people losing their grip and their faith. The backbone of society is affected: the towns themselves are demoralized. Death and despair reign supreme. Then Sidonius turns again to Basilius and beseeches him, even if he cannot retain independency, at least to safeguard orthodoxy. The grand arch of the composition, begun with its one pillar of the Exordium, which at the same time is an approach to the theme itself, and crowned by the Narratio of the sorry plight of Gaul, finally comes to rest on its second pillar, the Argumentatio and Petito, firmly concluded by the words which summarize the whole of the letter – and for that matter the core of book 7: ex fide, non ex foedere.

The characteristic feature of this letter is its seemingly disproportionate introduction. The Exordium/Captatio takes up more than half of the text! It is built up in three stages. First, the theme is introduced with the metaphor of the wolf who threatens the sheep. Next, Euric’s name is mentioned. Finally, the core of the threat is revealed: Euric’s triumphant Arianism. The length and complexity of the Exordium are essential to its purport. It takes a great deal of diplomatic energy for Sidonius to bring home his message. What he is after desperately defies Euric’s dominance and urgently claims Basilius’ evasive support.

Furthermore, in my introduction I give an impression of the scholarly debate concerning the ‘Arian danger’ in Gaul, and come to the conclusion that Sidonius’ anxiety is to be taken seriously.

• Position

The traditional order of the letters of book 7 makes it plausible that the letters 6 and 7, which are about the disaster of the Gallican church and of Clermont, were deliberately set in a frame by the author; this frame consists of a first letter (5), and subsequently two more on the Bourges episode (8, 9). For this issue – and a caveat as to the order – see General Introduction, sect. 5.2 Manuscripts and 5.4 The structure of book 7.

2 Addressee

The addressee is Basilius, possibly bishop of Aquae Sextiae (now Aix-en-Provence, dept. Bouches-du-Rhône), one of the more important sees in the south of Provence, head of
Narbonensis Secunda, which comprised, among others, Apt and Riez. It had taken a long time for the see of Aix to become the undisputed head of the church province (of which it had always been the civil metropolis). It had been eclipsed by the pretensions of Marseille, and after that by those of Arles. In the year 445 AD pope Leo curbed the aspirations of Arles, and Aix got its chance. See Griffe 2: 164 f.

The first mention of Basilius is his presence, when still a presbyter in Arles, at the funeral AD 449 of Hilarius of Arles – if the identification mentioned by the Bollandists at Vita Hilarii, Acta SS. Maii II, d. 5, col. 33e, cap. 31 sancti Basili, tunc presbyteris, nunc pontificis summī … industria, is right, who note 'Basilius traditur dein factus episcopus Aquensis urbis in Provincia'. Heinzelmann 1982 does not doubt that the identification is correct.

Together with Mamertus of Vienne (Ep. 7.1), Graecus of Marseille (Ep. 7.2, 7.7 and 7.10), Megethius of Belley (?) (Ep. 7.3), Fonteius of Vaison (Ep. 7.4) and Euphronius of Autun (Ep. 7.8), he will have been present at the council of Arles, ca. 470/75 AD. He is mentioned in the praescriptio of the presbyter Lucidus’ letter of retractation to this council. His name is not among the co-signatories of the letter of Faustus which led up to it, though this may well be due to the precarious manuscript tradition of this list. His position in the praescriptio, according to Mathisen 1990: 137, suggests an ordination date between 463 en 470, closer to 463, which means he belongs to the younger generation of the bishops who received one of the letters in my corpus. See General Introduction, sect. 4.4 The council of Arles in the early 470s.

His Christological debate with the Arian Modaharius in defence of Nicene orthodoxy, and his mission to negotiate the peace with Euric AD 475 are known from the current letter only. The same is true for the deduction by Sirmond (PL 58: 563c), that his was the see of Aix, from the fact that Sidonius tells us he lived close to his three colleagues, from Arles, Marseille and Riez.


3 Date

Loyen 3: 214 says ‘printemps ou debut de l’été 475’, which he corroborates in his introduction 2: xx. Bishop Epiphanius had conducted the preliminary negotiations with Euric in the spring of that year, and then the four bishops, Graecus, Basilius, Faustus and Leontius, were charged by the emperor Nepos with the definitive settlement and its details. It amounted to the exchange of the Auvergne and Provence. That must have been May-June 475. See also Stevens 1933: 108.

The letter was written a few months earlier than the next one, 7.7. In 7.6 Sidonius thinks he can still influence the outcome of the negotiations, in 7.7 decisions have been taken and the surrender of Clermont has been agreed. See Harries 1994: 233-37, who, however, advocates earlier dates, respectively: ‘late in 474’ for Epiphanius’ mission and letter 7.6, and ‘several months’ later for the conclusion of the treaty and letter 7.7.
4 Arians and Catholics

This letter has received a lot of attention, earliest from Gregory of Tours, who mentions it expressly in Franc. 2.25. Gregory distilled proof from it for a heavy persecution in Gaul under Euric. Euric, so he says, put do death everybody who was not of his perverse belief, clerics were imprisoned, bishops were either banished or beheaded. He ordered the church entrances to be barred with thorn bushes to prevent people from entering and cause orthodox belief to sink into oblivion. Especially the towns of Novempopulana (Gascogne) and of both provinces of Aquitania were ravaged by this persecution. So far Gregory.

Modern scholars tend to be sceptical about this tale of woe, ever since Stroheker’s sensible analysis of the facts (Stroheker 1948: 40 ff.). Let us have a look at some of the most recent research.

Wolfram 1988: 199 f. has a balanced answer to the question whether Euric systematically persecuted the Catholic church. According to him, the picture Sidonius paints of banishment and vacancies is gloomy, indeed. Secondly, the story of the debate between the Arian Modaharius and the Catholic bishop Basilius of Aix, which Sidonius includes in this letter, seems to indicate, that Euric accompanied his military offensive with a campaign of Arianization. Further, it is remarkable that there were also Roman Arian candidates for the appointment to the bishopric of Bourges. Finally, it seems fairly certain that Euric made it impossible for the Catholic bishops of his realm to communicate with Rome. ‘Yet Euric cannot be described as a systematic persecutor of Catholics. He tried to achieve a gradual shutdown of the ecclesiastical institutions, but he did so without proselytizing. Thus it cannot be shown that Modaharius was connected to Euric ... or that there was official support for the Roman Arians at Bourges. Euric’s anti-Catholic policy remained purely negative and therefore stopped halfway. He ceased it, though not completely, soon after the Romans recognized his conquests. He certainly did not wish to engage in a religious war.’ Tensions remained in existence between several factions and parties in the senatorial nobility and the ecclesiastical hierarchy (see notes 229 and 232).

Heather 1996: 212 f. describes the process of fusion between Goths and Gallo-Romans, with some tensions in the religious sphere. Euric held religious debates at his court, bishops were exiled and no new elections allowed, but all this was the result of the political circumstances.

Likewise Harries 1996: 43 writes: ‘Although the sincerity of Sidonius’ Catholic Christianity cannot be doubted, his condemnation of Arianism in the early 470s is an isolated phenomenon, the product of a state of war with Gothia existing for other reasons.’ According to her, Sidonius had a habit of adapting his arguments to the recipients of his letters, in this case the anti-Arian Basilius. She, furthermore, underlines the fact that the Burgundians also made life difficult for bishops whom they suspected of potential disloyalty (p. 34 with n. 18).

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170 Jones, however, takes at face value the religious zeal attributed to Euric. He signals ‘a fanatical conviction that Catholicism was a heresy displeasing God. The Germans certainly believed that their doctrine was, and could be demonstrated to be, correct’ (LRE 2: 965; see also 1: 242 ff.).

171 For my discussion of this point see on 7.8.3 qui fidei fovent Arrianorum.

172 An interesting generalization from the sole mention of Modaharius!
Mathisen and Sivan 1998: 38 ff. stress the peaceful coexistence between Arians and Catholics in the first half of the century, despite an insurmountable theological difference. Things changed when Euric acceded to the throne, but on the whole Arians displayed greater tolerance than Catholics. ‘In spite of formidable theological ammunition and a likely superiority of intellect ... the Gallo-Roman leaders of the Nicene church never managed to convert a single Goth to their cause, and they rarely tried. Nor did the Goths make any attempt to impose their Arian beliefs on their Catholic subjects.’ The debate between Modaharius and Basilius is the only instance before the end of Roman rule of Arian Goths challenging Catholic theology. But then Euric’s intervention in the internal affairs of the Catholic church brought about a ban on episcopal elections and saw the exile of bishops, among whom Sidonius himself. ‘Euric saw himself as a legitimate successor of the Roman government in Aquitania, if not in all of Gaul. ... The Gallic ecclesiastical establishment formed a virtual state within the state. This Euric could not tolerate. ... The growing union between Gallo-Roman aristocrats and the ecclesiastical hierarchy was a clear threat to the stability of the Gothic regime. So it would appear that, pace Sidonius, the Arian Euric was not attacking Catholic orthodoxy per se but the Catholic leadership, and for essentially political rather than religious reasons.’

Summing up these scholarly views, we can conclude that Euric’s measures first and foremost seem to have had a political character. The repression brought to bear on the Catholic organisation did not spring from any intention to eradicate Nicene belief, but was part and parcel of the war against Rome. When the war was won, repression ebbed away almost totally.

I would like to add that this is not to say, that to those who lived through the years of repression the measures were not frightening. Sidonius’ vivid description may be a rhetorical hyperbole, his anxiety is to be taken seriously. The exact proportion of fact and fiction, however, must inevitably remain unknown. Wood 1992: 12 f. has discussed the current letter as an example par excellence of the problem created by the literary character of the historical sources for the reconstruction of the fifth century. He argues that this letter has the very specific context of the imminent cession of Clermont to Euric and the role of Basilius in the negotiations. Hence Sidonius’ tirade against the policies of Nepos and Euric in apocalyptical images and Biblical language. But Ep. 8.9 to Lampridius, written only a year later, has laudatory verses about Euric’s court, because Sidonius was trying to win favour with one of the courtiers. Without 7.6 we would know nothing about the ‘persecution’, without 8.9 we would have no check as to its rhetorical character. In fact, this is a singularly happy coincidence. For most of the fifth century we have no such check. ‘Sidonius’ two letters provide an alarming insight into just how much we do not know.’

173 For a later debate see below in sect. 2 Modaharius.

174 Other sources report the Arian takeover of a church and the destruction of another one. See GC 3: 229 n. 22.

175 The letter is discussed at length by Griffé 2: 82 f. and Kaufmann 1995: 201 ff. (with translation). On p. 207 Kaufmann remarks that the letter is striking in its commitment to the cause of the church, which hitherto had not been a conspicuous feature of Sidonius’ correspondence.
5 Manuscripts

This letter figures in MFC, and is missing in LNVTR. The omission, like the one of letter 7, may have arisen from deliberate suppression at an early stage in the transmission of the letters, because the content was not palatable to the Visigoths. See General Introduction, par. 5.2.2 Order of book 7, letters 1-11.

6 ‘You’ and ‘I’

The first personal pronoun, nobis (sect. 1) is a ‘real’ plural, ‘you and I’, Basilius and Sidonius. In the personal introduction to the letter, they are subsequently indicated by, respectively, the second and the first persons singular (tu and ego). In the second part of the letter, however, vos gradually prevails over tu for the addressee. This suggests a more functional, and inherently reverent, approach to the addressee, less as an individual, and more as a member of the highest clergy. In the end (sect. 10), all of a sudden tu re-emerges to stress Basilius’ personal responsibility for the outcome of the negotiations.

Let us go into this in more detail now. In the first three sections of the letter, the first person plural is a real plural (you, Basilius, and I, Sidonius), whereas the first and second persons singular (personal and possessive pronouns, verb) indicate, respectively, the author and the addressee. Then, in section 4, with nobis (peccatoribus), the function of the first person plural briefly changes to indicate only the author, balanced by the ceremonious plural vobis (sanctis) for the addressee. The first person plural is continued in the description of the sorry plight of Gaul (versamur, decoquimur and plangamus), where it has an inclusive function: ‘we all, Gallo-Roman Catholics’. Meanwhile, the form of address for the correspondent has changed back to the singular (si requiras), as subsequently does the ‘I’ (sect. 5 ego, etc.). For the rest of the letter the author continues to use the first person singular for himself. The addressee, however, changes from plural again (sect. 7 discite, festinetis, 9 inspicite, intellegetis, vestros), to a sudden, expressive singular (sect. 10 tu). The second persons singular in these sections (8 videas, 9 pronunties) have a generalizing character (‘one can see’, etc.), whereas vos in the concluding section is inclusive (‘you and your fellow negotiators’).

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 Basilius, bishop of Aix (?).

Exordium A. Sect. 1 – 3 pastorum: ‘The long-standing friendship between us both and your spiritual superiority, proven in the debate with the Arian Modaharius, justify my calling your attention to something which worries me. It is the wolf who, unnoticed till now, plays havoc among the herdsmen of the Christian flock.’

Exordium B. Sect. 3 neque ego – 4 permissum est: ‘I am deeply convinced of my personal inferiority, but it is less important than the public cause, which calls for the truth. King Euric has broken the treaty and is advancing. Neither of us is in a position to criticize him.’

Exordium C. Sect. 4 quin potius – 6: ‘It is normal to see winners and losers in this world, witness the poor man Lazarus, the Israelites in Egypt, the three men in the fiery furnace, and the Babylonian captivity. Hardship endured is a boon to one’s formation as a Christian, for
myself first of all. Euric’s advance is a danger to Christianity. In addition to being intelligent and successful, he abhors Catholicism and ascribes his success to Arianism.’

Narratio. Sect. 7 – 8: ‘A great number of towns are deprived of their bishops and not allowed to choose new ones. Spiritual leadership is sorely missed in the villages as well as in the towns. Consequently church buildings become dilapidated and services come to an end.’

Argumentatio. Sect. 9: ‘The death and non-replacement of bishops, and as a result the decline of church life, might lead to the end of religion. Not to mention the fact that bishops are being actively deposed now, see Crocus and Simplicius.’

Petitio. Sect. 10: ‘But fortunately, you, as one of the negotiators with Euric, are in a position to do something about this. Let the treaty stipulate that the people of Gaul remain orthodox, although their overlord will not be Roman any more.’

Commentary

Section 1

Sunt nobis munere dei novo nostrorum temporum exemplo amicitiarum vetera iura,

The letter manifests itself right at the outset as a request from the author to his correspondent by mentioning the claim which amicitia lays to the involvement of the partners.

sunt nobis, ‘the two of us have’: The verb in first position introduces the topic, in this case ‘old friendship’. For the three possible functions of ‘verb initial’, see my comment on 7.9.5 refert historia saecularis. For a survey of opening sentences in Sidonius in relation to the theme of the letters, see General Introduction, par. 5.5.2 Opening sentences.

Nobis is a ‘real’ plural, ‘you and I’, Basilius and Sidonius. See Introduction, section 6 ‘You’ and ‘I’.

munere dei, ‘by God’s grace’, is found also in Ep. 1.6.2, 8.11.1. For this type of phrase concerning divine assistance, see my comment on 7.1.1 sub ope Christi.
	novo nostrorum temporum exemplo, ‘embodying a new example to our time’: The exchange of services between amici is an example to others, as Ep. 4.11.5 sic utrique ab alterutro usque ad invidiam exempli mutua fide germanitatis officia restituebantur, ‘so each repaid to the other the services of brotherhood in mutual good faith, setting an example which might well inspire envy’ (Anderson).

Bellès 3: 39 n. 49 had rightly seen that the phrase novo exemplo, litt. ‘a new example of exemplary conduct’, is an allusion to a long tradition of close friendships from antiquity, like

176 Fernández López 1994: 158 f., 207-210 assigns this letter to subcategory 3.2.3.1 ‘Ecclesiastical salutatio publica, with a request for help’, as also 7.1, 7.5 and 7.8, and analyses it on pp. 124-34. For her method, see General Introduction, sect. 5.3 Classification and analysis.
Theseus-Pirithous, Orestes-Pylades, Nisus-Euryalus. But perhaps, he added, *novo* is provoked simply by the contrast to *vetera*. I think it is both: the reference to classical heritage and rhetorical elaboration are integral parts of Sidonius’ frame of mind. Compare my discussions of *novus-vetus* (and *exemplum*) on 7.1.3 *ad nova celer veterum Ninivitarum exempla decurrísti*, and on 7.9.25 *novam sententiam meam ... vestram veterem*. For this kind of set elements in formulation, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 *Style*: ‘Word play, sound and rhythm’. In his discussion of the relative openness of Gaul’s ‘extended aristocracy’ to newcomers, Mathisen 1993: 15 commented on this passage: ‘If aristocrats occasionally alluded to a rarity of close friendships, it only reaffirmed the sense of elitism which true friends shared’.


It is important to note that the topos of *vetera iura* is meaningful here, because the opposite is to follow soon: Euric reigns *armorum iure* (sect. 4). Consequently, the opening clause is not only a tribute to the letter’s addressee, but also an overture to the message the letter is meant to convey.

For the plural *amicitiam* instead of the singular, see my comment on 7.2.10 *epistulas*. Compare *Ep*. 4.7.1 *amicitiarum iura* with 4.1.5 *amicitiae iura*, without difference in meaning, although the proximity of *nobis* here and in 4.7.1 may have favoured the plural.

**diuque est quod invicem diligimus ex aequo.**

**diuque est quod**, ‘a long time already’, is later Latin usage, cf. e.g. Ennod. *Ep*. 3.16 *diu est quod animus meus illa qua solebat relevari expectatione torquetur.*

**ex aequo**, ‘on terms of equality’ (Anderson), which is better than Loyen’s ‘une égale affection’. The opposition is to the inequality in spiritual life in the next sentence, in which field Basilius is Sidonius’ *patronus*. Cf. *Laus Pis.* 113 f. *diligis ex aequo, nec te fortuna colentum / natalesve movent: probitas spectatur in illis*, ‘you accept the people who request your favour on a basis of equality, irrespective of their position and birth ...’. We find *ex aequo* two more times in the correspondence, there meaning ‘balanced’, ‘fair’, viz. 2.9.3 *ex aequo*, ‘equal’, ‘balanced’, and 3.9.2 *ex aequo et bono*, ‘a fair and equitable hearing’ (Anderson).

**porro autem, quod ad communem conscientiam pertinet, tu patronus**

**porro autem**, ‘for the rest’, ‘otherwise’, occurs twelve times in all in the letters, e.g. 7.9.3, 7.14.12.

**communem conscientiam**, ‘the character we share’: For *communis*, ‘common’, ‘of both of us’, about *amici*, cf. e.g. 6.6.1 *absentiae communis (!), 9.5.1 communis animus*. For the definition of *communitas*, refer to Cic. *Lael*. 61 *cum emendati mores amicorum sint, tum sit inter eos omnium rerum consiliorum voluntatum sine ulla exceptione communitas*, ‘when the characters of friends are blameless, then let them share interests, plans and desires without any exception’. For Sidonius, cf. also 5.9.1 (friends) *quos ... contiuxerat litterarum dignitatum periculorum conscientiarum similitudo, ‘bound by similarity of literary pursuits, career, vicissitudes, and

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character’. Hellegouarc’h 1963: 63 does not mention *communitas*, but has such synonyms as *concordia, coniunctio* and *societas*.

For *conscientia*, ‘inner life’, ‘character’, see my comment on 7.4.3 *conscientiae dote*.

(quamquam hoc ipsum praesumptiose arroganterque loquar;)

*hoc ipsum*, ‘even this’, viz. that you are my *patronus*, because my iniquity not only makes for an incommensurate relationship between us, but also almost excludes the possibility of any effective alliance. The hyperbolic *captatio* is proportionate to the eventual, probing *petitio* (sect. 10).

*quamquam praesumptiose arroganterque loquar*, ‘though it is presumptuous and arrogant to say’: For *praesumptio/praesumptiosus* see my comment on 7.3.2 *praesumptioni*, and 7.4.2 *praesumptiose*. The words also have a Christian connotation, as the opposite of pious humility, e.g. Cassian. Coll. 23.21 *arrogantiae praesumptionem*. For Sidonius the bishop it coincides seamlessly with the aristocratic code of conduct. See the next sentence, which shows Sidonius to be an inveterate sinner. As Wood 1992: 11 has argued, Sidonius was firmly rooted in the ascetic traditions of fifth century Gaul, like e.g. Salvian, Ruricius, Avitus. Cf. Rousseau 1976, and General Introduction, sect. 4.2 *Theology, monasticism, the saints, and liturgy*. For the doublet *praesumptiose arroganterque*, see there, sect. 6.2 *Style*.

The subjunctive *loquar* following *quamquam* is normal in later Latin, and interchangeable with the indicative. See my comment on 7.3.1 *quamquam… sollicitaretur*.

*namque iniquitas mea tanta est, ut mederi de lapsuum eius assiduitate vix etiam tuae supplicationis efficacia queat*).

*namque*, ‘because’: For *namque* as an alternative to *nam*, see my comment on 7.1.1 *namque*. In cases like this one, where it precedes a word beginning with a vowel, *namque* is generally preferred for euphonic reasons.

*iniquitas*, ‘iniquity’, ‘sinfulness’, is one of the words which received a specifically Christian colouring. The connotation originates in the idiom of the Old Testament, e.g. *Gen*. 4.13 *dixit Cain ad dominum: maior est iniquitas mea quam ut veniam merear*, and *passim* in the psalms and the prophets. For the phrasing, cf. Cic. N.D. 3.15 *quae fuit eorum tanta iniquitas, ut placari populo Romano non possent nisi viri tales occidissent?*, ‘were they (i.e. the gods) so cruel that they could only be reconciled if the Romans sacrificed such men?’.

*ut mederi ... vix etiam tuae supplicationis efficacia queat*, ‘that even your powerful intercession can scarcely heal it’: For *mederi* in a figurative sense, ‘to help’, ‘to solve a problem’, see TLL 8: 522.44 ff. See also my comment on 7.5.3 *reficiamur*. See also on 7.7.4 *publicis mederi periculis*.

*Mederi* in Sidonian usage (seven occurrences) always seems to be a deponents, according to the classical norm, most clearly in the instances with dat., 2.12.3 *valetudini, 5.7.7 afflictis, 7.7.4 periculis*, 8.10.4 *languoribus*. *Mederi* in our phrase is absolute: ‘to bring comfort, remedy’, cf. e.g. Cic. *Fam. 13.19.2 ne quid accideret eiis modi ut ne tu quidem mederi posses*. See also my comment on 7.5.3 *intentionibus medendis*.

One might have misgivings on account of the clausula *efficacia queat*, cretic-paeon IV, which would be a great exception among the rhythmic patterns I have found in the analysis of
clausula and cursus in my corpus. Incidentally, it occurs once more in this letter, sect. 3 conscientia prenat. Other exceptional metrical patterns in it are incommoda fero and (solitudo parochias (spoondee-paean IV), and memoria perit, consisting entirely of short syllables. It looks as though letter 6 is not so much metrically boundless as metrically indifferent. Its use of the cursus is also a-specific. For figures see Appendix H ‘Clausulae’ (see also my comment on 7.4.4 pondere potest). On the other hand, efficaciī queat, trochee + cretic, would do perfectly for a classic clausula. On that supposition, mederi would be a passive, ‘that it cannot be healed even by your powerful intercession’, which is a possibility in later Latin, cf. e.g. Hier. Ep. 147.3 solum desperationis crimen est, quod mederi nequeat, ‘the only fault in despair is that it cannot be cured’.

The parallels illness – sin and healing – prayer are habitual in Sidonius, cf. e.g. Ep. 2.7.2, 3.10.2. For the image of Christ as a doctor, cf. e.g. 4.14.3 quia Christo res humanas vitasque medicaturo putrimum conscientiarum ulter squalens ulcus aperimus, ‘for Christ who will cure the lives of mankind …’. See Gualandri 1979: 115 f. with literature.

Tuæ supplicationis efficacia, ‘the efficacy of your praying’, ‘your powerful prayers’: For the genitivus inversus, see my comment on 7.1.5 orationum frequentia.

Supplicatio in Sidonius has its classical meaning, ‘religious solemnity’, ‘day of prayer’, in 5.14.2 and 7.1.3 (q.v.) applied to the Rogationes, but also the later ‘prayer’, ‘entreaty’, ‘intercession’, in 1.7.13 nos quidem ... vota facimus, preces supplicationsque geminamus (to the emperor to pardon Arvandus) and here in its Christian sense, a prayer to God, sym. oratio, preces, found as early as Arnob. Nat. 1.36 (vos deum) cotidianis supplicationibus adoratis. See Mohrmann 2: 104 and Mohrmann 3: 113.

The efficacia of prayer is of course essential. For Sidonius, cf. e.g. 9.3.4 his igitur ... precatibus efficacissimis obtine, ut portio nostra sit dominus.

Note the k-sounds in efficacia queat, possibly to mark the end of the sentence.

de lapsuum eius asiduitate, ‘due to its never-ending series of errors’: Cf. 6.1.5 facinorum continuatione, ‘by my never-ceasing iniquities’ (Anderson). For causal de, see TLL 5/1: 65.47 ff. ‘i.q. ob, propter’, KS 2/1: 499 f. For the increase in use of de in later Latin, see my comment on 7.1.1 de nostra tantum obice.

Section 2

igitur, quia mihi es tam patrocinio quam dilectione bis dominus,

Summarizes the argumentation of section 1. Patrocinium, ‘patronage’, refers to the moral superiority as a patronus, there ascribed to Basilius, dilectio to the old amicitia. Note the chiastic order of the reference. In 1 amicitia came first, patronus followed.

For dominus as a honorific title, esp. found in epistolography, see TLL 5/1: 1925.3 ff., and my remarks on 7.2.1 consummatissime pontificum, and 7.4.4 verissimis dominis animae meae.

pariter et quod memini probe, quo polleas igne sensuum, fonte verborum,

A second reason is now introduced as to why the author invokes Basilius’ assistance. The reason is Basilius’ proven superiority in the debate against Arianism.
memini probe, ‘I remember well’: This seems to indicate, together with the vivid description which follows, that Sidonius had been present at the debate. The phrase is found in Cicero, e.g. de Orat. 3.194 Antipater ille Sidonius, quem tu probe, Catule, meministi, and then Apuleius, e.g. Apol. 67 si probe memini.

quo polleas igne sensuum, fonte verborum, ‘the power of your glowing thoughts and flowing words’ (Anderson). Pollere of that in which one excels, e.g. Ep. 5.1.1 cum studiis ipse maxumis polleas, 6.7.2 intercessione ... cuius viribus immane polletis, 9.3.7 pro caritate qua polles. Cf. e.g. Tac. Ann. 13.2.2 hi (Burrus and Seneca) diversa arte ex aequo pollebant, ‘… were influential’, Hier. Ep. 70.3 Cyprianus, vir et eloquentia polles et martyrio. Of inanimate objects in Sidonius Ep. 4.3.4 liber multifarium pollens, ‘in many ways a powerful book’.

It is Sidonius’ habit to speak of sensus, ‘contents’, ‘subject matter’, ‘line of thought’, as fiery, sparkling, ardent, or, alternatively, profound, weighty, pithy. At the same time ‘form’, verba, is a playing fountain, a foaming wave or a streaming river. See 7.13.2 in quibus eum magis occupat medulla sensuum quam spuma verborum, ‘in which he is more concerned with the pith of the sense than with the froth of the words’ (Anderson), 8.10.1 nam stilum vestrum quanta comitetur vel flamma sensuum vel unda sermonum, ‘… the glow of thought and the flow of language’ (Anderson), 9.7.2 pondus in sensibus, flumen in verbis. Cf. 9.2.2 gravidas ... spiritualum sensuum spicas, ‘ears of grain heavy with spiritual meanings’ (about Origen’s allegorical method).

The metaphor of eloquence as water is entirely traditional. See TLL 6/1: 1025.6 ff. For Sidonius see Ep. 4.17.1 impletus fonte facundiae, 5.17.9 facundiae fons inexhaustus, and, in his circle, e.g. Ruric. Ep. 1.2 eloquentiae vestrae imbre, 1.10 eloquentiae tuae rore.

The opposition fire and water (as in 8.10.1) adds to the effect of the phrase. For this constant play with conventional elements, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

qui viderim Modaharium, civem Gothum, haereses Arrianae iacula vibrantem quo tu spiritualium testimoniorum mucrone confoderis,

This passage, the sections 2 and 3, has received ample attention in Gualandri’s treatment of figurative language in Sidonius (Gualandri 1979: 105 ff., esp. 111-113). Sidonius loves to apply a metaphor and develop it in minute detail, especially with regard to the choice of words. These metaphors are at their most luxuriant (‘quasi ossessivo’, p. 109) in the letters sent to his fellow bishops. They have a biblical flavour, originating in what Gualandri calls a ‘tendenza al travestimento simbolico della narrazione’ (ibid.), which is typical of allegorical biblical exegesis, and benefits from Old Testament realism.

The current letter is full to the brim of this kind of metaphor. We shall soon meet debaters armed with spears and a sword, somnolent shepherds and the wolf threatening their unsuspecting sheep, the dung of sin, to be washed away by tears of penitence and cleaned out by forks of prayer. After that a host of biblical metaphors will claim our attention. One thing is certain: all this appealed in the highest degree to contemporary taste. It was written by one of the most excellent stylists of his time, a consummate noble and a devoted clergyman, as fashionable as he was versed in the Scriptures. It was written for an occasion which was of the greatest importance to him, to a bishop-politician who was involved in crucial decisions. This was high-level language, meant to influence high society.
On this attitude and its appraisal by literary criticism, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style and par. 6.4.1 Mannerism?

**Modaharium, civem Gothum**, ‘Modaharius, a Gothic layman’: Modaharius is called *civis*, with emphasis, which means: a prominent layman, possibly a scholar. His name is given, instead of some generalizing description, so he must have been a memorable person. The debate between the Arian Visigoth Modaharius and the Nicene bishop Basilius was evidently not a debate between two priests, contrary to what Wolfram supposes (Wolfram 1988: 33 f. ‘an Arian-Gothic priest’, cf. p. 455 n. 190 about Euric’s Arian court priests, ‘yet Modaharius … was probably not an envoy of Euric’). Compare the debate between the Arian bishop Germinius of Sirmium and the pro-Nicene layman Heraclianus in the mid-360s, described in the *Altercatio Heracliani laici cum Germino episcoio Sirmiensi*, for which see Williams 1996, esp. 350 f.

The ‘celebrated Christological debate’ between Modaharius and Basilius ‘circa the early 470s’ is ranged by Mathisen and Sivan 1998: 40 f. among the (rare) signs of Arian intellectual activity in Toulouse, together with the debate mentioned by Greg. Tur. *Glor. mart.* 80 between an Arian presbyter and a Nicene deacon, and the analogous miracle story *Glor. conf.* 14 *Christiano cum heretico certante*.

It seems that the debate in Gaul was poor in comparison with the debate in Northern Africa between the established Catholics and the Arian Vandals, cf. e.g. Vict. Vit. 2.39 and Aug. c. *Maxim.* 1, as the ideological clash was much more violent there (described in GC 3: 283 ff.).

**haereseos Arrianae iacula vibrantem**, ‘brandishing the javelins of the Arian heresy’: As to which reading, *Arrianae (ariane) C* or *Arrianae MF*, is preferable, we have only one parallel in Sidonius, 7.8.3 *qui fidem fovent Arrianorum*. There the leading MSS (LMTCFP) have double rr. Editors have judged differently; I prefer *Arrianae* with Loyen. The name Arius and the adjective are spelt in both ways throughout patristic literature.

Instead of the polemical formulation ‘Arian heresy’, Sidonius in 7.8.3 writes *fidem … Arianorum* — perhaps intentionally (see my comment there). The Catholics were not in the habit of sparing their Arian opponents, cf. e.g. Lucif. *Athan.* 2.32 *si apostolicam evangelicamque anathematizantes fidei Arrianam susceperitis perfidiam*.

Vibrare, ‘brandish’, ‘propel’, in the metaphorical sense of vehemently uttering one’s opinion or hurling one’s diatribes, e.g. Quint. 11.3.120 *eos, qui sententias … iaculantur* (accompanied with gestures), Catul. 36.5 (*si desissem … truces vibrare iambos*).

For the question of Arianism, see ODCC s.v., with literature.

**quo tu spiritualium testimoniorum mucrone confoderis**, ‘with what sword of spiritual testimony you stabbed him’: Luetjohann, followed by Mohr, reads *spiritualitium* with M, Anderson and Loyen *spiritualium* with CF. Both are attested elsewhere in Sidonius. The difference lies in orthography only.

The clause is an indirect question depending on *memini*. The object of *confoderis* is *Modaharium*.

**Spiritualia testimonia** are proofs from the Scriptures and utterances by authoritative theologians. *Spiritualis*, ‘spiritual’, ‘inspired’, is opposed to *corporalis, carnalis*, ‘worldly’, ‘human’. It comprises the whole of Scriptural authority and exegesis and its moral application. See 7.9.1 *desiderio spiritualium lectionum, quaram tibi tam per authenticos [= the
Biblical authors] quam per disputatores [= commentators] bybliotheca fidei catholicae perfamiliaris est (see my comment ad loc.). One might almost translate ‘orthodox’ here. For this ‘christianisme lexicographique’, see Mohrmann 3: 52, 60, and for its use in Sidonius, Gualandri 1979: 110 n. 13.

A parallel from Sidonius’ immediate environment is Claud. Anim. 2.11 (the author introduces the definitive argumentation from Paul, after a selection of arguments from the rest of the Bible) igitur quamquam nonnullis locorum sicubi conduxit harumpiam scripturarum testimoniis usus sim, fas tamen est multimodo veritatis gladio falsiloqui cerviculam salubri concisione concipilari, ‘although I have already at several instances applied a suitable selection of these testimonies from the Scriptures, the moment has now come to draw the many-sided sword of truth and behead the liar with a healthy blow’. Sidonius himself uses the cognate metaphor of heresy hunted by faith: 6.12.4 teque quodam venatu apostolico feras Fotinianorum mentes spiritualium praedicationum cassibus implicare, ‘and that you – engaging as it were in an apostolic hunt – entangle the wild minds of the Photinians in the nets of spiritual preaching’.

The origin of the metaphor of the sword of the Spirit, and the whole of the spiritual armour in the battle against the Evil one, is Eph. 6.16 in omnibus sumentes scutum fidei, in quo possitis omnia tela nequissimi ignea extinguere, 17 et galeam salutis assumite et gladium spiritus (quod est verbum Dei). See also Thess. 5.8. The classic treatment of the theme is Adolf von Harnack, Militia Christi, Tübingen, 1905.

The originally poetical mucro occurs four times in the correspondence, with no appreciable difference to gladius (five times).

servata ceterorum tam reverentia quam pace pontificum non iniuria tibi defleo,

servata ceterorum tam reverentia quam pace pontificum, ‘with due respect for the other bishops and with their permission’: The double hyperbaton is bold. The exact phrase with servare is rare, viz. Cassiod. Var. 3.36 antefatum servata reverentia a te praecepiimus ammoneri, and Sidon. Ep. 1.9.2 servata pace reliquorum, but the expression as such abounds, e.g. 1.7.3 salva fidei reverentia, 1.9.5 reservata senioris consularis reverentia, 4.3.10 salva pace potiorum, 8.3.5 fidei catholicae pace praefata, and cf. e.g. 7.2.2 salva vestrarum aurium severitate. See Köhler 1995: 16 on this type of formula expressing reservation as an epistolary topic.

Reverentia and pax are attested in combination in Prosp. c. Coll. 1.2 salva catholicae pace victoriae, salva indissolubilium reverentia decretorum.

non iniuria, ‘justifiably’, sums up the argumentation (a) quia ... and (b) pariter et quod ... It is right that Sidonius should complain to Basilius, and not to his colleagues, because Basilius is his bis dominus as well as a successful opponent of Arianism.

tibi defleo, ‘I lament in your presence’, ‘… to you’: Tibi is a ‘Dativ der Gegenwart’, LHS 2: 96, cf. e.g. Tib. 2.5.103 suae (puellae) plorabit, Prop. 1.12.15 felix, qui potuit praesenti flere puellae.

For the same rhythm compare 5.10.1 non iniuria tibi fautor est.

qualiter ecclesiasticas caulas istius aetatis lupus,

The shepherd and his flock, the shepherd either herding the sheep or neglecting them, is a central metaphor in the Prophets and the Gospels. Ezechiel, among others, brings out the
havoc wrought by the selfish shepherds: Ezech. 34.5 et dispersae sunt oves meae eo quod non esset pastor et factae sunt in devorationem omnium bestiarum agri et dispersae sunt. The sheep are devoured by the animals of prey, because the shepherd does not protect them. The classic pericope is loh. 10.1-17 on the Good Shepherd. Jesus is the good shepherd, the others are thieves and robbers. They try to enter the stable by stealth: (1) qui non intrat per ostium in ovile ovium, sed ascendit aliunde, ille fur est et latro. The thief only enters to rob and slaughter: (10) fur non venit nisi ut furetur, et mactet, et perdat. If the shepherd were to be replaced by a hireling, the hireling would abandon the sheep as soon as he saw the wolf coming: (12) mercenarius ... videt lupum venientem et dimittit oves et fugit: et lupus rapit et dispergit oves.

The wolf is the image of the heretic who endangers the faithful in the ‘sheepfold’ of the church, cf. also Ambr. in Luc. 7 1.477 nonne lupis istis haeretici conparandi sunt, qui insidiantur ovilibus Christi, fremunt circa caulas nocturno magis tempore quam diurno? and, from Sidonius’ own spiritual home Lérins, Vincent. Ler. Comm. 25 qui sunt ‘lupi rapaces’, nisi sensus haereticorum feri et rabidi, qui caulas ecclesiae semper infestant et gregem Christi, quaqua possunt, dilacerant?

It will appear, as we go on, that the lupus is even heresy in person, king Euric, the champion of Arianism. As yet, no name is mentioned. The danger is defined as an attack by the wolf of heresy, the devil himself, on the stable of the church, which goes unnoticed, because its first objective is the sleeping shepherds. Once the shepherds have been removed, the devil will have free play among the poor sheep.


We have an imitation here (in essence traditional, see next lemma) of Verg. A. 9.59 ff. ac veluti pleno lupus insidiatus ovili / cum fremit ad caulas ... / nocte super media, etc., in Dryden’s translation:

So roams the nightly wolf about the fold,  
Wet with descending show’rs, and stiff with cold,  
He howls for hunger, and he grins for pain,  
(His gnashing teeth are exercis’d in vain,)  
And, impotent of anger, finds no way  
In his distended paws to grasp the prey.

Virgil describes how Turnus impatiently tries to enter the encampment of the Trojans, who, however, to his exasperation, remain passive and do not move. The reminiscence extends to the passiveness of those who are inside: Sidonius sect. 3 dormitantum ... pastorum, Virgil v. 55 Teurcum ... inertia corda; the bleating of the sheep: Sidonius sect. 3 balatibus ovium destituturam, Virgil vv. 61 f.tuti sub matribus agni balatum exercent (note the subtle change from safety in Virgil to danger in Sidonius); and the surreptitious character of the attack: Sidonius sect. 2 clandestino and necdem intellecti, Virgil v. 61 nocte super media.

The parallel has also been pointed out by Fo 2002: 158 ff., who in addition refers to A. 10.20 for sect. 3 insultet. Fo sees a connection with the next letter, which thematizes the Trojan descent of the Arverians (7.1.2 sanguine ab Iliaco): Turnus (alias Euric) besieges the Trojans, ancestors of the Arverians, a malicious allusion which was meant to escape the unlettered
Visigoths. I am afraid this is a somewhat strained interpretation, especially since letter 6 is not about Clermont only, but about the whole of southern Gaul threatened by Euric’s repression.

**istius aetatis lupus**, ‘the wolf of our time’: The MSS situation is as follows: *aeris* codd Bellès: *aetatis* M	extsuperscript{1} Mohr Anderson Loyen: *istius orae* Wouweren ‘ex optimo codice’ (see Leo in introd. ed. Luetjohann, p. xxiv): *haereses* Wilamowitz Luetjohann: *haeresis* Fernández López (private suggestion): *aevi* is aut *aedi aut aedis* Warmington (Additional Notes p. 612 f.).

The manuscript reading *aeris*, ‘air’, cannot be sound. Warmington tried to defend it, because ‘both pagans and Christians imagined our air to be inhabited by spirits and powers perceived mentally.’ ‘But,’ he concluded, ‘Semple insists that the image of an air-borne wolf raiding the ecclesiasticas caulas is too bizarre even for Sidonius; and I am inclined to agree.’ And so am I. Bellès made a second attempt (n. 53 ad loc.), saying that ‘this air’ either simply means ‘the air we breathe’ = ‘this world’ (for which he does not give parallels), or ‘this cloud’ = ‘this dark world’ (but the parallels he adduces, like Verg. A. 1.411 f. *at Venus obscuro gradientis aere saepsit et multo nebulae circum dea fudit amictu*, make no sense because they always contain an explanatory adjective like *obscurus*, *ater*, *densus*).

My conclusion is that *istius aeris* is too fragile to defend, and that there is a better alternative. The better alternative seems to be *istius aetatis*. The reading is paleographically plausible: M	extsuperscript{1} first amended *aetat*, which is only one step further than *aer*, and then explained the abbreviation involved by writing *is* above *at*. On the particular value of the ‘second hand’ of M, see Loyen’s introduction, Loyen 2: liv.

The meaning ‘our time’, ‘our era’ is well known, cf. e.g. Cic. *Quinct. 7 huiusce aetatis homines disertissimos, Caes. Civ. 1.7.6 superioris aetatis exempla*, Liv. 29.29. 5 maximus omnium aetatis suae regum. The *iunctura*, if any, created by *istius aetatis lupus*, ‘the wolf of our time’, is more than acceptable, especially in an author like Sidonius, who likes to create extraordinary collocations from ordinary words (see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style). For the situation, compare bishop Lucifer of Cagliari and his partisans, imprisoned and exiled because of their struggle against Arianism: Lucif. *Athan. 1.34 cur nos retines in carcerem? cur mittis ad exilia, nisi quia sis metuens, ne vos lupos Arrianos rapaces canes rabidos atque Antichristos esse temporis nostri manifestemus sacris revelantibus scripturis? sacrae enim scripturae probant vos ex actibus vestris non esse Dei servos, sed plane filios diaboli*, ‘you banish us, because you are afraid we will expose you as being greedy Arian wolves, mad dogs and the Antichrists of our time …’.

This would mean that the emendation *haereses* (or *haeresis*, closer to the word ending in the MSS) is superfluous – apart from the fact that it would be drastic, that it is a repetition of *haereses* which we just read, and that *haereses* there was copied correctly by the same scribes.

For *istius* = *huius* in later Latin, see my comment on 7.1.6 *populus iste*.

**qui peccatis pereuntium saginatur animarum,**

*saginatur*, ‘is nourished’, ‘satiated’: *Saginare*, already classical, is a hapax in Sidonius. For its metaphorical use, cf. e.g. Cic. *Sest. 78 qui ab illo pestifero ac perditio civie iampridem rei publicae sanguine saginantur*, ‘who are stuffed … with the blood of the state’. Patristic litterature often applies it to spiritual food, holy communion, e.g. Tert. *Resurr. 8 caro corpore et sanguine Christi vescitur, ut et anima de Deo saginetur*, ‘the flesh is fed with Christ’s body and blood, so that the
soul too is nourished by God’, Sedul. Op. pasch. 5.3 caelestibus epulis saginatae … animae iam fideles, Cassian. Conl. 10.11.2 sagini misteriosis.

The wolf-archheretic-devil feeds upon the bodies of sinners in unholy communion. With this, Sidonius has created an original and vivid image.

peccatis pereuntium … animarum, ‘the sins of the souls who perish’: The peccata here are first and foremost the sins of heresy, cf. Cypr. Ep. 74.2.1 et cum singulae haereses … diversa peccata habeant, ‘while individual heresies … exhibit diverging sins’. And sinners will eternally be damned: Aug. Psalm. 36.2.10 peccatores peribunt.

Note the alliteration p – p, which is often found with peccare, e.g. Cic. Clu. 154 plura peccatis pericula proposita, Ambr. Ioseph 5.24 ne … peccato periret.

The same scene is evoked by Greg. M. in Evang. 1.14.3 sed est alius lupus qui sine cessatione cotidie non corpora, sed mentes dilaniat, malignus videlicet spiritus, qui caulas fidelium insinuans circuit, et mortes animarum quaerit.

clandestino morsu necdum intellecti dentis arrodat.

clandestino … necdum intellecti, ‘stealthy … yet unnoticed’: The bite of the wolf is stealthy and those involved are as yet not aware of it. People have not yet understood the consequences of the fact that so many dioceses are vacant nor do they grasp the cause: the masterplan of Euric. The same thought is expressed below: catholici status valetudinem occultam (sect. 7). Clandestinus occurs two more times in Sidonius, of treason and informers: Ep. 3.13.10 apertae simulatis … clandestinae proditionis, 5.7.1 clandestina delatorum … vestigia.

For necdum as an alternative for nondum, see my comment at 7.1.1 necdum … limitaverunt.

morsu … dentis, ‘a biting tooth’: Dens is a metaphor of destruction, envy, blame: TLL 5.452.35 ff., e.g. Cic. Balb. 57 (gossipmongers) non illo inimico, sed hoc malo dente carpunt, ‘they carp, not with malicious, but rather with everyday criticism’. The pair morsus dentis is late, and found in Rufin. Apol. 1.3 morsum improviso dentis infigit, Ennod. Ep. 1.2 clericorum certe exercitatis simus maledictor, qui ad eos semper novelli et acuti dentis morsus exhibuit. Cf. Claud. Epith. (= 10) 102 morsu numerosi dentis eburno, ‘with a fine ivory comb’.

arrodat, ‘bites’, is a hapax in Sidonius’ letters and figures once in his poetry: Carm. 2.170 arroso quicquid sapit ungue Cleanthes, ‘all the wisdom Cleanthes acquired with much nail-biting’. It is used figuratively of sponging on the state (e.g. Cic. Sest. 72, Hist. Aug. Pius 7.7) and criticizing, finding fault (e.g. Ambr. Ep. 7.39.3 ut arroderet aliquid de meis scriptis, cf. Sen. Ep. 27.7 stultorum divitum adivor). As far as I know, it was first applied to being torn apart by a wolf, and a heretic at that, in Vincent. Ler. Comm. 11 qualemuisse nuper temptationem putamus, cum infelix ille Nestorius, subito ex ove conversus in lupum, gregem Christi lacerare coepisset, cum eum hi ipsi, qui rodebantur, ex magna adhuc parte ovem crediderent ideoque morsibus suis magis paterent?

A wolf is proverbially unreliable, and strikes when the shepherd (or the watchdogs) sleeps, cf. Pl. Trin. 169 ff. adesurivit magis et inhiavit acrius / lupus; observavit dum dormitant canes; / gregem univoxor sumvit totum avortere, ‘the wolf was ravenous and opened his jaws wide; he spied for the dogs to doze off; he longed to carry away the whole herd.’ Cf. Ar. Lys. 629 oios πιστὸν οὐδὲν εἴ μὴ περ ἀνὴρ κεχρύντα, ‘they are not to be trusted, no more than a wolf that opens his jaws wide’.
Sidonius had an attentive reader in Gozwin of Mainz (eleventh cent.), *Ep. ad Walcherum* l. 159 (the theme is envy) *sed novi canes illos, qui clandestino morsu semper parati sunt alienam vitam discutiendo rogere*, and *Vita Albani martyris*, prol. *sed magis quam unquam hoc tempore acris invidia pulsans innocentiam ... toxicati dentis clandestino morsu venenat*.

**Section 3**

namque hostis antiquus, quo facilius insultet balatibus ovium destituturum,

*namque*, ‘namely’, explains what essentially is the *clandestinus morsus necdum intellecti dentis*, viz. the devil’s shrewd tactic of ruining the faithful deviously via the liquidation of their leaders. For *namque* as an alternative to *nam*, see my comment on 7.1.1 *namque*. In cases like this, when preceding a word beginning with *h*, *namque* is generally preferred for euphonic reasons.

*hostis antiquus*, ‘the old Fiend’, ‘the devil’: Cf. *Carm.* 16.51 f. (Christ) *eripiens quidquid veteris migraverat hostis / in ius per nostrum facinus*, ‘delivering whatsoever had passed into the dominion of the old Enemy through our transgression’ (Anderson). First attested in Cypr. *Fort.* praef. *adversarius vetus est et hostis antiquus cum quo proelium gerimus*. See further e.g. *Aug.* Serm. 94 A *ille hostis antiquus semper contra nos vigilat: non dormiamus*, ibid. 189 *hostis antiquus, id est diabolus*. For its biblical roots cf. *Apoc.* 12.9 *serpens antiquus qui vocatur diabolus*, and 20.2. Sleep makes it easy for the devil to hit home, as here in the case of the *dormitantum ... pastorum*, e.g. 1 Petr. 5.8 *sobrii estote, vigilate quia adversarius vester diabolus tanquam leo rugiens circuit quaerens quem devoret*.

*insultet balatibus ovium destituturum*, ‘tramples on the destitute, bleating sheep’: *Insultet balatibus*, litt. ‘tramples on the bleating’, the noun instead of the adjective for a more pungent expression (for this genitivus inversus, see my comment on 7.1.5 *orationum frequentia*), is construed like *Verg.* A. 12.339 *caesis hostibus insultans*. The metaphorical sense, ‘to behave insultingly’, ‘mock’, is also present, which, in Christian authors, is often encountered in relation to the heathen, heretics or the devil, e.g. *Aug.* Psalm. 48.2.3 *tumeant modo superbi et divites huius saeculi, impii bonis insultent, infideles fidelibus*, ‘... let the impious insult the righteous, the infidels the faithful’, Hier. Ezech. 11.36 *prophetas et apostolos ... qui audiant verbum dei et quibus diabolus insultavit inimicus; ‘... whom the devil, the Fiend, mocked*. Cf. *Cassiod.* Psalm. 31.4.385 *insultant haeretici*.

The sheep are abandoned, *destituturum*, because their spiritual shepherds do not heed the devil’s stratagem. They behave like the hireling in the parable: *loh.* 10.12 *dimittit oves*. Cf. Sidonius in *Ep.* 7.17.3 *fluctuatemque regulam fratrum destitutorum* (the friars at a loss after the abbot’s death).

dormitantum prius incipit cervicibus imminere pastorum.

dormitantum ... pastorum, ‘of the dozing shepherds’: The shepherd sleeping is a *contradictio in terminis*, and a source of ridicule as well as of serious concern, ranging from Pl. *Bacch.* 1122 f. *pastor harum / dormit* (on account of which a number of ‘sheep’ have strayed from the ‘herd’ of ladies) to Hier. in Nah. 3 l. 694 *dormitaverunt pastores tui, .... dispersus est populus tuus super montes, et non est qui congreget*. 

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For dormitare, ‘to drowse’, cf. 2.2.13 (a small room) ubi … dormitandi potius quam dormiendi locus est, ‘where you can take a nap rather than sleep’.

**prius incipit cervicibus imminere**, ‘will threaten the necks first’: I.e. first the necks of the shepherds, then those of the sheep. *Prius incipit* is no pleonasm. *Incipit* can constitute a periphrastic future tense in later Latin, like Greek μελέλειν. Cf. TLL 7/1: 921.36 ‘i.q. debere’, 54 ‘in eo esse ut, velle’, 78 ‘denotat actionem ingessivam’, most often found in Vulgata and patristic authors. See LHS 2: 313, Löfstedt 1911: 210 (and on the ‘Auflösung des Futurums’ in general Löfstedt 1956, 2: 63 ff.). For the future tense auxiliaries *debere, posse, velle, habere, ire*, see Pinkster 1985.

It is also part of Sidonius’ stylistic repertory. Analyzing his use of it, one comes to the conclusion that the notion of the future tense is often softened into a modal expression of probability or plausibility. *Incipere* expresses that which may logically be expected to happen. The following examples may serve as illustrations.

First Ep. 7.7.5 non enim diutius ipsi maiores nostri hoc nomine gloriabuntur, qui minores incipiunt non habere. Here we have a clear future tense: *incipiunt habere = habebunt*: ‘for our ancestors themselves will no longer be proud of that name when they are going to have no descendants.’ The same is true for 7.9.24 filios ambo bene et prudenter instituunt, quibus comparatus pater inde felicior incipit esse, quia vincitur: ‘they both bring up their sons decently and carefully; once compared with them, their father will be all the more happy because he is surpassed.’

A more modal use is found in e.g. 5.3.4 ne, si in praeteritis criminibus manserimus, incipiat ad animae potius mortem pertinere quod vivimus: ‘it is to be feared that, if I persist in the sins of the past, my preservation may bring not life but death to my soul’ (Anderson) and 5.15.2 quae (sc. gratia) utique pro tali labore si solvitur, incipiet ad vestram respicere mercedem: ‘if you do something in return for his effort, it is likely that you will be recompensed for it’.

Thus, the phrase *prius incipit … imminere* means ‘he will first launch an attack on …’ or ‘he may be expected to attack first …’. The onslaught on orthodoxy – or, more precisely, the becoming manifest of its proportions and harmfulness – lies still in the future. Compare the future tense 6 *insidiaturum*.

Cf. my comment on 7.1.2 *coepit initiari* (periphrastic perfect).

*Cervicibus imminere*, ‘to threaten the neck’, i.e. the life, cf. e.g. Salv. *Gub* 2.18 *imminentem iam cervicibus tuis divinae severitatis gladium sustinebis*, ‘you will feel the sword of divine wrath threatening your neck’.

**neque ego ita mei meminens non sum, ut nequaquam me hunc esse reminiscar,**

This is the beginning of Exordium/Captatio B. The author has scarcely hinted at the imminent danger, when he recoils and takes another run-up to disclose it more fully with the words Evarix, rex Gothorum and what follows in section 4. First he says he humbly knows his place as a sinner who has no right to point at others and to bother his correspondent.

**neque ego ita mei meminens non sum**, ‘I am not so forgetful of myself’: The same expression of submission to a bishop is found in 6.3.1 *non ego tamen tantum mei meminens non sum, ut* etc. The present participle *meminens* is first attested in the first century BC, and then
in later Latin. Sidonius uses it four times. See Amherdt 2001: 161 f. ad 4.3.10 *meminens*, to which must be added the puzzling reference in Serv. Gramm. 4.441.2 f. *nam invenimus in Plauto ‘meminens’.*

The accumulation of negations *neque - non - nequaquam* is remarkable.

**quem longis adhuc abluenda fletibus conscientia premat;**

The code of conduct towards a cleric is to deprecate one’s own conscience as unclean, polluted, or festering. A concise sampling from Sidonius yields the following: *Ep. 3.13.11 conscientia ... sordidatissima, 4.14.3 putrium conscientiarium ... squalens ulcus, 6.7.1 ulcerosae conscientiae nimirum hiulca vulnera, 8.14.4 conscientiae luxuriantis fetore pollutos.* This conscience is badly in need of cleansing by remorse and the purifying influence of the priest. Sidonius elsewhere uses the metaphor of a river of pure water by which his own stream is cleaned, *caenosus per conscientiam, ‘muddy due to a bad conscience’, (7.8.1, followed by *in illo squalidum si quid ac putre sorderet, totum id admixta consilii tui vena dilueret,* ‘any nasty rotting filth in it would be wholly washed away by the mingling stream of your counsel’ (Anderson)), and, as below, of the cleaning of a stable or the purifying of the air (8.14.4). For the cleansing power of tears, see my comment on 7.1.5 *posse restingui.* See also Amherdt 2001: 348 f. ad 4.14.3 *putrium conscientiarum*.

The tears of remorse we find here flow abundantly throughout Christian literature, e.g. Ambr. in Psalm. 118 serm. 7.32 ille ... lapsus superioris offensam quaerit quomodo abluat fletibus paenitentiae, Paul. Nol. Carm. 31.411 f. peccatum lugere iuvat contractaque culpis / vulnera profusis fletibus ablueret. The verb *abluere,* ‘to wash away’, is characteristic in this context.

The biblical roots of the image can be outlined by texts like *Zach. 13.1 fons ... in ablutionem peccatoris and Act. 22.16 abluie peccata tua invocato nomine ipsius.* Baptism is the ultimate ritual by which one is cleansed from sin (e.g. *Matth. 3 John the Baptist*). Tears of remorse are shed – to mention only the most archetypical scene – by Peter after he has disowned Jesus: *Luc. 22.62 et egressus foras Petrus flevit amare.* *premat,* ‘oppresses’: Cf. e.g. Ambr. in Psalm. 118 serm. 19.2 *fervet noxia conscientia, moles peccatorum premit,* ‘your guilty conscience burns, the burden of sins oppresses you’, Aug. Psalm. 83.3 *premebat enim pectus conscientia peccatorum, and pass. conscientiā premitur,* e.g. Ambr. in Psalm. 37.2.3.

**cuius stercora tamen sub ope Christi quandoque mysticis orationum tuarum rastris eruderabuntur.**

Prayer will muck out the spiritual stables of Augias. The metaphor of manure for something improper was thought of as too drastic by earlier rhetoricians (cf. *Cic. de Oraet. 3.164 nolo ‘stercus curiae’ dici Glauciam, cited with approval by Quint. Inst. 8.6.15*). It is found Lucil. 398 f. Marx praetor ... spurcos ore quod omnis / extra castra ut stercus foras eiecit, ‘that the praetor discarded all foul-mouthed persons from the encampment like dung’, Sen. Apoc. 7.5 in *quod (viz. miserable struggle with advocates) si incidisses, ... maluisses cloacas Augeae purgare: multo plus ego stercoris exhausi, ‘if you would have had to put up with that, you would have preferred to clean the stables of Augias; I have removed much more manure’. But Christian authors developed a predilection for exactly this kind of drastic imagery against the backdrop of biblical usage. All things wordly and sinful, and hence to be banished, can be
called stercus, after Paul’s well known word Phil. 3.8 verumtamen existimo omnia detrimentum esse propter eminentem scientiam Iesu Christi Domini mei, propter quem omnia detrimentum feci et arbitror ut stercora ut Christum luci faciam, ‘because all is far outweighed by the gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I did in fact lose everything. I count it so much dung, for the sake of gaining Christ’. Cf. e.g. Ambr. in Psalm. 118 serm. 5.34 mundi huius stercora, ‘the dung of this world’, Hier. in Hab. 1.2 nec abscondamur ibi, ubi impius Saul stercora doctrinarum suarum egerere consuevit, ‘the dung of his doctrine’, Chromat. 33 l. 88 ambo igitur suscipiantur ...: hic de terra vitiorum, ille de stercore peccatorum, ‘the dung of sins’.

sub ope Christi, ‘with Christ’s help’: See my comment on 7.1.1 sub ope Christi.

quandoque, ‘some day’: Cf. in a similar context 6.1.5 sed ora, ut quandoque resipiscam, ‘but pray that sooner or later I may come to my senses’ (Anderson).

orationum ... rastris eruderabuntur, ‘will be cleaned out with the hoes of prayer’, is an original iunctura. A rastrum (pl. mostly rastrii) is a drag hoe, used for cleaning the fields, e.g. Enn. Ann. 9.319 rastros dentefabres capsit causa poliendi / agri, ‘he took spiked hoes to clean the field’, Catul. 64.39 non humilis curvis purgatur vinea rastris, ‘the lowly vineyard is not raked with curved hoes’. Metaphorically of the fear of God: Paul. Nol. Ep. 39.3 si ... rastro divini timoris spinas suas eruat, ‘if (your soul) removes its thorns with the hoe of the fear of God’. For an equally visual metaphor for the efficacy of prayer, cf. Paul. Nol. Ep. 27.4 ut adversum peccata nostra pro nobis aciem orationum dirigant, ‘that they may draw up the battle line of their prayers for us against our sins’. See General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

For the rare verb used for cleaning here eruderare, ‘to remove rubble’, cf. Gloss. 6: 399 eruderans: purgans rudera, expurgans. It is attested in this sense since Ambr. Ep. 22.2 eruderari terram (for the earlier meaning ‘to level a site (with rubble) ’, cf. e.g. Var. R. 2.2.7, Vitr. 7.1.1). Sidonius uses it three more times: 5.7.7 (of disproving slander), 5.13.1 (of removing fallen leafs) and 5.15.1 (of emending a manuscript). As a Christian metaphor also Ennod. Opusc. 10.3 ipse penetralia cordis nostri sancto eruderata pandit introitu.

sed quoniam supereminet privati reatus verecundiam publica salus,

Exquisitely turns the avowed inferiority into a complimentary awareness of the common cause.

privati ... publica: Sidonius often (fourteen times in all) thematizes the opposition private – public, which in his precarious situation is extraordinarily important, e.g. 3.2.3 (the priest Constantius from Lyon has supported Clermont) quia non privatum commodum requirebas, amorem publicum rettulisti, ‘because you did not care about your own interest, you won the hearts of the town’, 4.25.1 quae bonum publicum semper evertunt studia privata, ‘private concerns which always mar the common good’, and 7.7.4 non tam curae est publicis mederi periculis quam privatis studiis fortunis, (Graecus and the other negotiators are about to sacrifice Clermont) ‘you are not keen on solving the political problems but on furthering your own interest’. Cf. the variant 6.12.5 (to bishop Patiens who has helped Clermont) quod ... peculiari sumptu inopiae communi ... frumenta misisti, ‘that you have sent corn, to meet the public shortage at your own expense’. Also salus publica recurs no fewer than six times, in addition to its synonym salus comunis.

More in general, Sidonius thinks it a nobleman’s duty to do more than foster his private interests: it is his duty to assume public office. See Köhler 1995: 216 f., in the introduction to
Ep. 1.6. Add to this Heather 2005: 116 ff. on the altered situation of local landowners within the changing structures of the Empire, where by AD 400 positions in the imperial bureaucracy had become more attractive than obligations in the town councils, a tendency which for Gaul was coming to an end by Sidonius’ time. See my comment on 7.2.5 summatibus, and General Introduction, sect. 3.3 Gallo-Roman aristocracy.

reatus verecundiam, ‘the shameful sense of guilt’, also in Greg. M. Moral. 10.3 unde mox se ad defensionem praeparat ut reatus sui verecundiam ... tegat. Cf. Ps. Ambr. Apol. Dav. 6.34 et hic nonnulla est pecati verecundia et pudor culpae. For verecundia, see my comment on 7.2.1 oneras ... verecundiam meam. Note the wordplay with verebor which immediately follows.

non verebor, etsi carpat zelum in me fidei sinister interpres, sub vanitatis invidia causam prodere veritatis.

carpat zelum ... fidei, ‘casts doubt on my religious zeal’: For carpere, ‘to criticize’, ‘carp at’, see Köhler 1995: 298 ad 1.11.2 carpebant: the appropriate word for the activities of critics and satirists according to ancient grammarians. About literary criticism 3.14.2 neglegentia ... hoc volens tantum legere, quod carpat. Cf. earlier on sect. 2 morsu ... dentis.

Zelus is a hapax in Sidonius. The combination zelus fidei is found since Tert. Idol. 7.1 (see comm. Waszink ad loc.). Directed against heretics in Hier. Ep. 88.1 (thank you for your letter) quod ... adversus sceleratissimam heresim zelum fidei demonstrarint. The phrase carpat zelum again is a Sidonian iunctura.

sinister interpres, ‘a malign critic’: Sidonius takes the risk of being criticized for his honesty. He might even have had certain people in mind, possibly an Arian antagonist in Clermont, like the two priests who frustrated his work as a bishop and even tried to murder him (Greg. Tur. Franc. 2.23), and who might well have been Arians. See Kaufmann 1995: 202 n. 618. In that case Anderson would be right, who in n. 2 ad loc. suggested as an alternative translation: ‘some perverse interpreter of the faith’, where perverse = Arian. Or else someone from a different faction of the Gallo-Roman nobility, for which see General Introduction, sect. 3.3 Gallo-Roman aristocracy. See my comment on 7.5.5 malesuadus interpres.

sub vanitatis invidia, ‘at the risk of been called vain’: Sub, ‘subject to the risk of’ (OCD 17b), e.g. Suet. Tib. 36 sub poena perpetuactiva servitutis, ‘under penalty of lasting bondage’. Sub invidia, ‘at the risk of being criticized for ...’, ‘at the risk of indignation about ...’, e.g. Plin. Ep. 6.2.3 quid enim iucundius quam sub alterius invidia ... commode dicere?, ‘what could be more enjoyable than speaking at ease on somebody else’s responsibility?’

The opposite of vanitatis invidia, ‘being thought arrogant’, is Cypr. Ep. 27.3 invidiam verecundiae nostrae, ‘criticism at our modesty’. Sidonius has 1.7.9 sub invidia sordidatorum, ‘with the advantage of the indignation at being clothed as suppliants’. Cf. 7.7.4 convicii invidiam, and 7.9.6 procacis invidiam.

causam prodere veritatis, ‘to bring forward the cause of truth’: Causa veritatis, ‘the case for verity’, ‘the interest of truth’, is a juridical term, cf. e.g. Gaius Inst. 4.178 potiusque ex iudicis errore vel iniquitate victoriam sperat quam ex causa veritatis, ‘and he hopes to win due to a judicial error or through unfairness rather than on the basis of truth’. Cf. examples from contexts of litigation, such as Rufin. Apol. adv. Hier. 2.48 nec in causa veritatis studiose agendum esse magis quam religioso, ‘in the case for verity one should not act in a partisan but in a religious way’, and Aug. c. Cresc. 4.3.3 nonne melius ... causa veritatis et unitatis ... inter
episcopos ageretur?, ‘isn’t it preferable to discuss the case of truth and unity between bishops?’.

For veritatem prodere, ‘to present the truth’, in a juridical context see e.g. Cod. Iust. 5.37.22.2. Compare the use of veritas in Ep. 7.5.1 consulas veritati.

Vanitatis invidia and causam veritatis form a chiasmus, reinforced by the similarity of vanitatis – veritatis.

**Section 4**

Evarix, rex Gothorum, quod limitem regni sui rupto dissolutoque foedere antiquo vel tutatur armorum iure vel promovet,

The next stage in the climactic composition of the Exordium: Euric’s name is stated clearly, and his conquest, too – only to be enveloped in excuses for the author’s rashness immediately after. However, the message is delivered, made palatable by a kind of *praeteritio*.

**Evarix**, ‘Euric’: On the form of the name see Kaufmann 1995: 209 n. 636. The form *Evarix* is encountered only here in Sidonius. Interestingly, Gregory of Tours echoes it in the passage which elaborates this letter, *Franc. 2.25*, whereas elsewhere he writes Euvarex, Eoricus, Euricus of Eorichus. In one other instance does Sidonius mention Euric by name, in *Carm. 34.42* (= *Ep. 8.9.5*), where he writes Eorics. Everywhere else he uses only his title or other circumlocutions; this is Sidonius’ way, first of keeping his distance from the foreigner, later of paying subdued respect. See e.g. 1.7.5 regem Gothorum (with Köhler’s note on the difference between Theodoric and Euric: Euric had drastically changed the Roman friendly policy of his brother Theodoric, whom he killed and succeeded AD 466), or simply 4.8.1 rege. He is certainly among the ‘kings wearing skins’, 7.9.19 pellitos reges, which is scarcely a compliment. But then, in Sidonius’ palinody after the final takeover, we hear 4.22.3 potentissimi ... regis and 8.3.3 rex inclitus. Note that the Burgundian king Chilperic is not called by name either: 6.12.3 regem praesentem.

**Evarix, rex Gothorum** follows *Modaharium, civem Gothum* (sect. 2), thus adding to the coherence of the introductory section.

**limitem regni**, ‘the boundaries of his kingdom’: Cf. 7.1.1 terminos suos ... limitaverunt, and for the Visigothic expansionism, General Introduction, sect. 3.1 *Visigoths and Burgundians*.

**rupto dissolutoque foedere antiquo**, ‘having broken and shattered the old treaty’ (Anderson): The *ruptum foedus*, ‘violation of the treaty’, is the usual Roman excuse for a righteous war. See Baldus 2004 on the Roman peace treaty: ‘The sources are abundant in statements of the kind that certain polities were foedifragi, violators of treaties. ... Above all, such statements are made when war guilt is discussed, for a *bellum iustum* may be waged against the party violating the treaty. At this point, we must not expect any elaborate theory of justification as was known in contemporary private law; ... there was no political interest in such an autonomous theory’ (p. 128). He also discusses the link with *fides/perfidia*, and suggests further reading.

The Visigoths, already *foederati* during the decades which took them to Gaul, had been reinstated as federates in 416, and in 418 finally settled in Aquitaine (Harries 1994: 63), being
offered hospitium and allotted the sortes Gothorum, ‘the shares of the Goths’. See below on sect. 10 Gothicae sortis, and the General Introduction, sect. 3.1 Visigoths and Burgundians. Loyen 2: xv rightly defines the ruptum foedus as the aggression since 469, when Euric started to realize a sovereign kingship of his own, in Jordanes’ words: Get. 237 Euricus ergo ... crebrate mutationem Romanorum principum cernens Gallias suo iure nisus est occupare.

The word foedus is central to the letters under consideration: 7.6.10 per vos mala foederum currunt and teneamus ex fide, etsi non tenemus ex foedere, 7.7.4 pudeat vos ... huius foederis, where see my comment. Even after the settlement of 476 it preoccupied Sidonius’ mind, witness a letter from exile in Bordeaux AD 476, 9.3.2 aemulantum invicem sese pridem foedera ... regnorum, treaties between the kingdoms which have been rivals for a long time’.

Rumpere foedus is classical, found since Lucr. 2.254, but dissolvere foedus, apart from Sis. Hist. 112, is attested only in later Latin, e.g. Amm. 25.9.11, Oros. Hist. 5.4.21. The reduplication rupto dissolutoque leaves no doubt as to the radical character of Euric’s new policy. On doublets, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

vel tutatur armorum iure vel promovet, ‘is “defending”, in other words, extending’ (Anderson): Irony in the guise of a quasi-objective statement. Seen from Euric’s side ‘protection’ of the border, from the Roman point of view of course ‘occupation’. Anderson has caught this well. Later, Ennodius provides this ‘defense’ with a warning. He has bishop Epiphanius say bluntly to Euric, on opening the peace negotiations of 475 AD: Ennod. Opusc. 3 p. 353 l. 5 f. Hartel nec ferrum fines tuetur imperii, si caelestis dominus offendatur, ‘the sword cannot protect your territory, if the Lord of Heaven is offended’.

armorum iure, ‘by “right” of arms’, ‘by armed force’: Ius TLL 7/2: 689.36 ff. ‘praevalente notione q.e. vis et potestas, facultas, licentia, arbitrium’, e.g. Pomp. Trog. Iust. 38.5.7 ruptum ... sibi esse victoriae ius, ‘... the license belonging to victory’. The exact phrase does not recur until Ven. Fort. Mart. 4.333 armorum iure tueri. Cf. Luc. 4.821 f. ius licet in iugulos nostros sibi fecerit ensis / Sulla etc., ‘though Sulla has claimed the right of the sword against our necks’.

promovet, ‘extends’, of territory, cf. 8.3.3 promotae limitem sortis.

nec nobis peccatoribus hic accusare nec vobis sanctis hic discutere permissum est.

nobis peccatoribus, ‘for me, a sinner’: In the same self-deprecatory way, usual among clerics: 6.1.2 exi a me, quia homo peccator sum, domine, 7.4.1 a me peccatore digressis sanctae communionis portio patet, 9.2.3 novus clericus peccator antiquus.

vobis sanctis, ‘for you, a saint’: For sanctus of bishops, see my comment on 7.2.4 sancti Eustachii.

hic, ‘now’: No doubt hic means ‘in this letter’, ‘at this moment’, ‘in this (political) situation’, cf. e.g. 2.2.1 hic quid de regionis nostrae climate loquar? and 2.13.3 hic si omittamus antecedentium principum casus. The circumstances do not allow freedom of speech, one has to submit for one’s own safety, as is demonstrated in the ensuing biblical stories.

discutere, ‘investigate’: Cf. e.g. 1.7.8 non prius quam discuterent (the judicial enquiry into the case of Arvandus), and 9.13.5 ut censor incipias cum severitate discutere (ironically, of literary criticism). The judicial enquiry (discutere) follows the lodging of the complaint (accusare).
quin potius, si requiras, ordinis res est, ut et dives hic purpura byssoque veletur et Lazarus hic ulceribus et paupertate feriatur;

First the author introduces the parable of the rich man and the poor Lazarus, Luc. 16.19-31. In the Vulgate the corresponding words are: v. 19 homo quidam erat dives, qui induebatur purpura et bysso, v.20 et erat quidam mendicus, nomine Lazarus, qui iacebat ad ianuam eius, ulceribus plenus: ‘There was once a rich man, who dressed in purple and the finest linen. At his gate, covered with sores, lay a poor man named Lazarus.’ See General Introduction, sect. 6.1 Intertextuality.

quin potius, si requiras, ordinis res est, ‘in fact, if you look more closely, it is the normal thing’: Sidonius and Basilius, in their situation, cannot criticize the powerful king. On closer inspection, this is no isolated fact, it is as things go in this world - a fact of life which is then illustrated with paradigmatic scenes from the Bible.

Quin potius, ‘indeed’, ‘more than that’: ‘This is not only true for us, it is the general rule.’ The function of quin potius here is to corroborate and generalize the previous sentence, not to contradict it (Anderson: ‘on the contrary’, Loyen ‘au contraire’; Bellès correctly ‘i encara més’, ‘and even more than that’). See LHS 2: 676 f. ‘das steigernde quin’, also quin potius, quin etiam. Quin potius is one of Sidonius’ favourites with no less than fourteen occurrences in the correspondence. It is very versatile. Compare, beside the generalizing use here, 7.7.6 ‘rather’ (contrast), 7.8.1 ‘even’ (strenghtening), and 7.8.4 (contrast again), with my respective comments.

Si requiras: The phrase has no parallel in Sidonius, and is rare, cf. Cledon, Gramm. 5.13.27 reperies, si requiras.

Ordinis res est, ‘it is the regular thing’, is used in a threefold anaphora, with two members of equal length and the third member almost twice as long: 14 words (Lazarus), 14 words (Egypt), 23 words (Babylon). On repetition, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style. For the ‘Gesetz der wachsenden Glieder’, my comment on 7.1.2 propugnacula. The collocation itself is a one-off.

The three illustrations which follow may have the veil of the biblical past, but at the same time they have all the authority of it, and are perfectly clear in their criticism of the rich and ruthless ruler. Evidently, Sidonius thought he could afford to make this public under the eyes of Euric. He knew what he was doing when he revised these letters, once he was reinstated as bishop of Clermont AD 476-477. Were not Euric’s ears and eyes omnipresent? And was not Sidonius among the most notable authors, if not the most notable of them all? As Mommsen saw, Visigothic ‘censorship’ may well have spotted this letter, and some others too, and caused them to disappear from the manuscript(s) it could lay its hands on (see General Introduction, sect. 5.2 Manuscripts).

In Africa, during the Vandal persecution of the Catholics, this kind of scarcely veiled criticism of the king by some bishops had led to their immediate banishment. Cf. Vict. Vit. 1.7 et si forsitan quispiam, ut moris est, dum dei populum admoneret, Pharaonem, Nabuchodonosor, Holofernem aut aliquem similem nominasset, obiciebatur illi, quod in persona regis ista dixisset, et statim exilio trudebatur.

hic, ‘in this world’, as opposed to the life hereafter, where all sufferings will be recompensed, cf. below sect. 5 futuraramque beatitudinem, ‘the future happiness’. The hic of the previous sentence, ‘the political circumstances we live in’, is now heightened as it were, and brought
onto an allegorical and spiritual level. This simple *hic* returns in an elaborated way in the next two examples: *in hac allegorica Aegypto* and *in hac figuratae Babylonis fornace*. Human life is begging like Lazarus, toiling as in Egypt and burning as in Babylon.

**purpura byssoque veletur**, ‘is dressed in purple and fine linen’: I.e. in red and white. *Byssus* also in *Carm. 37.14 (= Ep. 9.13.5) rutilum toreuma bysso*, ‘the couch red with fine linen’, the adjective *byssinus* in *Ep. 1.2.6 modo conchyliata profertur supellex, modo byssina*, ‘purple red … linen white’.

The choice of *veletur* instead of *induebatur* of the Vulgate text may have been brought about by a reminiscence of Ov. *Pont. 4.4.23 purpura Pompeium summi velabit honoris*, and *Mart. 3.2.10 (licet) te purpura delicata velet*. Apart from that, *velare* is quite prosaic in Sidonius, cf. 4.20.2 *manicæa sola brachiorum principia velantes*, as, incidentally, *indui* also is, cf. 1.11.16.

**ulceribus et paupertate feriatur**, ‘is struck with ulcers and poverty’: The collocation here only.

**ordinis res est, ut, dum in hac allegorica versamur Aegypto, Pharao incedat cum diademate, Israelita cum cophino;**

The slave labour of the Israelites in Egypt, the plagues which struck the land because Pharaoh refused to let them go, and the final triumphant exodus (Exod. 1-15) were a rich source for allegorical interpretation for the ancient church, as e.g. Augustine wrote in *Psalm. 77.26 hae omnes Aegyptiorum poenae allegorica interpretatione exponi possunt*. An example of this interpretation, which transposes the exodus of Israel to the redemption from sin of the Christian, is Ambr. *Abr. 2.9.65 ita ergo et nos in hac terra adflictionis fugiamus lateres formare, sed gemitu et lacrimis provocemus domini misericordiam, ut mittat nobis Moysen et Aaron, hoc est legem et sacerdotem, sed illum verum sacerdotum principem, qui licet inter homines versaretur, dicebatur: ‘ecce spiritus ante faciem nostram Christus dominus’, et liberet nos de terra Aegypti, ut domini pascha celebremus*. The *vasa Aegypti* (Aug. *Doctr. Christ. 2.40) are among the most famous products of this tradition.

For the equation between Egypt and the wicked world, cf. e.g. Hier. *in Ezech. 9.29 in Aegyptum saeculi istius*, ‘to the Egypt of this world’, Aug. *c. Faust. 22.91 ut simul de hoc saeculo tamquam de Aegypto liberentur*, ‘to be redeemed from this world as from Egypt’.

For references in Sidonius see General Introduction, sect. 6.1 Intertextuality.

**Israelita cum cophino**, ‘the Jew with a basket’: The task of the Israelites in Egypt was to make bricks, for which they had to carry all the materials themselves (Ex. 5.6-21).

*Cophinus*, Gr. κόφινος, ‘a large basket’, ‘hamper’, in agriculture to carry soil and manure, e.g. Col. 11.3.51 *stercoratam terram inditam cophinus afferat*, here to carry the material used in making bricks, as in *Psalm 80.7 manus eius in cophino servierunt*, explained by Aug. *Psalm. 80.9 l. 6 f. per cophinum significatur opera servilia. mundare, stercorare, terram portare, cophino fit; servilia sunt opera*, ‘the word “basket” means slave labour …’, cf. Paul. Nol. *Ep. 32.23*. This is to be distinguished from the use in Juv. 3.14 *Judaeis, quorum cophinus faenumque supellex*, viz. a haybasket which served to keep the sabbath meal warm.
ordinis res est, ut, dum in hac figuratae Babylonis fornace decoquimur,
Just as Egypt was the land of slavery, so Babylon was the land of captivity for the Jews. Its
king Nebuchadnezzar 586 BC laid waste to Jerusalem and its temple, and deported the
people. Legend has it that he had three young men, who were accused of not worshipping
his image, thrown into a blazing furnace, Dan. 3.8-30, esp. v. 21 et confestim viri illi vincti ...
missi sunt in medium fornacis ignis ardentis. The scene recurs more than once in early Christian
literature and art. In Christian imagery it represents the devil’s threat to man, esp. regarding
his bodily weaknesses: Aug. Civ. 11.15 quod ait Esaias sub figurata persona principis Babyloniae
diabolum notans, ‘Isaiah by the allegorical person of the king of Babylon means the devil’,
Hier. Ep. 79.5 quis fornacem regis Babylonis sine adustione ingressus est?, ‘who has entered the
furnace of the king of Babylon without being scorched?’, Cassian. Inst. 5.14.2 fornacem corporis
nostri, quae rege Babylonio occasiones peccatorum et vitia nobis iugiter subministrante succenditur,
‘the furnace of our body which is set ablaze because the king of Babylon constantly provides
it with opportunities to sin and with wickedness’.

Sidonius, however, has in mind the more general oppression he and his friends have to
endure under the Visigoths.

This third comparison is the longest and most complex. It pictures the painful oppression in
Babylon, Jeremiah weeping over the ruins of Jerusalem and the king of Assur trampling
underfoot its sanctuary. The ruins of Jerusalem and the destruction of its temple evoke the
undermining of the church in Gaul. Stylistically, the author has taken care to put the victims
first (nos cum Ieremia) and the oppressor second (Assur), whereas, in the first and second
comparison, he began with the oppressor (dives, Pharao) and ended with the victim (Lazarus,
Israelita).

nos cum Ieremia spiritalem Ierusalem suspiriosis plangamus ululatibus
Jeremiah lamented the devastation of Jerusalem: Lament. prol. et factum est, postquam in
captivitatem redactus est Israel et Ierusalem deserta est, sedit Ieremias propheta flens et planxit
lamentatione hac in Ierusalem.

spiritalem Ierusalem, ‘the spiritual Jerusalem’: Either future happiness in Heaven or the
catholic church in Gaul is meant, in its ideal, uncontaminated shape.

(Aegypto) and figuratae (Babylonis).

Among the names of the city of Jerusalem, Ierusalem or Hierusalem has metaphorical and
theological associations, whereas (Hieros)olyma is the geographical designation (cf. Ep. 7.9.21
in Solymis, and e.g. Mart. 7.55.7 Solymis ... perustis). Cf. in Sidonius 6.1.1 nec de inferiore
Hierusalem, ‘from your no whit inferior Jerusalem’ (the vantage point of his dignity from
where bishop Lupus oversees the church), and 8.13.3 patriam sibi maluit Ierusalem (heaven)
potius quam Hierusolymam (the city) computari.

Jerome distinguished four possible meanings of ‘the spiritual Jerusalem’, viz. the historical
city, the heaven for the redeemed, the church as a vision of peace, and the souls of the
faithful; cf. Hier. in Ezek. 4.16.1 ff. For the allegorical method, see J.H. Waszink, art.
‘Allegorese’ RAC 1 (1950) 283-293.
suspiriosis plangamus ululatibus, ‘we lament with sighs and groans’ (Anderson): This collocation has no direct models. For Sidonius suspiriosus has the connotation of repentance, e.g. 5.14.3 (invitation to assist at the Rogationes) ieiunatur oratur, psallitur fletur. ad haec te festa cervicum humiliatarum et sternacium civium suspiriosa contubernia peto, ‘there is fasting and prayer, psalm singing and weeping; to this celebration of meekly bowed heads and to this fellowship of humbly sighing citizens do I invite you’. Cf. 7.9.6 per suspiriosas voragines, and 8.14.5 culpas suas anima poenaliter recordata suspirat, ‘the soul sighs when it ruefully remembers its sins’.

Planctus is used in 2.8.2 of the lament for a dead person. Ululatus is a hapax in Sidonius. For the general atmosphere one might compare Verg. A. 4.667 t lamentis gemituque et femineo ululatu / tecta fremunt, resonat magnis plangoribus aether.

et Assur fastu regio tonans sanctorum sancta proculcet.

In 721 BC Sargon, king of Assur, annihilated the northern realm of the Ten Tribes of Israel (2 Kings 17.1-6). Assyrian supremacy ended with the fall of Ninive 612 BC. Only the successor state of the Chaldaeans, under their king Nebuchadnezzar, defeated the southern realm and its capital Jerusalem in 586. As Nebuchadnezzar, not the Assyrians, destroyed the temple, Assur here means the Mesopotamian kings in general.

fastu regio tonans, ‘thundering in his royal pride’: Both fastus and tonare only here in Sidonius. The phrase is unique.

Fastus regius, ‘royal pride’, the haughtiness of a king, is the opposite of the ideal which Sidonius and friends cherished concerning the affability of the truly authoritative. See e.g. letter 4. The antagonism between the established Gallo-Roman aristocrats and the New Deal of the Visigothic king could not be expressed more concisely. Fastus regius and its opposite are documented e.g. Curt. 9.8.23 (Ptolemaeus) modico civilique cultu, liberalis inprimis adituque facili nihil ex fastu regiae adsumpserat, (Ptolemy remained affable and modest) ‘he had adopted nothing of royal haughtiness’, Aug. Hept. 2.16 l.204 (about the possibility of Moses and Aaron being timid when confronted with Pharao’s majesty) an forte regius fastus non eos permittebat de proximo loqui?

Tonare, ‘to make a thunderous noise’, of superhuman phenomena, e.g. Verg. A. 3.571 horrificis iuxta tonat Aetna ruinis, Prop. 4.1.7 Tarpeius pater (= Iuppiter Capitolinus) de rupe tonabat. Cf. hyperbolically of the emperor Domitian, Mart. 7.56.4 a nostro … Tonante.

sanctorum sancta proculcet, ‘tramples on the Holy of Holies’: The phrase only here in Sidonius. The Holy of Holiest is the inmost part of the tabernacle and the temple, in which the Ark of the Covenant was preserved. See e.g. Ex. 26.34, Hebr. 9.3. Here it stands pars prototo for the temple as such. The order sanctorum sancta, instead of sancta sanctorum, is rare (six times in all in the whole of prose literature up till and including Sidonius). Its effect on the sentence ending sancta proculcet is a retic + spondee, whereas sancta sanctorum would have been a dispondee (both are cursus planus). Cretic + spondee is the preferred clausula in Sidonius (almost 25%); see Appendix H Clausulae.

Proculcare, ‘to tread down’, ‘trample on’, is found since Lucr. 5.1235 proculcare ac ludibrio … habere. The connotation of contempt is the same as here.

The provenance of the phrase is New Testament apocalypse: Luc. 21.24 Hierusalem calcabitur a gentibus, Apoc. 11.2 (gentes) civitatem sanctum calcabunt. The same statement about the
devastating effect of the Gothic, Arian onset is expressed by Quodvultdeus (+ ca. 453) Prom. 13 l. 35 civitatem sanctam calcari ... ab haereticis et maxime Arrianis qui tunc plurimum poterunt; ... Gotos ... per quorum saevitiam ipse iam diabolus ecclesiam vastat et tunc amplius persequetur, cessare etiam faciens inuge sacrificium. Note that also the regular celebration of the Mass is interrupted.

Section 5

quibus ego praesentum futurarurnque beatitudinum vicissitudinibus inspectis communia patientius incommoda fero;

The scriptural examples just presented, reveal on closer inspection that the present happiness of the oppressor is ephemeral, but that future, eternal happiness will be the victims’ share. These two are complementary and form a balanced justice.

Eternal bliss awaits those who suffered in this world, and by far exceeds these sufferings, cf. the Paulinian saying Rom. 8.18 existimo enim quod non sunt condignae passiones huius temporis ad futuram gloriam quae revelabitur in nobis, ‘for I reckon that the sufferings we now endure bear no comparison with the splendour, as yet unrevealed, which is in store for us’. Worldly happiness is tainted, esp. in the case of the powerful, cf. e.g. (about kings) Aug. Civ. 12.21 CC SL l. 13 per inmundas nequitias beatitudo quaeratur, ‘they strive after bliss through foul depravity’, ibid. l. 17 per nostras falsas beatitudines. The opposite Aug. Civ. 9.13 l. 27 aeterna beatitudo.

vicissitudinibus, ‘alternations: Vicissitudo means ‘reciprocity’, ‘mutuality’, ‘alternation’ in Sidonius: 1.4.3 studii huiusce, 2.9.3, 9.14.1 mutui oratus. The plural only here, in accordance with the plurality of the things exchanged, or complementary to each other, like e.g. Cic. Leg. 2.16 dierum noctiumque vicissitudines, Ambr. Cain et Ab. 2.6.23 in vicissitudinibus gratiarum, in quibus non satis est reddere quod acceperis, sed commendare quod reddas.

communia patientius incommoda fero, ‘I bear our common troubles more patiently’: In line with the above mentioned word of Paul, Christian pastoral practice is to indicate that, for the faithful, misery is relatively short and bearable, even if it be death, e.g. Lact. Epit. 61.5 postremo ipsam mortem non inviti aut timidi, sed libentes et interriti subire nitamur, cum sciamus quali aput deum gloria simus futuri triumphato saeculo ad promissa venientes, quibus bonis, quanta beatitudine brevia haec poenarum mala et huius vitae damna peneurus, ‘we try to undergo death willingly and bravely, because we know what glory we will earn with God …’. For incommoda, cf. e.g. 9.3.3 quia patior hic incommoda peregrini (Sidonius in exile).

primum, quod mihi quae merear introspicienti, quaecumque adversa provenerint, leviora reputabantur;

The reasoning is not very cogent or efficient, because two strains of thought interfere. The author has just stated that the vicissitudo makes it easier for him to bear his unhappiness. Now he goes on to explain that this is so, primum quod, in the first place, when he considers his own conscience, the penalty, on balance, is light; dein quod, secondly, because it is good for a man’s inner self if he has to endure hardships outwardly. Logically speaking, these are no proofs for the statement, but new arguments for putting up with misfortune, on the same level as the vicissitudo-argument.
mihi quae merear introspicienti, ‘to me, when I look inward at what I deserve’: The dative with provenerint, and again with reputabuntur. For this method of self-criticism, see Plin. Pan. 74.3 alius enim fortasse alium, ipsum se nemo deceperit, introspiciat modo vitam seque, quid mereatur, interroget, ‘people may perhaps deceive each other, but let nobody deceive himself, and only look inward at his life and ask himself what he deserves’.

quaecumque adversa provenerint, leviora reputabuntur, ‘any misfortunes which befall me will seem less heavy’: Provenire, ‘to turn up’, ‘arise’, is classical and occurs four times in Sidonius. For the collocation with adversa, cf. Ambrosiast. in Gal. 4.10 per haec facilius solent adversa provenire. Cf. Liv. 22.8.2 quodcumque adversi inciderit.

Leviora may be ‘less heavy’ (Anderson), viz. less heavy to bear because the misfortunes are deserved, or ‘trop légers’ (Loyen), viz. not heavy enough because the author deserves much more. For adversa – leviora cf. Cic. Lael. 22 nam et secundas res splendidiores facit amicitia et adversas partiens communicansque leviores, ‘friendship … makes adversity less heavy to bear’.

dein quod certum scio maximum esse remedium interioris hominis, si in hac area mundi variis passionum flagellis trituretur exterior.

remedium interioris hominis, ‘a cure for the inner man’: For the kind of collocation, cf. Ep. 6.6.2 interioris hominis maciem. For the medical metaphor consult Gualandri 1979: 115 f.

interioris hominis ... exterior, ‘inner man … outer’: I.e. soul and body, cf. Tert. Resurr. 40 l. 4 interiorem (sc. hominem), id est animam, et exteriorum, id est carnem. The body is afflicted by all kinds of misery, the soul is, at the same time, renewed and strenghtened. See again Paul, 2 Cor. 4.16 propter quod non deficitur, sed licet is qui foris est noster homo corrumpitur, tamen is qui intus est renovatur de die in diem, ‘no wonder we do not lose heart! Though our outward humanity is in decay, yet day by day we are inwardly renewed’, and its explanation in Tert. adv. Marc. 5 CSEL p. 615 l. 18: et corporis corruptionem ex vexatione temptationum et animi renovationem ex contemplatione promissionum, ‘the corruption of the body due to the torment of temptations and the renewal of the spirit thanks to the contemplation of what has been promised’.

in hac area mundi ... trituretur, ‘is threshed on the threshing floor of the present world’: For area mundi we have only one ancient parallel (though with a different nuance), Prud. Ham. 877 f. nocturnae cedunt nebulae, nigrantia cedunt / nubila, praetenti cedit teres area mundi, ‘… the round extent of the universe that spreads before them gives way’. The phrase had a modest success in the Middle Ages, esp. John of Salisbury Policraticus 2.20 quibus fidelis anima in area mundi teritur, who will have read Sidonius, because he not only echoes area mundi, but is the first and only one to apply again the complete metaphor of the soul being threshed.

Note the shift of the demonstrative pronoun hac area mundi = area huius mundi.

The t.t. for threshing is terere, cf. Cato Agr. 129 aream, ubi frumentum teratur, sic facito. Likewise the noun triturae. Triturare, however, is not attested outside the patres and the Vulgata. There triturae/titurare has its roots in the Old Testament, as an evocative term for the catharsis in the turmoil of nations, and especially the purification of Israel, during the Captivity, e.g. Is. 25.10 triturabitur Moab sub eo, lir. 51.33 filia Babylonis quasi area, tempus triturae eius.

The idea of threshing has its place in the New Testament in the prophesy of John the Baptist, who announces the judgment of the Messiah: Matth. 3.12 cuius ventilabrum in manu sua et
permundabit aream suam, ‘his shovel is ready in his hand and he will winnow his threshing floor’. A cognate theme is the parable of the corn and the darnel, and their separation at the end of time (Matth. 13.24 ff.). The idea is common in Augustine and others for the chastening, and decisive, influence of earthly tribulations, cf. e.g. Aug. Serm. 259 sic in isto saeculo, videtis quomodo tritatur area, id. Serm. 260C MiAg 1 p. 339 l. 23 (about the faithful in Elia’s time) quando adhuc in huius saeculi area tritabatur. Cf. Cypr. Ep. 37.2.2 (about the final ‘harvest’) in domini area.

variis passionum flagellis, ‘the whips of all kinds of sufferings’: The whip as an instrument of punishment is found e.g. Hor. S. 1.2.41 ille flagellis ad mortem caesus. In Christian thought God’s punishment is proof of his love, cf. Hebr. 12.6 quem enim diligii Dominus castigat; flagellat autem omnem filium quem recipit, with comment by Aug. Serm. 46 CC SL 41 l. 254 si exceptus a passione flagellorum, exceptus a numero filiorum, ‘if exempted from the passion of whipping, then exempted from the number of sons (i.e. of the chosen)’. The passion of Christ, and its imitation by the martyrs, is present in the background, cf. e.g. Pass. Perp. 18.9 ad hoc populus exasperatus flagellis eos vexari per ordinem venatorum postulavit; et utique gratulati sunt quod aliquid et de dominicis passionibus essent consecuti, ‘the crowd demanded that they be whipped … and they were happy to share in part the passion of the Lord’.

Section 6

sed, quod fatendum est, praefatum regem Gothorum, quamquam sit ob virium merita terribilis,

As Bellès has pointed out (ad loc. n. 61), this is a crucial turning point in the argumentation. If Euric’s advance were purely wordly, one might accept its consequences with resignation. But Euric is not so much a political adversary, the author says, as an enemy of the Catholic faith. This – Bellès claims – is a subtle tactic to defend the cause of the Auvergne not primarily as a political issue, but as an issue of faith.

In my analysis section 6 rounds off Exordium C with the, now finally, undisguised and complete statement of the accusation Sidonius wants to make at Euric’s address.

sed, quod fatendum est, ‘nevertheless, I am sorry I have to be honest and say ...’: Quod fatendum est is a concession to politeness. The argument runs like this: ‘Although I am not in a position to criticize Euric, and the overpowering presence of the rich and mighty is regrettably normal, I must be honest and say that I am afraid he is going to infringe upon the Catholic privileges’. For the phrase itself, see my comment on 7.4.3 sed, quod fatendum est.

praefatum regem Gothorum, ‘the said king of the Goths’: For praefatus, see my comment on 7.5.3 praefatae civitatis.

quamquam sit: For the subjunctive, see my comment on 7.3.1 quamquam … sollicitaretur.

ob virium merita terribilis, ‘terrifying on account of his military strength’: Ob merita is used in bonam et malam partem, and weakens into a kind of preposition in the course of time, cf. successively Plin. Pan. 55.6 ob egregia in rem publicam merita, Apul. Soc. 15 ob adversa vitae merita, Tert. Nat. 2.9 ob merita vitae, Min. Fel. 21.1 ob merita virtutis aut muneris deos habitos, Lact. Inst. 1.8.8 ob merita virtutum suarum aut munera aut artium repertarum, Cassian. Conl. 3.4 ob merita peccatorum. See my comment on 7.10.2 per iniustitiae nostrae merita.
For *terribilis* of the same king, cf. Ennod. *Opusc.* 3 p. 353 l. 1 f. Hartel (bishop Epiphanius addresses Euric) *quamquam te, stupende terrarum princeps, multorum auribus reddat virtutis fama terribilem,* ‘… the renown of your strength makes you terrifying to many’.

Euric’s might had grown formidable by the years 475-476 and Sidonius more than once avowed it with respect: *Ep.* 4.22.3 *potentissimi consilia regis* (see Amherdt ad loc.), 8.3.3 *rex inclitus … corda terrificat gentium transmarinarum,* ‘the famous king terrifies the hearts of the nations across the sea’, and 8.9.5 v. 20 *subactus orbis.*

non tam Romanis moenibus quam legibus Christianis insidiaturum pavesco.

One should not be misled by Euric’s military superiority. He is an even greater danger to Catholicism than to Roman territory. The initial theme of the book, Clermont left at the mercy of the Gothic invasion (7.1.1 *Gothos in Romanum solum castra movisse*, 7.5.3 *solum oppidum Arvernium Romanorum reliquum partibus*), is made more profound here, by revealing orthodox Catholicism as its vital characteristic.

*legibus Christianis,* ‘Catholic jurisdiction’, ‘Christian religion’: The plural is caused by the (chiasitic) parallelism to *Romanis moenibus.* The annexation of *Christianus* for the Catholics is a clear stand against the Arians. Sidonius uses *Christianus* three times only: once in a comparably sweeping utterance about his friend, 5.2.1 *Mamertus Claudianus peritissimus Christianorum philosophus,* and 9.9.15 *Christiano dogmati ac sensui* (against pagan philosophers). For the polemic annexation against ‘heretics’ cf. Tert. *Præscr.* 37 *si enim haeretici sunt, Christiani esse non possunt,* Greg. *Tur.* Franc. 3.10 *videns autem se non posse evadere, ad ecclesiam Christianorum configurare coepit* (viz. the Arian Amalaric who maltreated his wife Clothilde *propter fidem catholicam*).

For the meaning ‘Catholic/Christian jurisdiction’, cf. *Cod. Theod.* 1.27.1 *iudex pro sua sollicitudine observare debeat, ut, si ad episcopale iudicium provocetur, silentium accommodetur et, si quis ad legem christianam negotium transferre voluerit et illud iudicium observare, audiatur* (the bishop could be appealed to in a range of legal matters, cf. Harries 1994: 210 f.) and ibid. 3.1.5 interpr. (buying back a slave who had ended up between Jews) *ut servus in Christiana lege permaneret.* For the generalized use ‘Christian religion’, cf. *Cod. Theod.* 2.8.20 (a. 392) *festis solis diebus circensium sunt inhibenda certamina, quo Christianae legis veneranda mysteria nullus spectaculorum concursus avertat,* ‘no circus games on feast days … to avoid disturbing the hallowed rites of the Christian church’, and several times in Ammianus, 15.7.6 and 20.7.7 *Christianae legis antistes,* ‘a bishop of the Christian church’, 25.10.15 *Christianae legis … studiosus.*

*insidiaturum,* ‘will make a treacherous attack’: This reminds the reader of the wolf/devil (sect. 3 *incipit ... imminere*). Cf. Verg. *A.* 9.59 *pleno lupus insidiatus ovili.* Cf. for an abstract object with this verb, e.g. Liv. 34.33.8 *ad insidiandum libertati civium suorum.*

Note the chiasmus *Romanis moenibus – legibus Christianis.*

tantum, *ut ferunt, ori, tantum pectori suo catholici mentio nominis acet,* Gualandri 1979: 69 n. 119 compared Euric’s zeal for Arianism and loathing of Catholicism with his brother’s halfhearted religious observance, which from Sidonius’ point of view was
to be preferred: 1.2.4 *quod* (Theudoricus) *servet istam pro consuetudine potius quam pro ratione reverentiam*, ‘Theodoric’ devotion is a matter of routine rather than of conviction’.

**tantum ori ... tantum pectori suo ... acet**, ‘is so repugnant to his mouth ... to his heart’: The anaphora, with a slight climax to it, stresses the point that here Basilius is told what the real motive behind Euric’s aggression is: hate against Catholicism. Euric not only hates to pronounce the word ‘Catholic’, it inspires him with jealousy.

The pair *os – pectus* also occurs Ep. 4.21.3 *qui tibi per unius oris officium non unius pectoris profudere secretum*, ‘the work of one mouth ... the secret of many hearts’. The words concern what is said and what is thought or felt, outside and inside. It is said of insincere speakers: Gel. 1.15.1 *eorum orationem ... in ore nasci, non in pectore*. One remembers and talks about what is really important: Sen. Ep. 95.53 *ille versus et in pectore et in ore sit: ‘homo sum, humili nihil a me alienum puto’.*

**Pectori suo = pectori eius**: For the later use of the reflexive possessive pronoun *suus* instead of the anaphoric *eius/eorum*, see LHS 2: 175 and Köhler 1995: 125 ad 1.2.1 *formae suae*. In my corpus also 7.9.18 *personam suam*, 19 *suum ... panem* and 23 *in sua ... peregrinatione*.

**Acet**, ‘is sour’, ‘makes jealous’. The verb is extremely rare. A hapax in Sidonius, it only occurs in Cato Agr. 148.1, meaning ‘to be sour’ (of wine), and (pseudo-?) Flavius Caper, De orthographia (second, fifth cent.) Keil 7 p. 93.1. 18 *sordet acet ... haec perfecta sunt*; cf. Aldhelm (seventh cent.), De metris et enigmatibus ac pedum regulis, MGH AA 15 p.168 l.17 ... *aceo acesco, vireo viresco*. The metaphorical connotation of jealousy is found once for the ingressive *acesco* (the reading, however, is not absolutely certain), Claud. Anim. 1.1 *accedit ad hoc etiam acescentis semper livoris intentio, invidentis animi crimen et poena*, ‘add to this the effort of an always sour envy, the crime and punishment of a jealous mind’. See also Engelbrecht 1886: 464. Hence we may infer that what Sidonius wanted to convey was Euric’s jealousy of the supremacy of the Catholic church.

As an aside: Luetjohann printed Wilamowitz’ conjecture *acet* in the controversial passage Ep. 9.12.1 *si sermo dulcis et propositionibus acer*, (of a letter) ‘as its wording is pleasing but also lively because of the opinions’. The manuscript reading, however, seems perfectly defendable; for this connotation of *acer*, see below on *acer animis*.

**ut ferunt**, ‘I am told’: For reasons of diplomacy, the author continues keeping his distance, be it ever so slightly, cf. 1.11.5, 3.7.3, 4.18.4, 9.6.2.

**catholicici ... nominis**, ‘the word “catholic”’ (Anderson), ‘everything called “catholic”’: *Catholicus* occurs fives times in Sidonius, all of them in books 7 and 8, and twice in this letter.

**ut ambigas ampliusne suae gentis an suae sectae teneat principatum**.

**ut ambigas ampliusne ... an**, ‘so that it is doubtful whether more ... or’: This is a typically Sidonian phrase, which recurs Ep. 1.5.5 *ambigas utrum conectat an separat*, 3.11.2 *ut ambigas utrum iudicio an institutione superaveris*, cf. 8.4.2 *ambigendum celerius an pulchrius elucubrasti*. The more usual way of expressing this thought is with *dubitare*, e.g. Liv. 30.26.9 *et sicut dubites utrum ingenio cunctator fuerit an quia ita bello ... aptum erat*, Vell. 2.85.6 *ut dubites suo an Cleopatrae arbitrio victoriam temperaturus fuerit*.

For *amplius* instead of *plus*, see my comment on 7.4.1 *amplius dignitate quam dignatione.*
sectae teneat principatum, ‘is the ruler of his belief’: Of secta we find only one other instance in Sidonius, 3.4.1 (a Jew) cuius mihi quoque esset persona cordi, si non esset secta despectui, ‘whom I would also like as a person, if I did not despise his religious conviction’. The word is classical, designating a system of ideas or a way of life in such different fields as philosophy, medicine, astronomy, jurisprudence, rhetoric, art. In Christian authors likewise it is in itself not necessarily pejorative, e.g. Act. 24.14 (Paul to Festus) confiteor autem hoc tibi, quod secundum sectam, quam dicunt haeresim, sic deservio Patri et Deo meo, ‘the belief which they call a heresy…’, Tert. Apol. 39.6 ex causa Dei sectae (= Christianity), Gesta conc. Aquil. 58 Arrianae haeresis secta ... anathema, ‘the group of the Arian heresy be cursed’. On the other hand, it may mean ‘sect’, ‘heresy’, e.g. Lact. Inst. 4.30.2 plurimae sectae ... quae concordiam sancti corporis rumpent, ‘several sects … which endangered the unity of the holy body’. This is also the case, almost without exception, in the laws on heresy of the Codex Theodosianus (there haeresis is always pejorative, and religio can denote a heresy when accompanied by adjectives like perfida and prava; see Zinser 2002). A recent collection of papers on ‘heresy’ is Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity, edd. Eduard Iricinschi and Holger M. Zellentin, Tübingen, 2008. 

Tenere principatum already in Caes. Gal. 1.31.3 Galliae totius factiones esse duas; harum alterius principatum tenere Haeduos, alterius Arvernos.

ad hoc armis potens, acer animis, alacer annis hunc solum patitur errem,

ad hoc, ‘moreover’: On top of his loathing for Catholicism he has a lot of qualities which enable him to fight it, above all his conviction that his is the legitimate belief.


acer animis, ‘acutely intelligent’: Apart from his military talent, Euric is highly intelligent and, immediately following, alacer annis, young and energetic. For acer as ‘clever’, see TLL 1: 358.49 ff. For this meaning of acer in Sidonius see 7.9.10 si acrem, vitatur ut callidus, ‘if he is intelligent, people shun him saying he is cunning’. Cf. e.g. Lucr. 2.1041 acri iudicio perpende, Tac. Hist. 2.76 divi Augusti acerrimam mentem.

This translation of acer is preferable to ‘his ardent spirit’ (Anderson) and ‘ardent dans ses ambitions’ (Loyen), because, instead of creating a near tautology with alacer annis (‘his youthful energy’, ‘bouillant de jeunesse’), it provides a more diversified characterisation: military superiority, intelligence, energy.

An aside. The meaning ‘intelligent’, ‘lively’ in Sidonius is also applicable in literary criticism, e.g. 5.5.2 acriter eloquenterque declamasse, ‘to speak pointedly and eloquently’. On account of this it is preferable, with Anderson and Loyen, to retain acer in 9.12.1 sermo dulcis et propositionibus acer, not acet (see the discussion earlier at acet).

The plural animis is preferred to animo here because of armis – annis. Compare 7.5.4 personas ... voluntates ... sententias.
alacer annis, ‘full of youthful energy’: Cf. the other occurrences 1.4.1 vegetis et alacribus exemplum, 1.6.2 cum sis alacer domi, in aggredienda peregrinatione trepidum, and 2.4.1 iuventutis alacritas. Euric, ca. 440 – 484 AD, was 35 years old at this time. For Euric’s biography, see DNP 4: 279 f.

Bellès 3: 43 n. 63 a.l. (after Savaron) has pointed out the attempt at a double paronomasia acer animis alacer annis, and the play on acer - alacer in several authors, e.g. Flor. Ep. 13.46 (4.2) numquam acrior neque alacrior exercitus Caesaris fuit. As Sidonius is always keen on being creative with words, this aspect is undoubtedly predominant over the exact differentiation of meaning in the three members, for which a suggestion has just been made. See General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

hunc solum patitur errorem, ‘he is liable to this error only’: Errorem pati is found since the fourth century, Filastr. 130 sunt alii heretici qui de inaequalitate psalterii errorem patiuntur non modicum.

quod putat sibi tractatum consiliorumque successum tribui pro religione legitima, quem potius assequitur pro felicitate terrena.

In cauda venenum. That Euric owes his success to his religio legitima is, from the pen of his Catholic opponent Sidonius, extremely sarcastic, and therefore perhaps the most offensive point made in the whole letter.

tractatum consiliorumque successum, ‘the success of his considerations and plan’: For the collocation cf. Cod. Theod. 22.12 pr. quod inter omnes communi consilio tractatuque convenerit. Tractatus in later Latin develops from class. ‘the act of handling’ to ‘advice’, ‘consideration’, ‘discussion’. In my corpus we have 7.8.1 si e tractatu tuo ... manaret, 7.9.12 in tractatibus otiosi, 7.9.18 si vero personam suam tractatu consiliosiore pensemus, 7.9.23 multos ... in tractatu ... cognoscimus. See Mossberg 1934: 95 f. Köhler 1995: 243 for Ep. 1.7.6 paraphrases ‘planmäßiges Vorgehen mit einem bestimmten Ziel’.

pro religione legitima, ‘thanks to his rightful belief’: Anderson’s and Loyen’s translation ‘the orthodoxy of his religion’ is beside the point. The argument is about the legitimacy of either doctrine to justify the conquests and form the foundation of a state. For this juridical aspect of religious institutions, cf. e.g. Suet. Aug. 32.1 collegia praeter antiqua et legitima dissolvit, Sulp. Sev. Chron. 1.50.3 longo post intervallo religione legitima per Ezechiam restituta.

Ironically, the Arians, in their turn, thought of themselves as Catholic and called the others heretics: Salv. Gub. 5.9 nam in tantum se catholicos esse iudicant ut nos ipsos titulo haereticae appellations infamant. quod ergo illi nobis sunt, hoc nos illis.

pro felicitate terrena, ‘thanks to his earthly good fortune’: This is a phrase especially dear to Augustine, Conf. 8.7 contempta felicitate terrena, ibid. 13.17 idem namque illis finis est temporalis et terrenae felicitatis, et passim.

Following this line of thought, having the correct religion prevails over having the right strategic insights, cf. Ambr. Fid. 1.3 (directed at the emperor who is going to war) nosti enim fide magis imperatoris quam virtute militum quaeri solere victoriam.
Section 7

propter quod discite cito catholici status valetudinem occultam, ut apertam festinetis adhibere medicinam

propter quod discite cito, ‘let me tell you briefly’: Because Euric is so powerful, shrewd and energetic, there is no time to be lost. See also festinetis. Discite, ‘let me inform you’, cf. 5.13.1 Seronatum Tolosa nosti redire? si nondum, et credo quod nondum, vel per haec disce.

catholici status, ‘the Catholic community’: The exact phrase is not found elsewhere. Status is the coherent whole, the stable organisation, e.g. Ep. 6.12.4 cunque multa in statu fidei tuis dispositionibus augeantur. See my comment on 7.1.3 statu urbis exinanito.

valetudinem occultam ... apertam medicinam, ‘hidden illness … public remedy’: This is ranged by Gualandri 1979: 116 n. 38 among the more generic expressions of the theme Christus medicus and religion-medicine. The church is a body which can be affected by illness, especially heresy, see Apon. (fifth cent.) 10 l. 434 si quando morbo hereticae contagionis aut persecutionis corpus ecclesiae coeperit infirmari, ‘if by chance the church has fallen ill through heretical contagion or persecution’. The illness is occulta, as said earlier: sect. 2 clandestino morsu necdum intellecti dentis. For the play on oppositions, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

Burdigala ... Auscenses

These are the following modern towns (AS = Aquitanica Secunda, AP = Aquitanica Prima, N = Novempopulana, m = metropolis):


Thus, in Aquitanica Secunda two sees were vacant, among which the metropolis, out of a total of eight; in Aquitanica Prima (Sidonius’ province) three out of six, and in Novempopulana four out of twelve, among which the metropolis. In all, nine out of 26, about one third. See Wolfram 1988: 199, Kaufmann 1995: 205 n. 624. For the Visigothic expansion in south-western Gaul, see General Introduction, par. 3.1.1 The Visigoths.

Ruteni: Rodez is the scene of the dedication of a bapistry by Sidonius (Ep. 4.15). The fact that Sidonius was called upon to consecrate it, means the see was vacant. It is highly probable that it is the same vacancy that is signalled here. See Loyen 2: 253 n. 15 and Amherdt 2001: 356. I am not sure, however, – as is argued by both – that 4.15 (Loyen: ‘autumn 476 or 477’) is later than 7.6. First, Euric’s offensive and his conquering of most of Aquitania Prima dates as far back as 469-470 and consequently the vacancy may have been an old one. Sidonius might easily have gone there before he wrote the current letter. Second, the expression mitigato temporum statu (4.15.2) does not necessarily mean that peace has returned, as Loyen believes. It might just as well be conditional: ‘if hopefully we are going to see better times, …’. This corroborates the early dating by Stevens, Stroheker and Anderson. The Ruteni might have played an ‘incorrect’ role in the Visigothic conquest, see Santelia 2002: 86 ad Carm. 24.32 f. calumniosis / ... Rutenis.
Gabalitani: Loyen 3: 190 n. 27 points out that Gabali may be either Javols, as in the classical era, or Mende. Griffe 2: 132 doubts whether the episcopal see of the civitas Gabalum was ever established in the rather insignificant capital Anderitum/Javols. The medieval sources place it in Mende, where the tomb of Saint Privat was. Loyen 2: xviii n. 2 thinks it probable that the see was transferred in the third century, after the destruction of Javols by the Alamanni. See Santelia 2002: 79 ad Carm. 24.23 terram Gabalum satis nivosam.

multoque iam maior numerus civitatum summis sacerdotibus ipsorum morte truncatus nec ulla deinceps episcopis in defunctorum officia suffectis,

multoque iam maior numerus civitatum, ‘and indeed a far greater number of towns than you would suppose’: This does not add even more towns to those just listed, but it sums up and concludes that more towns are involved than the reader may have supposed intuitively. Que, ‘and in general’, ‘and indeed’ (OLD 9a), proceeds from the particular to the general, cf. e.g. Amp. 47.7 Dalmatijas Pannonios Illyricos Aegyptios Germanos Cantabros totumque orbem perpacavit, ‘he conquered Dalmatia … and indeed the whole world’.

Iam, ‘already’, ≈ ‘surprisingly’, ‘unfortunately’, marks a state of affairs which is different from what the reader presupposed. ‘It signals that a higher point on the implied scale has been reached than was expected’, as Kroon and Risselada 1998: 435 say, who call it the particle iam’s ‘scalar’ function. Cf. e.g. Cic. Sest. 37 sextum iam illum consulatum gerentem, ‘who was consul for the sixth time already’. See also my comment on 7.1.4 iam … minime.

Thus not ‘a far greater number of other cities’ (my italics), as Anderson translates, nor is iam ‘bientôt’ here (Loyen, interpreting that the already considerable number of vacancies will increase within the near future), which probably would require a future tense. This makes Anderson’s note 3 ad loc. superfluous, and likewise Percival 1997: 290 n. 13. There is no problem with the Latin, contrary to what Percival suggested.

summis sacerdotibus, ‘bishops’, followed by its synonym episcopis.

ipsorum morte, ‘their death’: Ipsorum, logically unnecessary, brings to the fore the striking character of the loss of precisely the most important men in their communities.

truncatus, ‘amputated’, ‘deprived of’: A forceful metaphor for the members of the community losing their spiritual head. In 3.3.7 truncatum is literally ‘decapitated’.

in defunctorum officia suffectis, ‘appointed as successors to the dead’: As often, Sidonius creates an unusual combination of ordinary words. Cf. e.g. Vell. 2.104.3 successor officii patris mei, and Aug. Civ. 3.16 M. Horatius, qui pro defuncto Lucretio suffectus fuerat. Note the repetition of f-sounds which probably favoured the collocation.

The same tactic was applied in the persecutions of the catholics by the Vandals, cf. Vict. Vit. 1.7 quibus (sc. episcopis) tamem in exilio positis dum obitus obvenisset, non licebat alios eorum civitatibus ordinari.
per quos utique minorum ordinum ministeria subrogabantur, latum spiritalis ruinae limitem traxit.

utique, ‘in any case’, ‘at least’: The statement is, in an indirect way, that priests and other lower ranking clerics are no longer being appointed. In the past (imperf. subrogabantur), when there still were bishops, there was at least continuity in the nomination of lower clerics. The reader is left to infer that this mechanism now no longer works. See Percival 1997: 290.


latum spiritalis ruinae limitem traxit, ‘a wide tract of spiritual devastation has been created’ (Anderson). This is a contamination of ruinam trahere/ducere, ‘to (cause to) collapse’, like e.g. Verg. A. 2.465 f. ea (sc. turris) lapsa repente ruinam / cum sonitu trahit, and limitem trahere, ‘to clear a passage’, ‘leave a track’, like e.g. Verg. A. 10.513 f. proxima quaque metit gladio latumque per agmen / ardens limitem agit ferro, Plin. Nat. 2.96 bolis (a meteor) vero perpetua ardens longiorem trahit limitem. In the correspondence we have ruina only one more time, meaning ‘disaster’, ‘failure’ (about a military defeat), Ep. 3.3.8.

quam fere constat sic per singulos dies morientum patrum proficere defectu,

fere constat, ‘it is almost certain’: Only here in Sidonius. Classical Latin says satis constat. This consequence is still (partly) in the future, hence the small restriction fere. Anderson’s translation ‘it is generally agreed’ highlights a typical aspect of this phrase, viz. its marking the agreement among authorities, as e.g. Colum. 7.3.11 inter auctores fere constitit. Sidonius is not alone in his gloomy analysis.

patrum, ‘fathers’, ‘bishops’: The death of their ‘fathers’ leaves the faithful behind as orphans, orbatos further down. Pater is a honorific title for the fathers of the church (4.3.7 ad sacrosanctos patres), often for the bishops (e.g. 5.14.2 Mamertus pater et pontifex), and for monks (7.17.3 statuta Lirinensium patrum vel Grinincensium). For papa, ‘bishop’, see General Introduction, par. 5.5.3 Modes of address. A meticulous attention to variation is conspicuous in this passage: summis sacerdotibus, episcopis, patrum, pontificum, respectively.

proficere defectu, ‘increases by diminution’: An oxymoron: the havoc (quam = ruinam) increases as the number of living bishops grows smaller. Note the same wordplay (paronomasia, Hagendahl class 2) at 5.10.2 praetervolantia corporis decoramenta currentis aevi profectu defectuque labascunt, ‘bodily charm is transient; as years advance and life wanes, it falls away’ (Dalton).

There is a marked difference between the young and energetic king and the old, dying church leaders.

ut non solum quoslibet haereticos praesentum verum etiam haeresiarchas priorum temporum potuerit inflectere:

This ongoing collapse of the church is so pitiful that today’s heretics (Euric) cannot but be moved by it. It might have made the even stauncher founders of heresies, i.e. Arius, think twice.
haeresiarchas, ‘archheretics’: In 9.9.15 Stoicos, Cynicos, Peripateticos haeresiarchas of the founders of the philosophical schools. For the use of grecisms (among which t.t. like this one) by Sidonius, see Gualandri 1979: 145-63.

inflectere, ‘mollify’, ‘change’: Inflectere in Sidonius can have the emphasis on the emotional side, ‘to move’, ‘involve’, e.g. 1.7.11 quis enim super statu eius nimus inflecteretur?, ‘who would be very concerned about him?, or on the element of change, e.g. 7.12.3 praetermisit regem Gothiae ferocissimum inflexum affatu tam melleo, ‘(my letter) has not told how the Gothic king was influenced by your diplomatic address’. Loyen 3: 190 n. 28 has a long note on it, because, according to him, the meaning is not clear. He translates ‘émouvoir’, but would even go so far as to choose ‘détourner de leurs projets’. Both would be fine, in my opinion. One should remain within the range indicated in literature by such examples as Verg. A. 4.22 solus hic inflexit sensus, Stat. Theb. 8.715 lacrimis inflectere patrem.

ita populos excessu pontificum orbatos tristis intercisae fidei desperatio premit.

populos ... orbatos, ‘the orphaned people’: Populus is a Christian development, meaning ‘the laypeople’, ‘the community’. The plural populi, ‘people’, ‘faithful’, is encountered at a later stage. See Mohrmann 3: 120 with early examples such as pope Cornelius in Cypr. Ep. 49.2.5 cum ingenti populi suffragio. Cf. Aug. Ep. 209.9 Christianorum praepositos populorum, Hier. c. Vigil. 5 stulti omnium ecclesiarum populi qui occurrerunt sanctis reliquis. Yet the development is not exclusively Christian, cf. e.g. 7.7.2 (the Arvernians) audebant se quondam … sanguine ab Iliaco populos computare, and see my comment there.

For figurative orbatus cf. 7.5.1 (ecclesia) viduata pontifice, q.v., and above on truncatus.

excessu, ‘passing away’: Variation again: morte, defectu, excessu, respectively. The word is found twice in the correspondence, but in 4.3.4 it means ‘digression’. The meaning ‘death’ develops in Cicero, strengthened by its context, e.g. Cic. Fin. 3.60 excessum e vita, Tusc. 1.27 excessu vitae. (Notice how Rep. 2.52 post obitum vel potius excessum Romuli still differentiates: ‘the death, or rather the departure, of Romulus.’) It is established from the first century AD, e.g. Sen. Nat. 1.1.3 circa divi Augusti excessum.

tristis intercisae fidei desperatio, ‘a gloomy despair at the disruption of their faith’ (Anderson). Due to the death of their pastors, their belief itself is at stake. This essential theme will be developed in what I have called the Argumentatio A in section 9. Desperatio also in the proverbial Ep. 8.10.2 medicus in desperatione ... cognoscitur.

Section 8

nulla in desolatis cura dioecesibus parochiisque.

cura, ‘administration’, ‘control’, ‘oversight’: Of a bishopric or parish, e.g. Conc. Afr. SL 149 p. 356 l. 39 f. (a bishop should not be absent longer than necessary) rursum placuit ut nemini sit facultas ... curam vel frequentationem proprieae cathedrae negligere, Aug. Ep. 20.3 Divjak ut ... aliquis ordinaretur episcopus, ad quem cura regionis illius pertineret. Cf. e.g. Suet. Vit. 2.4 curam ... imperi sustinuit.

in desolatis ... dioecesibus parochiisque, ‘in the desolate urban dioceses and rural parishes’: Desolatus, ‘deprived of (their bishops)’, in the sense of e.g. Stat. Theb. 9.672 desolatum ...
magistro agmen. At the same time the meaning ‘emptied of its inhabitants’, ‘deserted’, is present, as e.g. Ov. Met. 1.349 vidit ... desolatas agere alta silentia terras, because the hostilities had ravaged the countryside. See Ep. 3.1.4 modo invidiosi huius anguli [= the Auvergne] etiam desolata proprietate potiantur, ‘for the prospect of gaining possession of this coveted corner, even though they [= the Goths] should first lay it waste’ (Anderson).

The nouns dioecesis and parochia were still interchangeable in the fifth and sixth century, for both (episcopal) diocese and (local) parish, before being fixed as, respectively, the province of the bishop and the priest. Only the context decides what is meant. Thus in Ep. 9.16.2 nam peragratis forte dioecesibus cum domum veni, the dioeceses are the rural parishes, and below per rusticas ... parochias, opposed to urbanarum ecclesiaram, the parochiae are the same. For the collocation, cf. e.g. Conc. IV Tolet. (633 AD) Can. 35 episcopum per cunctas dioeceses parochiasque suas per singulos annos ire oportet. In view of this, there is no need to follow Leo (and in his wake Anderson) in ruling out [parochiisquae] as a gloss. See also Engelbrecht 1898: 302.

For the question, see Blaise s.v., Griffe 2: 125 n. 22, HKG 2/1: 239, A. Scheuermann, Diözese: RAC 3: 1053-1063, esp. 1059 ff.

As to the use of grecisms like dioecesis and parochia as t.t., see above on sect. 7 haeresiarchas.

Sidonius goes on to sketch a sombre picture of the consequences of the vacancies in the dioceses. Is it exaggerated? Allowing for a good deal of rhetorical embellishment, and bearing in mind that a certain bias is in Sidonius’ interest to persuade Basilius, it is not. The process of Christianizing the rural populations had started as late as the last decades of the fourth century, and was at its height in the fifth. Its effectiveness and durability depended on the activity of the bishops and their civitates. Consequently the process will have been very uneven and precarious. Without the clergy the countryside was prone to resume its pagan rites. See HKG 2/1: 215 ff.

vides in ecclesiis aut putres culminum lapsus aut valvarum cardinibus avulsis basilicorum aditus hispidorum veprium obstructos.

The ruinous state of a number of churches is also thematized in 4.15.1 siquidem res est grandis exempli eo tempore a vobis nova ecclesiaram culmina strui, quo vix alius auderet vetusta sarcire, ‘it is a great thing that you build new churches at a time when others scarcely dare to shore up old ones’. This letter may have been written as early as ca. 470 (see above on sect. 7 Ruteni).

As time went on, the impact of Visigothic rule made itself felt more and more.

putres, ‘crumbling’, ‘mouldering’, with enallage between culminum and lapsus, conveys the feeling Sidonius had about the hopeless situation in the Auvergne. Compare the way he describes the defences of the town in 7.1.2 ambustam murorum faciem aut putrem sudium cratem. The image of a crumbling sanctuary is well rooted in tradition, e.g. Hor. Ep. 1.10.49 fanum putre Vacuane, Liv. 42.3.7 detractum culmen templo, nudatum tectum patere imbribus putrefaciendum.

Putres lapsus is not elsewhere attested, but we have Lucr. 2.1145 moenia mundi expugnata dabunt labem putrisque ruinas, ‘the home of the world will be seized, crumbling and go to pieces’.
The collapse of roofs is part of the ominous introduction to book 7: 7.1.3 caducas culminum cristas of houses set on fire. Slow decay and immediate destruction go hand in hand to create an oppressive atmosphere.

valvarum cardinibus avulsis, ‘doorhinges wrenched off’: In this phrase Sidonius has his own way with epic models like Verg. A. 2.480 limina perrumpit postisque a cardine vellit, and Stat. Theb. 1.348 (venti) confingunt axemque emoto cardine vellunt.

basilicarum is in a strict sense superfluous, for we already have in ecclesiis. Sidonius is devoted to a rich texture on word level, valuing diversity above exactness. Immediately following the doublet dioecesibus parochisique, rather than creating a technical distinction between basilica (church of the bishop) and other churches (ecclesia), the words paint a scene of total destruction. See General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

The term basilica is used by Sidonius for a range of (larger) churches built by the benefactor Patiens: 6.12.4 omitto per te plurimis locis basilicarum fundamenta consurgere, among which the church on the grave of St. Just in Lyon (2.10.3 vicinantia altari basilicae latera, 5.17.3 capacissima basilica). The memorial church in Tours on St. Martin’s tomb, built by bishop Perpetuus and later restored by Gregory of Tours, is called 4.18.4 basilican sancti pontificis confessorisque Martini.

The way Sidonius writes about the just mentioned church of St. Just in 2.10 is illustrative of the diversity with regard to his choice of words. It is first called ecclesia, then aedes and finally basilica. See Blaise s.v. basilica for its wide applicability, e.g. Avit. Ep. 6 oratoris vel basiliculis privatis.

hispidorum veprium fruticibus obstructos, ‘blocked by the stalks of the rough thorn bushes’: As the churches are not used any more, weeds are teeming. Greg. Tur. Franc. 2.25 (Euric) ipsos sacrorum templorum aditus spinis iusserat obserari, interpreted it as a deliberate action of Euric to prevent the faithful from entering, using ‘barbed wire’.

With hispidorum veprium cf. Verg. G. 3.444 hirsuti ... vepres. Cf. also Cic. Tusc. 5.64 (Cicero discovered the tomb of Archimedes) saeptum undique et vestitum vepribus et dumetis indagavi sepulcrum. Frutex and fruticare are among Sidonius’ lexical favourites, see Gualandri 1979: 100 n. 87.

ipsa, pro dolor, videas armenta non modo semipatentibus iacere vestibulis sed etiam herbosa viridantium altarium latera depasci.

pro dolor, ‘dreadful’, ‘terrible’: It is used by Sidonius at moments of great emotion: 3.12.1 on seeing the threatening violation of his father’s grave, and 7.7.2 when the freedom of Clermont is bartered for the possession of Provence. Cf. 1.6.3 pro pudor.

semipatentibus ... vestibulis, ‘in the half-open vestibules’: Semipatens is a hapax in Latin. Gualandri 1979: 177 discusses the neologism semiplene, and in n. 112 other cases of hapax with semi:- 1.7.9 semipullati, 1.7.4 semifumans, 6.10.1 semiconfecto, Carm. 11.60 semisopora. She argues that rhythm, analogy and structural oppositions influence the choice (and invention) of words.

Semipatentibus vestibulis is an abl. loci. Cf. 1.11.10 primus iacebat cornu sinistro, ‘he occupied the first place at the left end of the couch’.
Vestibulum, ‘forecourt’, ‘entrance’, e.g. Cic. Ver. 2.160 in primo aditu vestibuloque templi, Claud. in Eutrop. (= 18) 201 f. (about Eutropius’ villa) sufixa patenti / vestibulo ... regula, ‘fixed above the open doors of his hall is a list’ (Platnauer). In the case of a church one might also think of the narthex.

**herbosa viridantium altarium latera**, lit. ‘the overgrown sides of the green altars’: Note the enallage. The doubling herbosa viridantium is probably from Ov. Met. 15.573 f. viridique e caespite factus / placat (subj. Cipus) odoratis herbosas ignibus aras, ‘... the grassy altars made of green turf’. Cf. Tr. 5.5.9 ara ... gramineo viridis de caespite fiat, ‘let the altar be green from grassy turf’. For viridantium, see my comment on 7.7.3 viridantia (sc. gramina).

depasci, ‘graze bare’: The altar being cropped is from Verg. A. 5.93 depasta altaria liquit, (subj. serpens), ‘having eaten what was on the altar he left’. For deponens depasci cf. [Tib.] 3.7.128 nec quadrupes densas depascitur aspera silvas, ‘no wild animal grazes in the dense wood’.

sed iam nec per rusticas solum solitudo parochias: ipsa insuper urbanarum ecclesiarum conventicula rarescunt.

**sed iam nec**, ‘but no longer only…’: In the countryside bushes and cattle have entered the ruinous churches, but no longer only the countryside is affected. The towns also begin to suffer from the measures concerning the bishops.

**solitudo**, ‘devastation’: See my comment on 7.1.5 denuntiatae solitudinis minas.

**ipsa insuper**, ‘in addition even’: Cf. e.g. Liv. 23.5.12 hunc (scil. Poenum hostem) natura et moribus inimitem ferumque insuper duas ipse efferavit, ‘the enemy, ferocious by nature, on top of that was spurred on by the general himself’.

**ecclesiarum conventicula rarescunt**, ‘the congregation ...in the churches is becoming sparser’ (Anderson). Fewer people attend mass. Conventiculum is (OLD s.v.) ‘a (small) assembly’ or ‘a place of resort’”. Blaise s.v. ‘réunion de chrétiens’ and ‘église (bâtiment)’. Thus either ‘the number of people attending the services diminishes’ or ‘the church buildings become less crowded’. Rarescere of crowds e.g. Stat. Theb. 2.612 tantam ... dolent rarescere turbam, ‘... the crowd is thinning out’, of places id. Silv. 4.4.14 ardua iam densae rarescunt moenia Romae, ‘already the high blocks of crowded Rome grow empty’.

For ecclesiarum conventicula, cf. Ambr. Apol. Dav. 17.83 et bene ‘Hierusalem muri’ ecclesiarum conventicula, meaning the congregations of the faithful, the local churches all over the world. Cf. Max. Taur. Serm. 39 l. 35 quis enim dubitat ... synagogae esse conventicula vacuata, plebes multiplicatas ecclesiae?, ‘for who doubts that the synagogues are depleted, the churches become crowded?’.

**Section 9**

quid enim fidelibus solacii superest, quando clericalis non modo disciplina verum etiam memoria perit?

**fidelibus**, ‘the faithful’: Fidelis in Sidonius’ correspondence has its Christian meaning ‘believer’, ‘faithful’, three times out of nine, in each case as an object of guidance and pastoral care of the bishops, viz. also 6.12.1 fidelium calamitates indigentiamque miseratus, ‘taking to heart the misery and poverty of the faithful’, 8.15.1 fidelium ... pectoribus infigi viri talis ac tanti.
mores merita virtutes, ‘the character, merits and virtues of that great man should be implanted in the hearts of the faithful’.

solaci, ‘aid’, ‘help’: See my comment on 7.2.7 solacio comitis, and also 7.7.2 solata sunt. Cf. above 8 cura, ‘guidance’. The same connotation is found for verbs like consolari, e.g. 6.12.2 (bishop Patiens sends concrete help) in hoc curae tuae latitudo diffunditur, ut longe positorum consoletur angustias, ‘… overcomes the distress of outsiders’. Cf. 6.2.1 perfectionem vestrae consolationis, ‘the benefit of your assistance’.

clericalis … disciplina, ‘the guidance by the clergy’: For clericalis see Amherdt 2001: 180 ad 4.4.1 militia clericali for other occurrences of the word, and for the predilection of later Latin for the suffix –alis.

The phrase clericalis disciplina is Sidonius’ own invention. The usual phrase is disciplina ecclesiastica or disciplina ecclesiae. Disciplina in this context is ‘authoritative teaching’, ‘doctrine’, and ‘code of conduct’, ‘discipline’, in one. Cf. e.g. Tert. Virg. vel. 9.1 disciplinae ecclesiasticae praescripta, Cypr. Ep. 59.3 ecclesiasticae disciplina aut sacerdotatis … censura, Tert. Uxor. 1.7 disciplina ecclesiae et praescriptio apostoli. For another connotation of disciplina see 7.9.1 decorem disciplinamque.

A similar situation from Sidonius’ own experience, when he, as a future bishop, accompanied Patiens at the consecration of a bishop in Chalon-sur-Saône, was worded by him as follows: 4.25.1 ut municipio summus aliquis antistes ordinaretur, cuius ecclesiae disciplina nutabat, postquam iunior episcopus Paulus discesserat defeceratque. In the absence of a bishop church discipline is at stake.

memoria sc. clericalis, ‘the reminiscence of clerics’: Anderson thinks the meaning of the phrase ‘not very clear’. To me it seems rather straightforward: ‘The faithful are in danger, because not only is there no clergy present to guide them (as in a short interval in case of a vacancy), but also – much worse – the clergy has disappeared altogether from memory (because a vacancy has not been filled for a long time, as is the case here). Loyen incorrectly translates ‘souvenir de cet enseignement’.

perit is followed by a carefully varied series of words describing death: defungitur, moritur, facit terminus … finem, surripiuntur.

equidem cum clericus quisque defungitur, si benedictione succidua non accipiat dignitatis heredem,
equidem, ‘indeed’, ‘to say it pointedly’, announces the formula sacerdotium moritur, non sacerdos, which summarizes and reinforces the preceding analysis.

quisque = aliquis, see my comment on Ep. 7.5.4.

benedictione succidua, ‘by handing on his benediction’ (Anderson): The phrase is differently interpreted. Loyen has: ‘par défaut de la bénédiction épiscopale’. To me Semple’s note ad loc. is perfectly satisfactory: ‘The subject of accipiat is clericus. Succidua = succidaneus = successivus, continuus: “through the carrying on of the episcopal blessing”, i.e. there is no bishop to give his blessing to a new incumbent.’

Sidonius uses succidus two more times, and both times it is about continuity: 7.16.1 sollicitudines ipsas angore succiduo concatenatas, ‘the chain of anxieties which is one continuous
torture to me’ (Anderson), and 8.3.3 perorandi … flumen, quod … domesticum tibi quoque in tuum pecus per succiduas aetates ab atavo Frontone transfunditur, ‘the eloquence … which through successive generations … now flows through your veins’. Cf. e.g. Oros. Hist. 7.34.4 per succiduas usque ad nunc generationes, Alc. Avit. Eutuch.. 2 p. 26 l. 32 in succidua aetate, ‘in the rest of his life’.

Alongside this later use of the word the classical one of ‘giving way under one’, ‘collapsing’, continued to exist, e.g. Cassian. Conl. 9.2.3 effossis succiduis mortuisque ruderibus passionum, ‘after the collapsed and dead ruins of the passions have been excavated’.

in illa ecclesia sacerdotium moritur, non sacerdos.

This pointed statement is confirmed in the next sentence by the near synonymous, and equally pointed, facit terminus hominis finem religionis. The author wants to bring home to his correspondent that the danger is not confined to individual cases, but is structural.

For a similar formulation, cf. Alc. Avit. Ep. 34 p. 65 l. 4 at si papa urbis vocatur in dubium, episcopatus iam videbitur, non episcopus, vacillare. Cf. e.g. Aug. Quant. anim. 34.78 neque peccantes, sed ipsa peccata oderimus.

atque ita quid spei restare pronunties, ubi facit terminus hominis finem religionis?

pronunties, ‘would you say’: Pronuntiare is dear to Sidonius (twenty-five occurrences). Here it means ‘to give as one’s opinion’, cf. e.g. Plin. Nat. 18.204 sunt qui ... pronuntient festinatam sementem saepe decipere. The subjunctive has a potential character: ‘what hope, would you say, remains?’

facit terminus hominis finem religionis, ‘the death of a man implies the death of religion’: Follows up sacerdotium moritur, non sacerdos, in inverse order, from special (hominis) to general (religionis), and transitive (facit finem) instead of intransitive (moritur). This important letter is impeccable, even in its minute details.

altius inspicite spiritualium damna membrorum:

altius inspiciet, ‘have a closer look at’: Altius inspicere is found in later authors only, e.g. Aug. Conf. 12.6 intendi in ipsa corpora eorumque mutabilitatem altius inspexi, ‘I have considered the bodies and paid special attention to their mutability’, Prisc. Gramm. 17.138 p. 177 l. 15 Keil si quis haec (a particular grammatical phenomenon) quoque altius inspiciat. Cf. Plin. Ep. 4.14.5 altissime inspexeram. See Amherdt 2001: 255 ad 4.9.1 penitissime ... inspexi for synonyms.

With these words Sidonius directly and personally addresses Basilius, points out for a second time the disastrous consequences for the congregations of the loss of their priests and bishops, and implicitly engages his responsibility (vobis). It forms a bridge to the second part of the argumentation, taceo etc., which will contain a surprisingly new argument in the same personalized way.

spiritualium damna membrorum, ‘the loss of spiritual members’, meaning the members of the clergy. Bishops and priests who die are not replaced. Thus the heads are severed from the body; the organic structure of the church is torn apart. The author highlights not the losses as such but their consequences, see the following populorum fidel pericitaturum, ‘the belief of the faithful is at stake’.
For *damnum* + gen. obj. ‘damage to’, ‘loss (by death) to’, cf. 4.11.1 *damnum saeculi mei nuper erepto avunculo tuo*, ‘the loss to our time due to the recent death of your uncle’.

*Membra* is also found in 6.1.1 (to bishop Lupus) *tu ... tota ecclesiae dei nostri membra superinspicis*, ‘you supervise all the members of our church’, i.e. lay and clergy alike.

*Spiritalia membra* is reminiscent of the Paulinian image of the church as a spiritual body, 1 Cor. 12.12 *sicut enim corpus unum est et membra habet multa, omnia autem membra corporis cum sint multa, unum corpus sunt: ita et Christus*, ‘for Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which, many as they are, together make up one body’. Cf. Rom. 12.4 and Eph. 5.30. In the same vein Aug. Virg. 2.2 *Maria corporaliter caput huius corporis peperit, ecclesia spiritualiter membra illius capitis parit*, ‘Maria gives corporeal birth to the head of this body (i.e. Christ, head of the church), the church spiritual birth to the members of this head’.

...profecto intellegegetis, quanti surripiuntur episcopi, tantorum vobis populorum fide periclitaturam.

*surripiuntur*, ‘are snatched away’: The manuscript tradition is unclear here: *sub r&et mitis* C (rete Loyen in app.): *sub****mnt* M: surripiuntur F. Loyen and Bellès follow F (see also Loyen 2: liv), Luetjohann conjectured *subrepti sunt*, followed by Mohr and Anderson. Wilamowitz suggested *quantis fueritis privati episcopis*.


*tantorum*, = *tot*, ‘so many’: See my comment on 7.7.3 *tot tantisque*.

*vobis populorum*, ‘your congregations’ or ‘your faithful’: *Vobis* involves the addressee: ‘it is your interest, your responsibility’. Basilius, as peace negotiator, is ultimately responsible for all Catholics in the Visigothic sphere of influence. For this dat. sympatheticus see my comment on 7.3.1 *mihi animus*.

For *populus*, see my comment above on sect. 7 *populos orbatos*.

*fidem periclitaturam*, ‘faith will be endangered’, already found in Tertullian, e.g. *Fug. 2.4 ne tantum diabolo permittedur, ut fides periclitaretur*.

The phrase expresses the same idea as above sect. 7 *populos excessu pontificum orbatos tristis interciscac fidei desperatio premitt*. It constitutes a structural link between the narration and the argumentation.

*taceo vestros Crocum Simpliciumque collegas,*

*taceo*, ‘to say nothing (of the banishment of two of your colleagues)’: Having argued that the situation in the church is critical because dead bishops are not replaced, Sidonius now adds an even more overt intervention by Euric to crown it all, namely the banishment of others. Kaufmann 1995: 209 supposes that their attitude had been anti-Gothic, which kindled Euric’s fear that they would set the people against him. This additional argument, which is all the more effective because it comes as a surprise, is appropriately worded as a praeteritio. The exhaustive and repetitive argumentation up to this point has been more than convincing. One more blow, a kind of aside only, will surely finish off the addressee.
vestros ... collegas, ‘your colleagues’: This type of hyperbaton, with a proper name inserted, occurs already in archaic Latin, cf. Pl. Amph. 1077 tua Bromia ancilla, but remained rare. See LHS 2: 291 and 410. It bears resemblance to 7.9.18 viros Eucherium et Pannychium inlustres – if viros is right, which I doubt, see Mossberg 1934: 49 f. and my comment ad loc. Even without that parallel, hyperbaton is one of Sidonius’ most essential stylistic instruments; see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

For the interpretation of vestros see the next lemma.

Crocum Simpliciumque: Crocus was identified by Sirmond as one of the addressees of the letter of Lucidus (for which see General Introduction, sect. 4.4 The council of Arles in the early 470s, and bishop of Nîmes (note ad loc. PL 58: 572d). Griffe 2: 83, with more restraint, tends to localize his see ‘en Aquitaine ou plutôt en Narbonnaise première’, ‘voisine de la vallée du Rhône’; he cannot have been exiled before the council of Arles (n. 44). Loyen 3: 190 f. n. 29 adds that his banishment will have occurred later than the episcopal election in Bourges and the first skirmishes around Clermont of 471. Duchesne 1: 313 only lists a seventh century namesake in Nîmes. ‘Crocus’ is not in PLRE, and not in Mathisen’s addenda either. The problem of Crocus’ identity remains unresolved, see Heinzelmann 1982: 588 and Kaufmann 1995: 206 n. 627.

Simplicius might be the metropolitan of Bourges whom Sidonius had ordained (see my comment on 7.8.2), but the matter is best left open, for want of reliable material. Sirmond, this time on the safe side, wrote ‘non liquet’. Warmington ad loc. n. 3 denied any possible connection, also with the other men named Simplicius who occur in Sidonius’ letters. Wolfram 1988: 199, uncritically, says: ‘no doubt the metropolitan of Bourges’ – without further proof. Loyen 3: 190 f. n. 29 was ‘tempted’ to identify Simplicius with the bishop of Bourges, ‘mais l’expression vestros collegas est génante’.

Loyen’s embarrassment about vestros is understandable. If they were Basilius’ colleagues, they were Sidonius’ too. We have no information about a special relationship of Basilius with these two men. Supposing there was no such special relationship, the function of vestros is probably the same as that of vobis in the preceding sentence. It serves to try and reduce the impersonal distance which Basilius, as negotiator, might have towards ‘the peace problem’. Sidonius brings home to him, that he is negotiating about people of flesh and blood, ‘your own colleagues’.

quos cathedris sibi traditis eliminatos similis exilii cruciat poena dissimilis.

cathedris, ‘sees’: Cathedra , class. ‘a teacher’s, professor’s chair’, is from the very beginning of Christian prose found as ‘a bishop’s seat’ as well as ‘a bishop’s office’, e.g. Tert. Praescr. 36 percurre ecclesias apostolicas apud quas ipsae adhuc cathedrae apostolorum suis locis praesident, and Cypr. Unit. eccl. 4 l. 99 qui cathedram Petri, super quem fundata ecclesia est, deserit, in ecclesia se esse confidit? In Sidonius we have 7.9.2 cathedrae unius numerosissimos candidatos, 7.9.17 aut cathedris aut tribunalibus praesiderunt, 7.9.24 aut litterarum aut altarium cathedras and 9.11.5 sicut tu antistitum ceterorum cathedris (sc. prior es). In 2.9.4 and 7.9.5 it is simply ‘seat’.

eliminatos, ‘removed’, as in 4.10.1 me soli patrii finibus eliminatum, ‘(hardships wreck) me since I have been banished from my country’. The verb occurs from earliest Latin, e.g. Pompon. Atell. 33 p. 230 Ribbeck eliminabo extra aedis coniugem.
similis ... dissimilis, ‘similar … dissimilar’: They had both been banished, but the character of the banishment was different. For the word play cf. Ep. 2.9.1 (about two villas) dissimilis situs similiter oblectat, 8.6.2 quod mihi quoque, si parva magnis componere licet, ... quamquam dissimillimo similiter accessit. The opposition is of course trivial and frequent, but its conscious and artful use is especially evident in later writers, e.g. Paul. Nol. Carm. 28.162 dissimiles similis ... in aggere labes, and, amounting to a paradox, Aug. Ep. 169.2 similitudo dissimilis. See General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

cruciat poena, ‘are suffering punishment’: The collocation is found since Ov. Her. 14.119 en, ego, quod vivis, poenae crucianda reservor, ‘...I am exposed to punishment, to be tormented’. It is the only example in Sidonius, but see variants like 3.4.2 poenis plectamur, 4.23.2 inaudita genera poenarum ... excipere, 5.19.2 ne constringat poena raptorem.

Note the chiasmus, which prepares us for the clever phrasing in the next sentence. With that, the argumentatio comes to an end.

namque unus ipsorum dolet se non videre quo redeat; alter se dolet videre quo non redit.

‘One of them laments that he does not know where to return; the other laments that he sees, but is not allowed to.’

namque, ‘for’: For namque as an alternative to nam, see my comment on 7.1.1 namque. In cases like this one, when preceding a word beginning with a vowel, namque is generally preferred for euphonic reasons.

non videre quo redeat ... videre quo non redit: There is a traductio of videre here: from ‘to know’ to ‘to see’. For the use of videre with subordinate interrogative clause, ‘to know’, ‘understand’ (compare OLD 14c), cf. e.g. Cic. Fam. 9.6.2 quod ego cur nolim nihil video, ‘I see no reason why I should not want that’, Quint. Inst. 9.4.110 quid ita placuerit his non video, ‘I do not understand what so pleased them’. Redeat is oratio obliqua for ‘quo redeam?’. For the first mentioned bishop the way back was impossible, even if he would have been allowed to. One may think of inner dissensions or devastations by the war. The second theoretically could return, but was not allowed to. Quo non redit would be in full: quo ei redire non licet. Clarity is sacrificed to the love of pointed contrasts.

Commentators have proposed different solutions. Anderson explained: ‘The one had been banished far away, the other could still view his old diocese.’ Both Anderson and Loyen translated redeat ‘to which he would fain return’, ‘où il voudrait revenir’. In fact, as oratio obliqua for ‘utinam redeam’, which is grammatically doubtful. Bellès refined this: ‘One was banished far from his town, the other was allowed to remain in his diocese, but forbidden to exercise his duties.’ Especially the latter seems questionable (quo non redit = ‘he is forbidden to exercise his duties?’). Unlike these scholars, I think that the opposition is not about distance, but about the possibility to return at all, which is much more forceful and dramatic, and grammatically correct to boot.

tu sacratissimorum pontificum, Leontii, Fausti, Graeci, urbe, ordine, caritate medius inveniris;

sacratissimorum, ‘most holy’: For the adjective as a title of bishops, see my comment on 7.1.6 sacrosanctae informationis; the superlative, probably on account of the special position of these three. In 9.9.1 Sidonius addresses Faustus with vir sacratissime. Here is the epicentre of the transactions!

Leontius was bishop of Arles since ca. 461 AD. Letter 6.3 is addressed to him. See Duchesne 1: 257, Kaufmann 1995: 318 ff. # 61.

Faustus had been abbot of Lérins, and was bishop of Riez since ca. 460. He was banished not long after the peace treaty of 475. The letters 9.3 and 9.9, and Carm. 16 are addressed to him. See Duchesne 1: 284, Kaufmann 1995: 304 ff. # 41.

Graecus was bishop of Marseille since 464 or later. The letters 6.8, 7.2, 7.7, 7.11 and 9.4 are addressed to him. See Duchesne 1: 274, Kaufmann 1995: 312 f. # 50, and the Introduction to letter 2, ch. ‘Addressee’.

urbe, ‘as regards your town’: Aix is closest to Marseille, Arles and Riez, and for that reason possibly the see which Basilius held. See the Introduction, ch. ‘Addressee’.

ordine, ‘seniority’: The informal ranking between bishops was based, partly, on their length of service. In his letter to Leontius (6.3.1) Sidonius speaks of the edge Leontius has on him tempore dignitatis, privilegio loci, ‘by your length of service and the precedence of your see’. Compare also the veneration for the senior bishop Lupus on account of his in apostolica sede novem iam decursa quinquennia, ‘forty-five years of service as a bishop’ (6.1.3). See Mathisen 1990 on episcopal hierarchy, and my comment on 7.5.4 honoris vestri praerogativam.

caritate, ‘solidarity’: Because of the ties of amicitia. Caritas is akin to amor for close bonds in relations, see Hellegouarc’h 1963: 147 ff.

The three nouns have an increasing length of 2, 3 and 4 syllables; see my comment on 7.1.2 propugnacula, and 7.2.7 solus tenuis peregrinus.

medius inveniris, ‘you are in the midst of’, ‘you are on par with’, or even ‘you occupy a key position amidst’. TLL 8: 596.25 ‘fere i.q. consors’. The idea is that Basilius functions close to, on a level with, and with a grip on these most influential bishops.

Inveniri, ‘to find oneself’, ‘to be’, cf. e.g. Tert. Apol. 31.3 et nos ... in aliquo loco casus invenimur, (if the empire is endangered) ‘we also find ourselves in danger, one way or the other’.

The collocation medius inveniri is unique.

per vos mala foederum currunt, per vos regni utriusque pacta condicioesque portantur.

mala foederum, ‘the troubles caused by the treaty’: For mala + gen. in this way, cf. e.g. Liv. 34.41 ludicrum Nemeorum ... propter belli mala praetermissum, ‘the Nemean games were skipped because of the troubles of war’, and Ennod. Ep. 2.10.4 inter quaevis ... adversariorum mala gaudere, ‘to remain optimistic in spite of the damage caused by our opponents’.

Section 10
The plural *foederum* is employed for stylistic reasons, to balance the plurals in the ensuing clause. Together they describe the manifold intricacies of the situation. For this technique, cf. 5.12.2 *etsi non per foederum veritatem, saltim per indutiarum imaginem*, ‘not the reality of a treaty, but at least the ghost of a truce’ (Anderson), and 9.3.2 *foedera ... regnorum*, with the formal balance between the plurals *foedera* and *condiciones*. Below, with *ex foedere*, the same treaty is meant, this time in the singular, because of the parallel with *ex fide*. See the General Introduction, sect. 6.2 *Style*.

Different translators have proposed slightly different solutions. Dalton has: ‘these miserable treaties’ (also Stevens 1933: 159), Anderson: ‘the unfortunate treaties’, Loyen: ‘les rigueurs (= inexorability, constraint) des traités’, Bellès: ‘els perjudicis (= damage, harm) dels tractats’. All are negligent as to the exact event meant by *foederum*.

**per ... currunt**, ‘go via’, ‘are controlled by’: For this later, and not so common, figurative meaning see TLL 4/2: 1517.20 ff. and 1518.78 ff., e.g. Lucif. *Ep.* 7 p. 329, 23 *fides per successionem tantorum episcoporum cucurrit*, ‘faith was passed on through the succession of so many bishops’. In fact, the verb is nowhere else applied with precisely the same notion of plenipotentiary negotiators or other decision makers. Cf. infra *portantur*, 7.7.4 *per vos legationes meant*.

**regni utriusque**, ‘both states’: I.e. the Roman empire and the Visigothic kingdom. The phrase has caused a lot of speculation as to the partners: Visigoths and Odoacer? Visigoths and Burgundians? Visigoths and Romans? See Kaufmann 1995: 206 n. 630. The word *regnum* is not used to indicate the Roman empire in the letters, with the possible exception of 9.3.2 *foedera ... regnorum* (see Harries 1994: 175 n. 24). But it certainly is in the poems (e.g. *Carm.* 2.21, 5.5 and 11; see Stevens 1933: 207 n. 6). For ample evidence in other authors, see Fanning 1992. Thus, there is no problem in taking the phrase to refer to Visigoths and Romans.

**pacta**, ‘agreements’: Sidonius uses the word once more in the correspondence, 4.22.3, to Euric’s secretary Leo, who, he says, as an insider knows the *pacta regnantum*, ‘the treaties of sovereigns’. Note the similarity to *regni .. pacta*, an example of variation technique, for which see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 *Style*.

**portantur**, ‘circulate’: It is the usual verb for the delivering of letters, messages, requests and orders, e.g. Sil. 2.2 (the ship) *portabat iussa senatus*. It is not found elsewhere in this way, with *per*. The construction is determined by the parallelism with the first part of the sentence.

Now follows the essence of the Petitio, one penetrating sentence only, prepared by a host of arguments, a fair amount of emotion, and a lot of compliments. ‘Do your best to obtain the right of ordaining bishops. Be it that we no longer have political control in Visigothic territory, let us at least continue to decide on people’s belief.’ The *foedus* puts an end to Roman supremacy, the *fides* will hopefully remain Catholic.

**agite, quatenus haec sit amicitiae concordia principalis**, ‘Please, see to it that the essential point of the agreement in the alliance is the following: …’

The textual discussion is: *amicitia concordia principalis* codd.: *amicitiae* Luetjohann, Mohr, Anderson, Loyen, Bellès: *amicitia, concordia principali* Mommsen: *amicitiae et concordiae <condicio> principalis* coni. Anderson. I follow Luetjohann’s slight emendation which makes perfect sense, although the Latin is not easy to account for.
Nowhere else does Sidonius apply amicitia in the political sense to a treaty between states or rulers. It is without exception the term for the relationship within networks of individuals. But in Carn. 7.511 he makes the Visigothic king Theodoric say to the emperor Avitus: Romae sum te duce amicus, ‘with you as leader I am an ally of Rome’. Nor is amicitia the usual designation of the relations between Rome and the Goths in other authors (foedus predominates), with some exceptions, like Amm. 27. 5.1 (about the Goths) gens amica Romanis foederibusque longae pacis obstricta, and several times in Jordanes, e.g. Get. 271 sed statim imperator animo mutato ad pristinam recurrit amicitiam (viz. with the Goths). In Ennod. Opusc. 3. 88, in the description of the build-up to the peace negotiations with which we are concerned here, bishop Epiphanius, acting on behalf of the emperor Nepos, rounds off his offer of peace in the presence of king Euric by saying that the emperor is not averse to being called his amicus, though actually he is his dominus: sufficiat, quod elegit [sc. Nepos] aut certe patitur amicus dici, qui meruit dominus appellari. Perhaps we may conclude that the word amicitia served as a keyword in the peace talks. For amicitia, see TLL 1: 1893.71 ff. ‘de publica populorum (regum) coniunctione (societas, concordia, pax)’.

Concordia indicates the agreement reached between the negotiators and Euric in the letter following this one, 7.7.5 quapropter vel consilio, quo potestis, statum concordiae tam turpis incidite, ‘put an end to this disgraceful agreement’. The experienced envoy Epiphanius was the concordiae auctor par excellence; see Gillett 2003: 165 in his chapter on the saint’s Life by Ennodius (pp. 148-71). Usually amicitia and concordia are treated as near-synonyms and construed parallel to each other, e.g. Cic. Amic. 23 id si minus intellegitur, quanta vis amicitiae concordiaeque sit, but for amicitiae concordia cf. Hil. in Psalm. 118 ain 4 p. 150 l. 8 iustitia etenim est amicitiae concordia, unanimitatis vinculum, fundamentum pacis, ‘justice is the cement of friendship …’, cf. lord. Get. 296 sed non adeo ad pacis concordiam profuit ista coniunctio, ‘… a stable peace’.

For principalis as ‘main’ in Sidonius, cf. 1.5.5 ab alveo principali, ‘from the main riverbed’. Cf. 7.4.1 principalitas ... beneficii, ‘the height of privilege’, with my comment. More often it is ‘leading’, ‘outstanding’, e.g. 1.7.4 inter principalia patriae nostrae decora, ‘among the leading talents of our country’, 4.1.1 inter nos summa et principalis necessitudo, ‘the truly superb friendship between us’, or ‘imperial’, e.g. 8.7.2 ad trutinam iudicii principalis appensa, ‘put on the scales of the emperor’s judgement’. Dalton interpreted it in this way, and translated: ‘Do your best, as far as the royal condescension suffers you, …’ Principalis, though, can be said of the emperor, but surely not of the rex Euric. For the phrase concordia principalis, cf. Alc. Avit. Ep. 2.34 quapropter reddite nobis principalem, si tamen necdum est restituta, concordiam. Shanzer and Wood 2002: 162 translate it as follows: ‘Therefore, if you have not already done so, give back to us peace for our leader (i.e. the pope)’, whereas one might also advocate: ‘this essential peace’.

quatenus + final subjunctive, ‘so that’, is later Latin, since the second century, see LHS 2: 656. In Sidonius 3.7.2 mementoque viatorum manus gravare chartis, quatenus amicorum cura relevetur, ‘take care to load the arms of travellers with despatches, so that the cares of your friends may be lightened’ (Anderson), 8.11.4 adstruebamusque meliora, quatenus in pectore viri iracundia regnans ... emacularetur, ‘I gave a more favourable interpretation, in order that the anger which dominated the man’s heart might be excused’, 8.15.2 dabitur ... precatui tuo et meritis antistitis summi, quatenus ... famulemur, ‘my answer to your request and to the merits of the great bishop will be that I devote myself’. For agere quatenus = agere ut, cf. e.g. Greg. M. Ep.
9.29 l. 12 magis autem id agas quatenus de fide et industria tua divinae possis gratiae commendari, ‘and even more important, aim to be commendable to the divine grace on account of your faith and diligence’.

populos Galliarum, quos limes Gothicae sortis incluserit

*populos*, ‘the people’ or ‘the peoples’: The third, and last, time for this word to appear in the letter, always in relation to their *fides* which is at stake: 7 *populos* ... *tristis intercisae fidei desperatio premit*, 9 *populorum fidem periclitaturam*. The author’s political attitude in this letter is shown from its pastoral side.

*Gothicae sortis*, ‘Gothic share’, ‘Gothic territory’: On the very vexed problem of the Visigothic *sortes* (shares in land or in tax revenue?) see Jiménez Garnica 1999, who on p. 103 discusses our phrase, and General Introduction, sect. 3.1 *Visigoths and Burgundians*.

The essence of the Visigothic problem, to Roman eyes, was that they refused to be *foederati* any longer, and moved the *limes* of their *sors* beyond what had been agreed in 418/9, a movement which was turned by Euric into the creation of a new, independent Visigothic kingdom. Cf. 8.3.3 (to Euric’s secretary Leo about the king who establishes his power) *per promotae limitem sortis*, ‘by moving the frontier of his territory’, and above sect. 4 *Evarix* ..., *quod limitem regni sui rupto dissolutoque foedere antiquo ... promovet*.

teneamus ex fide, etsi non tenemus ex foedere

The letter ends on the pair of words, *fides* and *foedus*, that has proved to be thematic in it. *Fides* was introduced in sect. 3 where Sidonius’ own religious zeal was questioned by an opponent. Then it functioned in 7 and 9 (and now in 10) in relation to the crisis of faith in the communities. *Foedus*, as the *condicio sine qua non* of stability and Catholic ecclesiastical structures, was found in sect. 4, with Euric breaking the original agreement with the Romans, and now in 10 is again introduced, focused on the new, decisive treaty being negotiated.

*ex fide*, ‘by virtue of faith’: The meaning ‘faith’, ‘religion’, is prepared by what has preceded, but there is a word play on *ex fide*’s usual, juridical connotation, ‘in good faith’, cf. e.g. *Dig*. 17.1.60.4 *res ex fide agenda*, 40 5.37 *rationem ... ex fide reddat*. This is in nice opposition to *ex foedere*, ‘on the basis of a treaty’. A great deal of sarcasm goes with it, because what a *foedus* presupposes is essentially *fides*; see above on sect. 4 *rupto dissolutoque foedere antiquo*.

For the same kind of bargaining see the next letter, 7.7.6 *saltem hoc efficite ... ut sanguis vivat, quorum est moritura libertas*, ‘at least secure that our lives are spared whose liberty will die’. Letter 7 goes one step further. It pleads for the life of the people, no longer only for their conscience.