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

van Waarden, J.A.

Citation for published version (APA):
Letter 8

‘Rallying for Support’

Introduction

1 Overview

Sidonius has been working on the problem of steering the episcopal election in Bourges in the right direction. Evidently, he has reached his goal, for in this letter he is able to announce ‘the favourite of the *populus Biturix*’ – his own in the first place, the local grandee Simplicius (sect. 2). For the final decision a committee of bishops, including a metropolitan, is required. Because of the lack of *comprovinciales* proper, due to the war, Sidonius invites some colleagues from contiguous provinces to advise and assist him. The metropolitan Agroecius of Sens has been called upon at a slightly earlier stage, and in all probability has turned up (see letter 5). Now it is Euphronius’ turn to give counsel, if not in person then from a distance. Sidonius much admires his senior colleague from Autun, with whom he is united in the veneration for St Martin. He politely indicates the escape route of sending a written consent, if coming in person should be problematic (see below, sect. 4 *litterisque*). In the next letter, letter 9, we shall meet another metropolitan, Perpetuus of Tours, who is informed after Sidonius has announced his decision and addressed the community of Bourges.

For detailed information on the procedures regarding the election of a bishop, see the Introduction to letter 5, section 4 *The election and consecration of bishops*.

2 Position

The traditional order of the letters in book 7 makes it plausible that the letters 6 and 7, about the disaster of the Gallican church and of Clermont, were deliberately set in a frame by the author, which 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, par. 5.2.2 *Order of book 7, letters 1-11*.

3 Addressee

With this letter, as with no 5 to the metropolitan of Sens, and 9 to the one of Tours, we find ourselves in the circle of Sidonius’ northern connections.

The addressee is Euphronius, bishop of Augustodunum (now Autun, dept. Saône-et-Loire in present-day Burgundy), the second most important town of Lugdunensis I, after Lyon. Euphronius had first been a presbyter in the same town, and had become its bishop in 451 AD. The year is recorded in *Chronica Gallica* 616 (*Chron. min.* 1: 663) as the year of his death, but it is generally agreed that it is the year of his ordination.

Having built a church for the local martyr Symphorianus when still a presbyter, as a bishop he stood out for his veneration for St Martin of Tours (d. 397 AD). When bishop Perpetuus of Tours (the addressee of the next letter) ca. 470 built a larger basilica over the tomb of the saint, Euphronius sent a sculptured tablet of marble to cover the tomb (*cum grandi devotione,*
cf. Greg. Tur. Franc. 2.15). Perpetuus had also invited Sidonius to write a poetical tribute for its walls (as he had Paulinus of Périgueux). Sidonius came up with Carm. 31 (published in Ep. 4.18.5). Thus, the addressees of the letters 8 and 9 are associated with Sidonius in the promotion of the cult of St Martin. See General Introduction, par. 5.4.3 The structure and meaning of book 7. See also the Introduction to 7.9, section 3 Addressee.

Together with Patiens of Lyon, Euphronius supervised the tumultuous election of a bishop in Chalon-sur-Saône, ca. 469-70. Sidonius was present at the occasion and admiringly describes it to Domnulus in Ep. 4.25. He calls Euphronius one of his ‘fathers and patrons’, patrum vel patronorum (sect. 4), and compliments him on his magisterial conduct: fecit Euphronius quod conveniret non senectutis modo suae verum etiam dignitatis longaeavitati, ‘Euphronius acted as befitted his advanced age but also his long term in office’.

Ep. 9.2 (Loyen ‘vers 471’) is also addressed to him. He had asked Sidonius – ceremoniously or not - to write a biblical commentary, which the latter politely refused.

Like 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 Basilius of Aix (Ep. 7.6), he was present ca. 470/75 at the synod of Arles which condemned the views of the presbyter Lucidus. He countersigned the letter which formulated the theological objections to Lucidus. In the list of addressees of Lucidus’ retractatio, he figures first, together with Leontius of Arles who had organized the meeting. This does justice to his exceptional standing – without being a metropolitan – as a senior in office. See General Introduction, sect. 4.4 The council of Arles in the early 470s.

A short letter has been preserved which he wrote 453 AD together with Lupus of Troyes concerning the Christian holy days and married clerics (Conc. Gall. 1: 140 f.). The terminus post quem for his death is the council of Arles, or possibly the publication of the current letter, about 477 AD. At that time, he had held the episcopal office for no fewer than 25 years.


4 Date

According to Loyen, the letter was written in Clermont or Bourges, end of 470 or beginning of 471 AD. For further detail, see the introduction to letter 5, ch. ‘Date’, where I argue for the spring and summer of 470. I think letter 8 is later than letter 5, because Sidonius now apparently has made up his mind as to the right candidate (see sect. 2: ‘Bourges wants Simplicius for its bishop’). The letter was written in Bourges, rather than in Clermont, for it is improbable that Sidonius went all the way back to Clermont between his consultation in Bourges and the final speech in which he made his decision known to the community (letter 9, contio).

5 Manuscripts

The letter is found in all the relevant manuscripts.
6 ‘You’ and ‘I’

At first, Euphronius is referred to in the singular: (sect. 1) coronam tuam, e tractatu tuo, consilii tui, (sect. 2) expedias, decernas, es, voles, debes. Then, in sect. 3, there is a sudden change to the plural, scitote. In sect. 4 we find ex vestro nutu, followed again by evocandum te. The change from the singular to scitote and ex vestro nutu at first sight seems arbitrary. It would be somewhat contrived to postulate the meaning ‘you and your advisers’ for scitote, and concerning ex vestro nutu, it is Euphronius, and he alone, who decides on the candidature. Nevertheless, there may be an explanation. The letter on the whole relies on a combination of two approaches to win the addressee over: indirect, ceremonious circumlocutions and comparisons, plus a very direct tu. Almost imperceptibly, the cautious vos is inserted at two important moments: the start of the furnishing of proof, and the start of the final request.

In a similar way, the first persons singular and plural for the sender vary. On the whole it is the direct ego we find, but at the end modest nos creeps in: desipimus, decerneremus (sect. 4). Sidonius retires into the background, to let Euphronius come to the fore. Nobis (sect. 1) is inclusive (sender and addressee).

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 Euphronius, bishop of Autun.

Sect. 1: ‘Unfortunately, we reside at too great a distance from each other, and I have scarcely time to spare. It would be such a boon to be able to consult you frequently and in depth. You would be like fresh water to clear the muddy waters I’m in, due to my lack of experience.’

Sect. 2 - 3: ‘I limit myself to asking advice on just one point. The community of Bourges wants to have Simplicius for its bishop. Please, tell me what I should do. I hear a lot of good about this Simplicius, and from the right people. At first I thought they might be biased, but then I realized that I did not hear criticism either, not even from his Arian opponents. Therefore my conclusion is that he is the perfect candidate.’

Sect. 4: ‘I have already gone too far by suggesting all this to you. If I ask you to come or, at least, to write, it is precisely because I hope you will decide the matter for Bourges. Your wish will be our command.’

Fernández López 1994: 124 assigns this letter to subcategory 3.2.3.1 Ecclesiastical salutatio publica with a request for help, like 7.1, 7.5, and 7.6, and analyses it on pp. 125 ff. For her method, see General Introduction, sect. 5.3 Classification and analysis.
Commentary

Section 1

Quandoquidem me clericalis officii vincula ligant,

quandoquidem, ‘since’: This four-syllable opening word catches the ear. Twenty-one letters (14%) begin with a word consisting of four or more syllables. For some of these the length of the word may be called meaningful, like maestissimus (2.8 in which Sidonius announces the death of a beloved person) or spoponderam (8.16 which is about the fulfilment of the promise of the dedication of book 8). Quandoquidem is the only conjunction in this range; it is a colloquial element in comedy, found a number of times in Cicero’s theoretical writings, and often encountered in Lucretius, especially in verse beginnings, and from the first century AD onwards it is seen more and more, depending on an author’s taste. Among the frequent users are Ambrose and Augustine, and Sidonius is also fond of it (ten occurrences).

me clericalis officii vincula ligant, ‘the duties of my clerical office tie me to the spot’:

Sidonius argues that he is so steeped in work, that he cannot afford to travel. As a recently elected bishop (iuventutem) he has to cope with the problems as best he can. It would be convenient if his experienced colleague Euphronius lived nearby, and could be consulted in person as well as frequently. As this is not the case (sect. 2), Sidonius, instead, sends a written request for advice on the special question of Bourges.

For clericalis, cf. e.g. 7.2.3 militia ... in clericali, ‘in an ecclesiastical career’. Officium is one of several synonyms which in Sidonius designate the office of a bishop: militia, ministerium, professio. Cf. 4.22.5 per homines clericalis officii. Officii vincula is attested only one more time, in Aug. Ep. 228.4 verum est ... his, quos ecclesiastici officii non tenent vincula, ‘this is valid for those who are not bound by the commitments of a clerical office’. Ordinary people may flee because of the menace of persecution, but clerics must stay and be available. As he had said earlier in the same letter (sect. 1): ministerii nostri vincula, quibus nos Christi caritas alligavit, ne deseramus ecclesias, quibus servire debemus, non esse rumpenda, ‘the duties of our office, wherewith the love of Christ has bound us, not to leave our churches alone …’. The obligation for clerics to be available was formalized in the prohibition to travel without the permission of their superiors (for which see my comment on 7.2.1 litteras meas ad formatae vicem). For ligare in this context, see TLL 7/2: 1393.57 ff. ‘lege, religione, sacramento sim.’

This excuse is a variant of the topos which expresses the hope to meet the distant correspondent, a meeting which is substituted with the letter in question. See Cugusi 1983: 77 and General Introduction, par. 5.1.2 Epistolary characteristics.

felicissimum mediocratis meae statum pronuntiarem,

mediocratis meae statum, ‘the position of my mediocre self’: Mediocritas is found four times in the correspondence, also 4.22.4 mediocritas, 6.3.1 nostra mediocritas, 7.9.6 mediocritatem meam. The epistolary topos of self-denigration is reinforced by the Christian command of meekness and humility. See Amherdt 2001: 347 f. ad 4.14.3 humilitas nostrae professionis, said by Sidonius of his own episcopal office. The phrase mediocritas mea already Cypr. Ep. 20.1.2 quominus ... fratribus nostris ... mea mediocritate consulerem. See O’Brien 1930: 74 f. See my
comment on 7.4.1 a me peccatore digressis, and 7.6.1 quamquam praesumptiose arroganterque loquar.

Status, accompanied by a noun in the genitive, is sometimes little more than a paraphrase of that noun. See my comment on 7.1.3 statu urbis exinanito.

pronuntiare, ‘I would call’: For pronuntiare ‘to declare’ (since Pliny the Elder, then in Apuleius), here weakened ‘to call’, see also my comment on 7.6.9 pronunties.

si nobis haberentur quam territoria vicina tam moenia.

si, ‘if’: The hypothetical circumstances under which a meeting in person could be realized, are often expressed in this type of conditional clause, e.g. Ep. 2.11.1 si nobis pro situ spatiiisque regionum vicinarentur, ‘if we were neighbours when it comes to residence and distance’, 4.2.1 si possibile factu esset, 4.4.2 si per statum publicum liceat. For this variation technique, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

haberentur, ‘found themselves’, ‘were’: For haberi/se habere/habere, ‘to find oneself’, ‘be’, see TLL 6/3: 2460, 37 ff., cf. e.g. Greg. Tur. Franc. 2.14 basilicam ... quae habetur a civitate passus DL, ‘the church which is half a mile from the town’. It is well attested from the third century onward, and is prepared by cases like Tac. Ann. 14.3 (Agrippina) ubicumque haberetur, ‘wherever she was lodged’, ‘... sojourned’. Informative for the further development of habet, ‘il y a’, is Löfstedt 1911: 43 f. Sidonius himself does not use the verb in this way again.

quam territoria vicina tam moenia, ‘our towns as near to each other as our dioceses’: The ancient dioceses of Clermont and Autun bordered on one another, whereas the towns are at a distance of 200 kms. The excuse is topical. For Agroecius it was no problem to come from Sens to Bourges (see 7.5.4 vestras invitare personas, and 7.9.6 coram sacrosancto et pontificatu maximo dignissimo papa), Sidonius travelled from Clermont to Bourges – all distances of the same length, as, for that matter, the distance from Autun to Bourges.

Territorium of the diocese of the bishop, is found one more time in the correspondence, Ep. 6.1.1 in vestrum territorium (bishop Censorius of Auxerre), and is the usual t.t., e.g. Conc. Gall. 1: 119 l. 79 in alicuius episcopi territorio.

de minimis videlicet rebus coronam tuam maximisque consulerem

de minimis ... rebus ... maximisque consulerem, ‘I would consult with you on the most trivial and the most important matters’: With this choice of words, the author depicts himself as the classic seeker of wisdom. Such a man consults the truly wise on matters small and large, cf. Sen. Dial. 10.15.2 (the man who lives under the patronage of the wise) habebit, cum quibus de minimis maximisque rebus deliberet, quos de se cotidie consulat, a quibus audiat verum sine contumelia, laudetur sine adulatione, ad quorum se similitudinem effingat, ‘he can confer with them on matters small and large, consult them daily about himself, hear the truth from them without reproach, be praised without flattering, mould himself on their example’.

For minimis ... maximis, cf. also Ps.-Sall. Ep. 2.7.12 (the democracy in the Greek poleis) ubi promiscue dives et pauper ... de maximis rebus iuxta ac de minimis disceptat.

coronam tuam, ‘your Excellency’, in Sidonius also Ep. 6.3.2 auctoritas coronae tuae (to bishop Leontius). It corresponds to mediocratitiae meae in the previous sentence. It is applied to popes and bishops. See O’Brien 1930: 5 f. and General Introduction, par. 5.5.3 Modes of address. A
crown or diadem distinguished any official or priest, cf. e.g. Gel. 7.7.8 cuius sacerdotii (sc. fratrum Arvalium) insigne est spica corona et aliae infilae; hence its metonymical use for Christian prelates. It is first attested as a form of address in the third quarter of the fourth century, in Priscill. Tract. 2 p. 38 l. 6 (to pope Damasus) haec ideo apud venerabilem coronam tuam dicimus, ‘I say this openly before your Excellency’. Among early examples, cf. also Paul. Nol. Ep. 3.3 ad venerabilem socium coronae tuae … ita scripsimus, and Hier. Ep. 142 precor coronam tuam. See TLL 4: 983.72 ff. and 984.33 ff.

Anderson (note on 6.3.2), and in his wake Loyen and Bellès, interpreted corona as the tonsure, the ‘clerical crown’. This usage, however, is not attested before the sixth century, e.g. Greg. Tur. Vit. patr. 17.1 l. 14 coronam clerici. For hair in general, cf. Drac. Laud. Dei 3.699 scaena capillorum fundens a fronte coronam, ‘a head of hair spreading on the forehead like a crown’.

fieretque actionum mearum quasi cuiuspiam fluvii placidus cursus atque inoffensus,

Sidonius compares what he would do to a river. It would move calmly and smoothly if its source were Euphronius. No foam, no eddies, no mud, no rapids. Any turbidity would be cleared by his correspondent’s influx.

The passage is highlighted by Gualandri 1979: 108 as an example of Sidonius’ predilection for detailed metaphors. She points out their almost mechanical character, and the fact that they leave nothing to the reader’s imagination. Richly elaborated, they display a great lexical variety.

Let us investigate the metaphor in more detail. We have for the rivers fluvius, fons and vena, for their flowing and intermingling cursus, manare and admixta diluere, for the river’s calmness placidus and inoffensus (thanks to the saluberrimus source), for its roughness spumosus, turbidus, caenosus and praeceps, for its turbidity squalidus, putris and sordere. Note that, against two adjectives that denote positive qualities of Sidonius’ river, we have no fewer than six negative ones. Apart from the usual self-depreciation the author is keen on treating the reader to some impressive wild water rhetoric. All the while the reader is not left in any doubt as to the meaning of the metaphor and its components: the river is Sidonius’ actiones, the source Euphronius’ tractatus, the wild water Sidonius’ iactantia, superbia, conscientia and iuventus, the healthy influx, finally, Euphronius’ consilium.

The metaphor of the river is more often applied to eloquence, a stream of words, copious diction, correspondence, cf. e.g. what Sidonius writes to his friend, the priest Claudianus Mamertus, in 4.3.10 delicti huius mihi gratiam facias, quod aliquantisper mei meminens arenem venulam rarius flumino tuo misceo, ‘be indulgent to this my shortcoming, that remembering what I am I have for some time past only rarely mingled my parched rill with your stream’ (Anderson). The joining of the two streams represents the contact (by letter in this case) between both correspondents. See also the discussion ad loc. by Amherdt 2001: 161 f., and such examples as 8.3.3 perorandi ... flumen and 9.7.2 flumen in verbis.

For the use of metaphors in Sidonius, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

actionum mearum ... cursus, ‘the course of my actions’: Actionum cursus is not elsewhere developed into a full-blown metaphor, but does occur in Cic. (Caelius) Fam. 8.11.2 (Curionem) de suarum actionum cursu tua causa defexit, ‘your interest diverted him from his own plans’,

---

Letter 8 - Section 1 318
Prosp. Sent. 75 ut vinculis mortalitatis omnis humanarum actionum cursus praepediretur, ‘so that the course of human affairs was interrupted by the constraint of death’.

placidus ... atque inoffensus, ‘calm and unhampered’: Concerning the reading placidus, the manuscripts are divided: placidus LNR: placidissimus N'MCTF. Modern editors all prefer placidus, no doubt on account of the quality of especially L and N. One might further adduce the argument that the lowly stature of the author is best defined by means of the positivus placidus, presently to be exceeded by the superlativus saluberrimus of the addressee. If one looks for parallels, however, placidissimus would also be perfectly acceptable, cf. Prud. Perist. 7.26 f. (about a river) placidissimo / ... vertice.

For inoffensus, ‘moving without an obstruction’, ‘smooth’, of the movement of water, cf. Verg. A. 10.292 sed mare inoffensum crescenti adlabitur aestu; of the course of the stars, Sen. Her. F. 928 f. astra inoffensos agant / aeterna cursus; and of looking through limpid water, Claud. Rapt. Pros. 2.115 f. late perius umor / ducit inoffensos liquido sub flumine visus. In Sidonius’ correspondence it is found one more time: Ep. 9.7.3 quaeque lectoris linguam inoffensam decenter expediat, of smooth reading, without harsh word connections.

quasi cuiuspiam fluvii, ‘like some river’: The archaic quispiam is often used by Sidonius. See my comment on 7.2.2 quispiam dignus relator.

si e tractatu tuo veluti ex saluberrimo fonte manaret.  
tractatu, ‘advice’: See my comment on 7.6.6 tractatum consiliorumque successum.

veluti, ‘as it were’: For the pair veluti – velut, see my comment on 7.3.1 sicuti iniungis.

ex saluberrimo fonte, ‘from a most wholesome source’: The metaphor is met also in Ven. Fort. Carm. 5.2.49 f. cuius vox refluens plebi de fonte salubri / ut bibat aure fidem, porrigit ore salem, ‘whose voice, welling up from a wholesome source, gives the people faith to drink with their ears, and hearty food for their mouths’. As healthy water is of course of prime importance, the collocation is originally found in building regulations, like Vitr. 1.2.7 si primum omnibus templis saluberrimae regiones aquarumque fontes in is locis idonei eligentur, in quibus fana constituantur (for cultic reasons), and e fontibus salubribus aurum usus, ‘water supply from wholesome sources’ (for ‘hospitals’); cf. Liv. 42.54.11 ad has opportunitates accedit somma salubritas et copia, pluribus circumiectis fontibus, perennium aquarum.

procul dubio tunc ille non esset aut spumosus per iactantiam aut turbidus per superbiam aut caenosus per conscientiam aut praeceps per iuventutem.

This is a typical example of what Roberts has called the ‘jewelled style’ with its love for the formal manipulation of individual words and enumerative sequences (Roberts 1989: 59 ff.). Contrary to the usual practice in such cases, there is no variation in word order. Thanks to the extreme similarity between the first three elements (same number of syllables, rhyme), the fourth element is highlighted (different number of syllables, no rhyme; see further below). For a similar effect, cf. 3.2.3 aggeres saxis asperos, etc.

spumosus per iactantiam, ‘foaming with ostentation’: This is a not uncommon metaphor for rhetorical showing off, cf. e.g. Aug. c. Iulian. 5.43 quod autem te iactas, et inaniter spumeum diffundis eloquium, ‘as to the fact that you show off, and idly squander your foam of words’.
Sidonius here gives it a slight twist towards ostentation in general. It is his only instance, and very succinctly formulated.

**turbidus per superbiam**, ‘stirred up by pride’: The calm waters of modesty are disturbed by the wind of pride. For the equation of wind and pride, perturbing the human soul, cf. e.g. Aug. *in Psalm*. 41.12 *ergo quia ad me turbata est anima mea, et hanc perturbationem facti superbia*, and *ibid*. 1.4 *ventus ... id est superbia*, ‘so because “my soul is in turmoil within me”, and this turmoil is caused by pride ...’, ‘the “wind” means pride’.

**caenosus per conscientiam**, ‘muddy due to a bad conscience’: Continuing in the same moralistic vein, the author likens a bad conscience to the stirred-up sediment in a river, cf. e.g. Max. Taur. *Serm*. 67.3 (the water of the river Jordan retreats, literally for the Jews, symbolically for the Christians) *ita ut servos dei illic aqua caenosa non madidet, hic famulos Christi conscientia tetra non polluat*, ‘there God’s servants did not get soaked by the muddy water, here Christ’s faithful are not stained by a guilty conscience’, *Hil*. 9.40 *quid limosi corporis graves animae et sordente peccatis conscientia faetidae caenosaeque mentes usque ad iudicium diviniae de se professionis inflamur?*, ‘our souls burdened with the slimy body, and our minds foul and muddy due to our conscience which is defiled with sins ...’. See also my comment on 7.6.3 *abluenda fletibus conscientia*.

Note the alliteration *c-c*.

**praeceps per iuventutem**, ‘impetuous owing to youth’: Preachers and pedagogues alike repeatedly thematize this subject, e.g. Petr. Chrys. *Serm*. 45.2 *iuventus praecipitat*, ‘youth is impetuous’, Cassiod. *in Psalm*. 24.7 *iuventutem vero non tantum floridam aetatem posuit, sed praecipitationis audaciam*, “‘youth” not only stands for blooming age, but also for rash impulsivity’. Youthful rashness has to be bridled and kept under control, e.g. Drac. *Romul*. 8.236 f. *veneranda senectus / praecipitem frenat monitis per cuncta iuventam, ‘ venerable old age curbs impetuous youth’, Auson. *Prof.* (= 11) 11.4 f. *lubricae nisi te iuventae praecipitem flexus daret, / Pythagorei non tenentem tranitis rectam viam*, ‘(you could have been my successor) if you had not fallen headlong on the slippery steps of youth, and no longer kept to the right path of Pythagoras’.

Notice the cursus velox *praeceps per iuventutem*, in line with the meaning of the words, and expressive as a conclusion to the sentence.

**quin potius in illo squalidum si quid ac putre sorderet,**

**quin potius**, ‘yes, even’, ‘indeed’: The statement introduced by *quin* corroborates and expands what precedes (OLD s.v. *quin* 2a and 3c). The reasoning is: ‘If I could consult you regularly, my deeds would be pure and balanced like a placid river. Yes, even if, in spite of that, any pollution or irregularity should occur, it would be completely washed away by your advice.’ This accounts better for the logical connection between the sentences than the translation ‘on the contrary’, which is printed by Anderson and Loyen (for this usage, see my comment on 7.7.6 *quin potius ignoscite*). *Quin potius* is one of Sidonius’ favourites. In this letter we even have it twice (also 7.8.4), which one might ascribe to a certain negligence. It is very versatile. See also 7.6.4 with my comment.

**squalidum ... ac putre**, ‘filthy and rotting’, ‘a stinking quagmire’: Cf. *Ep*. 4.14.3 *putrium conscientiarum ultero squalens ulcus aperimus*, ‘we (clerics) take it upon ourselves to reveal the unsightly wound of our stinking consciences’. The moral self-depreciation of clerics could
not be more extreme: their sins form a rotting and stinking wound, which is badly in need of
the divine surgeon, or – as here – a dangerous instance of environmental pollution, to be
washed away by the healthy water of episcopal intervention. See my comment on 7.6.3 longis
... ablueva fletibus conscientia, and stercora. Cf. also 6.1.1 (Sidonius about himself) ego ... putris
et et fetida reatu terra, ‘I, a lump of earth, rotting and stinking with guilt’.

This is one of the topical themes which lend themselves to endless variation, in Sidonius and
in other authors. To give just one instance out of many of this revelling in an outrageous
description of sin, cf. Petr. Chrys. Serm. 17.5 (satanas) semel infectus putredine habitacula fetida et
inmunda perquirit, sordibus delectatur et caeno, qui utique semper foetore criminum et squalore
pascitur vitiorum, ‘Satan, who feeds on the stench of crimes and the filth of shortcomings, …
ransacks our stinking and unclean homes …’. For variation technique and extreme self-
depreciation, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style and par. 3.3.2 Social conventions and
Christianity respectively.

Squalidus and putris, in connection with water, essentially denote the messy mud of pools, cf.
Ep. 2.2.1 squalet glarea (‘gravel lies messily about’) in vadis, linum in ripis, pulvis in campis, and
3.2.3 viarum voragines ... umore imbrium putres, ‘holes in the roads, fetid with rainwater’.

In book 7 the reader has already encountered putris twice, in 7.1.2 putrem sudium craterem of the
deplorable state of the defences of Clermont, and in 7.6.8 putres culminum lapsus of the
collapsing churches all over the country. The spiritual leader of the region, for want of sound
advice, would be as putris as the structures he is supposed to uphold.

sorderet, ‘were soiled’: For sordere in this type of context, cf. e.g. Stat. Theb. 4.818 f. sordet aquis
egestus ab imis / alveus, ‘(the river) from the depths of its channel is muddy and befouled
(transl. Mozley, ed. Loeb). In addition, the entire passage in Statius forms an interesting
comparison with Sidonius’ imagery. Cf. metaphorically of sin, Ep. 3.13.11 conscientia ...
sordidatissima.

totum id admixta consilii tui vena dilueret.

admixta, ‘intermingled’: Admiscere, not elsewhere used of a rivulet flowing into the
mainstream, denotes the addition of an essentially different element, i.e. a liquid, as e.g.
Macr. Sat. 5.18.5 gravabar, inquit, vino cui aqua non fuisset admixta. In our case the element is a
healthy one. For the opposite, cf. e.g. Sen. Con. 7.praef.4 nec videbat nimium illum orationis suae
splendorem his admixtis sordibus non defendi sed inquinari, ‘… the splendour was tainted by
adding these commonplace’.

vena, ‘trickle, stream, feeding a larger body of water’, is found also in 9.11.9 fontium
conditorum vena, and 9.14.5 venae perennis, ‘a perennial source’ (cf. Ov. Fast. 3.298 vena perennis
aquae). See also (of correspondence) 4.3.10 arentem venulam rarius flumini tuo misceo, ‘I seldom
mingle my dry rivulet with your stream’.

dilueret, ‘would dissolve’; ‘wash away’: For the development of the metaphorical use,
compare e.g. Tert. Bapt. 15 felix aqua quae semel abluit, ... quae non adsiduitate sordium infecta
rursus quos diluit inquit, ‘blessed is the water … which is not continually polluted with dirt,
and soils again whom it has cleansed’, and Ennod. Ep. 2.1.8 paenitentia ... etsi in ipso non
invenisset quod dilueret, ‘although remorse had found nothing in him to purify’.

Letter 8 - Section 1
Section 2

sed quoniam huiuscemodi votis spatia sunt longa interposita praepedimento,

Distance, more than anything else, is the topical excuse for not coming, but writing instead – or colloqui cum absentibus, as writing is often described. See Thraede 1970: 162 ff. The way Sidonius puts it into words this time – huiuscemodi, interposita and praepedimento – is a bit archaic and unusual. He takes his time and uses a lot of embellishment to be on the right wavelength with his correspondent.

huiuscemodi, ‘of this kind’: Huiuscemodi is found five times in the correspondence, against thirteen times huiusmodi (1 : 2,6). Sidonius favours the archaic form, as is apparent from the comparison with Symmachus’ prose (no cases of huiuscemodi, against 33 of huiusmodi) and Avitus, Ennodius and Ruricius (6 times huiuscemodi against 29 times huiusmodi: 1 : 4,8). Only Claudianus Mamertus is comparable (2 times huiuscemodi against 6 times huiusmodi: 1 : 3).

The tendency to write huiusce, instead of huius, before consonant (probably for euphonic and rhythmical reasons) even intrudes into the petrified huiusmodi. See my comment on 7.1.3 harumce supplicationum.

spatia, ‘distance’, ‘journey’: Cf. 2.11.1 si nobis pro situ spatiisque regionum vicinaremur, ‘if we were neighbours when it comes to residence and distance’, 8.12.1 te magnis flagitatum precibus, parvis separatum spatiis, multis expectatum diebus, ‘… separated by a small distance …’, and 9.4.1 spatium viae regionumque, quod oppida nostra discriminat.

interposita, ‘lying in between’: Elsewhere Sidonius writes interiecta (or its derivatives), cf. 2.11.2 raritatem colloquii de prolixa terrarum interiectione venientem, 2.9.1 iura contermina, domicilia vicina, quibus interiecta gestatio peditem lassat (domains of Ferreolus and Apollinaris), 6.6.1 interiecti itineris longitudine.

praepedimento, ‘as an impediment’: Praeppedimentum is an archaism, probably introduced from comedy (see Gualandri 1979: 173 n. 98). It is attested in Pl. Poen. 605 f ne ... fallaciae / praepedimentum obiciatur. It occurs twice in Serv. auct. ad Aen. 3.607: ne esset ulla praepedimentum religionis, and in quo 'haerebat' morae vel praepedimenti verbum procul dubio est. Finally in Sidon. (Claud. Mam.) Ep. 4.2.4 nulla igitur cuiusquam praepedimenti occasio praetendi ... potest. See also Engelbrecht 1886: 457.

Although praepedimentum is rare, the verb praepedere is in general use. For a similar context of a voyage over a long distance, cf. Quodv. Prom. 2.27 (the queen of Sheba came to Solomon) neque granditate itineris praepedita, ‘not held back by the long journey’.

For the dativus finalis im-, praepedimento, the construction is almost always with esse (typically Liv. 26.24.15 nec tamen impedimento id rebus gerendis fuit). Other verbs do not occur before the fourth century AD, e.g. Dict. 3.5 (Achilles) Pylaemenem ... impedimento sibi oppositum comminus fundit. Sidonius, except for this instance, adheres to the construction with esse: 4.22.4, 5.15.1, 5.17.3, 8.10.4. For the nominative as an alternative to the dat. fin., see my comment on 7.2.3 quod erat maximum conatibus primis impedimentum.
sedulo precor, ut consulentem de scrupulo incursae ambiguitatis expedias

There is a slight ellipse in this *apodosis*. The train of thought is: ‘Because we are too far apart from each other to meet, I beg you to <write to me and> relieve my incertainty.’

**sedulo precor**, ‘I beg you earnestly’: For the phrase, see my comment on 7.1.6 *sedulo petens*.

**de scrupulo incursae ambiguitatis**, ‘from the worry of the doubt which besets me’:

*Scrupulus*, ‘a source of uneasiness or misgiving, a worry, headache’ (OLD), is often accompanied by a defining gen., e.g. Cic. *Att* 1.18.2 *domesticarum ... sollicitudinum aculeos omnis et scrupulos occultabo*, ‘… the worries about domestic problems’.

*Ambiguitas*, ‘doubt’, ‘hesitation’: Cf. 4.2.4 *ambiguo caret*, and 6.1.3 *procul ambiguo*, equivalent to *sine dubio*. The noun here only in Sidonius.

*Ambiguitatem incurrere*, ‘to be confronted with a problem’, is not attested, but cf. Iulian. (d. ca. 454 AD) in Psalm. 25.1c *neque, ex quo spem in te posui, aliquid dubitationis incurri*, Greg. M. *Ep*. 9.67 l. 28 CC SL *quocumque tempore quicquam dubietatis incurrant*, 14.3 l. 24 *nec ille aliquid dubietatis incurrat*.

**expedias**, ‘extricate’, ‘release’, is classical, cf. e.g. Cic. *Ver*. 4.28 *nunc de peripetasmatis quemadmodum te expedias non habes*, ‘now, you have no means to disentangle yourself from the coverlets’.

et, quia Simplicium, spectabilem virum episcopum sibi flagitat populus

Biturix ordinari,

What we know about Simplicius is based on the information Sidonius provides, here and in the *contio* in Bourges (7.9), together with some scant external evidence. The inventiveness required to combine these sources inevitably results in a fair margin of uncertainty. I here present the overall picture, and refer to my comment on 7.9.16, 17 and 20 for additional information.

Simplicius belonged to a family which had included both bishops and high government officials. He possibly bore the title *comes*, and had the relatively modest rank of *vir spectabilis*. As a member of the class of imperial bureaucrats, the *honorati*, his influence in Bourges must have been considerable. PLRE 2: 1015 s.v. Simplicius 9 thinks he was a member of the town council; this, however, seems to me to be beneath his station (see my comment on 7.9.16 *hactenus vestri*). His father-in-law Palladius and his father Eulodius/Eulogius had been bishops of Bourges before him. He eventually succeeded his father with the support of Sidonius, outclassing two *illustres*, because of their second marriages. He was an experienced diplomat, both at the imperial court and with the German kings. See Duchesne 2: 22-27, Stroheker 1948: 219 # 363 and PLRE 2: 1015 Simplicius # 9.

Harries 1994: 185 f. has drawn attention to the diminishing opportunities to hold imperial office, and, consequently, the increasing number of descendants of senatorial families who ‘exercised their energies and talents by running their local communities or serving in the royal courts’. They used the episcopal office ‘as a means of secular as well as spiritual patronage’. Episcopal families developed, ‘such as those of Rusticus of Narbonne, Perpetuus of Tours, or Simplicius of Bourges’. See also GC 3: 233-35 ‘Ein neues Bischofsmodell’. On the increasing local influence of the *honorati* at the cost of the town councils, see Liebeschuetz
There is an interesting hypothesis in Fernández López 1994: 64 n. 26, who surmises that the addressee of Ep. 3.11, Simplicius, is the same as the candidate for Bourges. The letter makes it clear that Sidonius and Simplicius had not yet met each other, which agrees – Fernández says – with the impartiality Sidonius pleads in 7.9.23. The letter – we might add – compliments Simplicius on the successful upbringing of his children, a son and a daughter. In 7.9.24 Simplicius and his wife bring up their sons (children?) in an exemplary way: *filios ambo bene et prudenter instituunt*. Note that the addressee of the letter is a layman, as is apparent from the heading *Sidonius Simplicio suo salutem*, and the simple greeting *Vale* (see General Introduction, par. 5.5.1 *Inscriptio* and *subscriptio*). Fernández’ idea runs contrary to the general supposition that the Simplicius of the letter is Simplicius of Vaison, a kinsman of Sidonius, probably one of his uncles: Stroheker 1948: 219 # 362, Anderson in his note on 3.11 and Loyen 2: 223 n. 32. Stevens 1933: 151 takes him to be a friend of the uncles. See also Giannotti 2000: 181. In my comment on 7.6.9 *Crocut Simpliciumque* I came to the conclusion that the matter of the identity there is best left open for want of reliable material. My conclusion here is the same.

spectabilem virum, ‘a senator with the rank of spectabilis’: Jones in LRE 1: 527 ff. has described the transformation, during the fourth and fifth centuries, of the aristocracy from one of birth into one of office. The number of senators was substantially enlarged. Anyone of importance was now a senator; the equestrian order all but disappeared. The title of clarissimus was devalued, and became the lowest in order. Two new ranks of senators were now distinguished, the middle one carrying the title of spectabilis, consisting of, among others, comites, duces and lesser palatine ministers, and the highest one, illusiris, reserved for those who had held the praetorian or urban prefecture or had been magister militum, plus the principal palatine ministers. On top of this, the former consuls and those carrying the honorific, non-hereditary, title of patricius formed the peak of the pyramid.

One should bear in mind, for the right perspective, that Sidonius, who bore the title of patricius (cf. Ep. 5.16.4), had far more prestige and wealth than Simplicius could dream of. See also Harries 1994: 171. The comparison between the two of them, which – as supposed earlier – is suggested by the link between the Bourges and the Clermont letters, could only be made on account of their both being bishops, and their comparable fate in that capacity in the confrontation with Euric.

flagitat populus Biturix, ‘the people of Bourges demand’: The verb *flagitare*, ‘clamour for’, ‘insist’, originally communicates a sense of urgency, cf. Cic. *Rep.* 2.23 *populus ... regem flagitare non destitit*. It even has a populistic feel, the atmosphere of the mob in a theatre, e.g. Tac. *Ann.* 16.4 *flagitante vulgo ut omnia studia sua publicaret*, where the audience prompts Nero to go on performing. In Sidonius, however, many occurrences of the verb have lost this urgency, as for instance in the topical context of asking for a piece of writing, e.g. 4.7.2 *se paginam meam ... flagitasse*, ‘that he had asked for this letter from me’; so even in our case we should not make too much of it.

The procedure has arrived at the second stage, when compared with the situation in letter 7.5 to Agroecius. There Sidonius wrote: *frenit populus per studia divisus*, ‘the people buzz with excitement, split into different factions’ (sect. 1), and *nullus a me hactenus nominatus, nullus adhibitus, nullus electus est*, ‘as yet, I have named nobody, introduced nobody, chosen nobody’
(4). By now, Sidonius evidently has made up his mind. He is convinced that he can manage the political controversy and safely push forward Simplicius. Accordingly, his wording is biased and confident: ‘The people of Bourges want Simplicius’. His colleague Eupronius is presented with a planned decision, to which he is in fact simply asked to agree, despite some polite beating around the bush: ‘Of course, you decide, I obey’ (sect. 4 omnia ex vestro nutu, arbitrio litterisque, and in omnibus obsecuturi).

For populus see my comment on 7.5.1 fremit populus. For the role the people played in the election of a bishop see the Introduction to letter 5, section 4 The election and consecration of bishops.

quid super tanto negotio debeam facere, decernas.

super tanto negotio, ‘about this serious business’ (Anderson): Cf. 5.9.1 super hoc negotio, 9.11.5 super prae senti negotio. The phrase is found since Tac. Ann. 2.35.1 super eo negotio.

decernas, ‘decide’: Rather than asking for advice, Sidonius tactfully invites Euphronius to decide the matter. Decernere is used especially of persons carrying out judicial or similar functions, e.g. Ulp. Dig. 1.3.1.1 quodcumque ... imperator ... cognoscens decrevit, Conc. Afr. CC SL 149 p. 91 l. 64 si decreverit (sc. episcopus) mittendos esse qui ... iudicent. See sect. 4 decerneremus.

huius es namque vel erga me dignationis vel erga reliquos auctoritatis

‘for you enjoy such prestige with me and such authority with others’ (Anderson)

huius, ‘such’: For hic – ut = talis – ut, see KS 2: 248. Huius es is slightly accentuated because of the postponement of namque (see next lemma): ‘you enjoy such great prestige’.

namque, ‘namely’: For a discussion of namque vs. nam, see my comment on 7.1.1 namque. I add the following remarks about its position in the clause. In Sidonius’ prose it takes up the second position in 7 cases, and the third position in 3, in a total of 60 occurrences of namque (together in 17% of cases). Schrickx 2009 in sect. 3.4 discusses word order for namque (her corpus of authors ends with Apuleius). Authors appear to vary widely in allowing a different position from the first one to namque, from 0% (e.g. Cicero) to 100% (Florus). She argues that the enclitic position signals a loss of ‘semantic content’, balanced by an increase of pragmatic functionality: the element which is put in first position – often an anaphoric is, hic, ibi, etc. – is highlighted (topic or focus). As is the case here, in huius ... dignationis, namque may separate the words of a phrase, with the first element brought into relief. See my comment on 7.9.22 vir est namque ... totius popularitatis alienus.

erga, ‘with’, ‘to’: It is here almost synonymous with apud, ‘in the opinion of’, ‘in the eyes of’ - the relation as seen by the object of attention, rather than by its subject (‘towards’, ‘for’). TLL 5/2: 753.76 ff. loosely qualifies this kind of use with the words: ‘liberiore usu de qualibet ratione inter animantia aut res quopiam pacto intercedente.’

dignationis, ‘respect’, ‘prestige’: Cf. 7.4.1 dignitate ... dignatione, with my comment. Between colleagues relations are not determined by hierarchy, but by mutual respect.

reliquos, ‘the rest’: The remaining people involved, the community of Bourges.
ut si quid fieri voles (voles autem quicquid aequissimum est), non suadere tam debeas quam iubere.

autem, ‘and in fact’, ‘and of course’: Adds an explanation or amplification, usu. in parenthesis, repeating a word from the previous clause (thus OLD s.v. 4), cf. e.g Cic. Fam. 6.5.1 quotienscumque filium tuum video (video autem fere cotidie). According to Kroon 1995: 268 it marks a ‘temporary thematic break’.

non suadere tam debeas quam iubere, ‘your wish is my command’: The same thought as in Carm. 7.494 f. suadere sub illo / quod poteras, modo velle sat est, ‘what you could advise under his rule, you now have but to command’. These words are said by the Visigothic king Theodoric I to the emperor Avitus about his father (= illo) and himself. The thought behind it is the same too: both parties know that this is a diplomatic way of maintaining one’s own rights without offending the other.

The opposition suadere – iubere is often used, from Cicero to Sidonius’ friend Claudianus Mamertus, Cic. Cat. 1.13 interroga me, num in exsilium? non iubeo, sed, si me consulis, suadeo, Claud. Mam. Anim. 1.1 nihil quod vel auctoritas iubeat vel ratio suadeat potissimum dicentes, ‘… what authority prescribes or reasoning makes advisable …’.

Section 3

de quo tamen Simplicio scitote narrari plurima bona, atque ea quidem a plurimis bonis.

tamen, ‘namely’: For the explicative function of tamen (more or less like enim), characteristic of later Latin, see Spevak 2005: 208. See also my comment on 7.1.2 solo tamen, and 7.2.1 quae tamen.

scitote, ‘you should know’: So far, Euphronius has been referred to in the singular; the polite vos is inserted at two important moments: here, at the start of furnishing proof, and further on, at the final request. For a discussion see the Introduction, section 6 ‘You’ and ‘I’.

Scitote comes from the field of forensic practice, when the proofs and arguments are presented. It is found very often in Cicero, e.g. Cael. 45 scitote, iudices, ‘you should know, gentlemen of the jury’, after which it is argued that Caelius cannot possibly be the licentious man his opponents suggest he is. Likewise, Sidonius is going to give the testimonia. Juridical language is one of the stylistic elements in Sidonius’ circle, see Monni 1999: 33 f., who also cites examples of imp. fut. in Claudianus Mamertus: ferto, adserito, defensitato, etc. In Sidonius we have one more instance, 2.1.2 scitote (to the addressee, but possibly including his acquaintances; Anderson translated ‘be it known to all of you’). Elsewhere we find 0.14.4 scias and 6.12.9 scias volo. For a discussion of the imp. fut., see my comment on 7.9.7 penditote.

plurima bona, atque ea quidem a plurimis bonis, ‘a great many good things, and by a lot of important people’: The upper class is on Simplicius’ side. Cf. 7.9.22 (Simplicius) gratiam non captat omnium sed bonorum, ‘he does not seek the favour of the many, but of the elite’. For boni, see my comment on 7.2.5 boni quique, and 7.9.6 ulli bonorum. For the wordplay cf. e.g. Pl. Am. 47 quod bonis faceret boni, ‘what good he did to the well-to-do’, and in Sidonius 2.6.2 de quo boni quique bona quaeque iudicaverunt, 7.14.1 omnes de te boni in commune senserunt omnia bona. For this variation technique, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.
Atque (ea) quidem, ‘and what is more’ (as a reinforcement), in Sidonius only here and 9.11.5
unius epistulae forma ..., atque ea quidem ... etc.

quae testimonia mihi prima fronte conloquii non satis grata, quia satis
gratiosa, iudicabantur.

At the start of the talks which Sidonius had with the authorities in Bourges, he found the
claims they made for Simplicius rather biased, as Simplicius was one of their lot. The reader
gathers from this passage, that Sidonius got the information he needed from his interlocutors
in the talks on the procedure and the candidature. In 7.9.23, however, in his speech to the
congregation, he adapts his words to the more general audience, and says that he has
gathered his information from a variety of sources and over a longer period of time.

testimonia, ‘testimonies’, ‘credentials’: The testimonium is the witness to the candidate’s
conduct and character from the side of the community who knows him well. Cf. e.g. Cypr.
Ep. 55.8.4 factus est autem Cornelius episcopus ... de clericorum paene omnium testimonio, and
Brev. Hippon. can. 20, Conc. Afr. p. 39 (and repeated several times) ut nullus ordinetur nisi

mihi: dat. auct. with iudicabantur: ‘were judged by me’, although the link with grata,
‘agreeable, acceptable to me’, will be the readers’ first reaction.

prima fronte conloquii, ‘at the outset of the talks’: The phrase may be thought of as a merger
of prima fronte, ‘at first sight, immediately’, and (in) fronte conloquii, ‘at the start of the talks’.
For prima fronte, cf. e.g. its first instance, Ov. Ars 3.553 f. nec prima fronte rapaces / este,’don’t
be too greedy at first’, and Quint. Inst. 7.1.56 dura prima fronte quaestio.

Frons + gen., ‘beginning’, is mainly later Latin, and is used of a letter or a book, cf. e.g. Tert.
Anim. 13 faciem ... operis frontemque materiae, ‘the title of the book and the outline of its
content’, Hier. Ep. 29.2 in fronte epistulae tuae, Ennod. Opusc. 2.49 in hac allegationis fronte,
‘from this very first sentence of the memoir’. Other collocations are less customary, e.g.
Prosp. c. Coll. 14.2 de praemissae professionis fronte, ‘the lead of the first enunciation’. For prima
frons, cf. Ov. Trist. 1.7.33 sex versus in prima fronte libelli, ‘six lines heading the poem’, and
Fulg. Rusp. (Victor) Ep. 9.5 in prima fronte epistulae (sixth cent.).

non satis grata, quia satis gratiosa, ‘not quite acceptable because rather too partial’
(Anderson): For satis, ‘fairly’, ‘quite’, see my comment on 7.2.4 satis secundus.

This second paronomasia grata ... gratiosa (Hagendahl class 3), immediately after plurima bona
– plurimis bonis, establishes the stylistic character of the passage. The wordplay is not often
found, but cf. Tert. Resurr. 56 ne illa gratiosissima caro, cui gratis vita constabit!, ‘that body is
really privileged, which gets the benefits of life for free’.

Gratiosus, ‘corrupt’, ‘partial’, is defined by Gel. 9.12.1 ‘gratiosus’ et qui adhibet gratias et qui
admittit, ‘“gratiosus” is he who grants favours and he who accepts them’. It is the opposite of
being iuratus or iudicialis, ‘on oath’, ‘impartial’, as e.g. Symm. Ep. 4.34 magna sunt auctoritatis
tuae pondera, nec possum gratiosum putare, quod tu iuratus allegas, ‘… I cannot think partial,
what you adduce on oath’, and Sidon. Ep. 5.15.1 bybliopolam nostrum non gratiense sed
iudicialiter expertus insinuo, ‘I introduce to you my secretary, with whom my acquaintance is
not biased but impartial’ (there are no other instances in Sidonius).
at postquam aemulos eius nihil vidi amplius quam silere, atque eos maxume, qui fidem fovent Arrianorum,

**aemulos**, ‘rivals’: It is difficult to determine whether ‘opponents’ in general are meant or, more specifically, Simplicius’ competitors for the sacred office. *Aemulus* in Sidonius’ correspondence is either (as here) a more or less hostile opponent (2.3.2 in the case of Pompey, 3.4.1 Visigoths and Burgundians, and 7.9.22 (Simplicius) *aemulis suis magis prodesse cupiens quam placere*, ‘intent rather on assisting his rivals than flattering them’), or a rival vying for excellence (4.3.10 literary, 8.8.2 moral). See resp. TLL 1: 978.71 ff. ‘invidus, inimicus, adversarius’, and 976.62 ff. ‘eiusdem rei studiosus, sectator, imitator.’

**nihil ... amplius**, ‘nothing but’: For *amplius* = *plus, potius*, see my comment on 7.4.1 *amplius dignitate quam dignatione*.

**silere**, ‘keep silent’: Sidonius describes a kindred scene during the election process in 7.9.3 *presbyterorum sane paucis angulatim fringultientibus, porro autem palam ne mussitantibus quidem*: some stealthy whispering among the priests, but no overt resistance. Simplicius’ rivals clearly had no arguments or means at their disposal to overrule the candidacy of Simplicius. The difference in stature is also evident from 7.9.22, cited above, where, in front of the audience in Bourges, he is depicted by Sidonius as strict but just. Simplicius will not stoop to conquer.

**qui fidem fovent Arrianorum**, ‘who support the Arian faith’: The manuscripts have *Arrianorum*, Luetjohann and Anderson printed *Arianorum*, Mohr, Loyen and Bellès *Arrianum*. The spelling with –rr- is the correct one: see my comment on 7.6.2 *haeresos Arrianae*.


*Fovere*, ‘to take the side of’, ‘support (one of the parties in a contest)’ (OLD s.v. 6): Cf. e.g. V. Max. 3.8.ext.1 *ut Romanorum potius quam Karthaginensium partes foveret*. In Sidonius, cf. 5.17.11 *si placet, edentes fovete*, ‘if you like it (i.e. the book), promote it by distributing it’, 6.3.2 *si peregrinationem ... foveatis*, ‘if you support his visit’, and, of persons, e.g. 7.2.5 *fovere boni* (scil. *Amantium*). *Fidem fovere* is not common, and has a different meaning in the two other known instances: ‘to treasure faith’, ‘to be a believer’, viz. Ambr. *Abr. 1.5.38 haec est enim quae intimus fidem spiritu fovet*, ‘for she [= Sara] is the one who preserves faith deep in her heart’, and Ennod. *Opusc. 6 p. 312 l. 26 proinde, quia nihil est quod fidem possit anteire, foveatur*, ‘consequently, as there is nothing which surpasses faith, let it be kept carefully’. Notice the alliteration in *fidem fovere*.

Religious coexistence between the Arian Visigoths and the Nicene Gallo-Romans on the whole seems to have been more or less peaceful, so much so that – as in this case – the Arians did not object to a Catholic nominee (Mathisen and Sivan 1998: 38). If *aemulos* is meant as rivals for the episcopacy, we may conclude from our passage not only that there was an Arian faction in Bourges, but that Arians actively aspired to the position of bishop – which, indeed, is the *communis opinio*. Thus Griffe 2: 73: ‘il avait eu des concurrents (*aemulos eius*), dont quelques-uns passaient pour être favorables aux Goths, aux Ariens’, Wolfram 1988: 200: ‘in 470/471 there were also Roman Arian candidates for the appointment to the bishopric of Bourges’, and Mathisen 1993: 33: ‘The local Arians – perhaps because they lacked any
ecclesiastical hierarchy of their own – even concurred in Sidonius’ selection of the Catholic bishop’, with n. 58 ‘It is unclear whether these Arians of Bourges were Romans or Goths’. Luce Pietri in GC 3: 229 thinks that bishop Perpetuus afterwards wanted to read the speech by Sidonius (see Ep. 7.9) precisely because Sidonius had managed to ward off the danger of an Arian replacing a Catholic bishop. See also Kaufmann 1995: 216.

In letter 7.6 Sidonius had fiercely attacked the Arian danger, to force a breakthrough in the negotiations about a trade-off between Clermont and Provence. To reach that aim he had maximized the distance between both creeds and their adherents. Here, his focus is not a polemic one, but, firstly, to convince Euphronius of Simplicius’ suitability for the office: Simplicius is able to bridge the gap even with his Arian opponents. Secondly, to make it clear to Euphronius that he himself controls the situation in the town, where even Arians (civis malus, below!) can be candidates without doing harm. The wording is telling: in 7.6.2 haeresos Arrianeae, here fidem ... Arrianorum.

The victory of Simplicius over the Arians would not last long. Harries 1994: 184: ‘He [= Simplicius] was therefore as well equipped as any to cope with the looming threat of Euric – too well qualified, perhaps, in the eyes of the king, who, ostensibly in response to an Arian faction opposed to Simplicius’ election, confirmed his control over Bourges by exiling Simplicius soon after that bishop’s consecration.’

neque quippiam nominato, licet necdum nostrae professionis, inlicitum opponi

quippiam ... inlicitum, ‘anything untoward’: For the archaism quispiam, see my comment on 7.2.2 quispiam dignus relator.

For what the inlicitum might be, cf. Cod. Iust. 1.3.41 (concerning the election of the bishop from a short list) ut ... ab iis qui in ea civitate habitant decretum fiat de tribus personis, de quarum recta fide vita honesta reliquisque virtutibus constet, ‘that the inhabitants of the town must draw up a shortlist of three persons whose orthodox faith, virtuous life and other merits are undisputed’.

nominato, ‘his designation’, ‘his nomination’: Sidonius is exasperatingly vague and unhelpful in his use of the verb nominare concerning the procedure. It may designate any phase in the selection and appointment of a candidate. We have to make do with two other passages beside the one under consideration, viz. 7.5.4 nullus a me hactenus nominatus, nullus adhibitus, nullus electus est, ‘I have as yet named nobody, introduced nobody, chosen nobody’, and 7.9.9 si quempiam nominavero monachorum, ‘if I nominate a monk’. As argued at 7.5.4, there is no clear-cut differentiation – if at all – between nominatus, adhibitus and electus. The stylistic element (commata, variation technique) prevails over procedural clarity. The same is, mutatis mutandis, the case in 7.9.9: nominare figures as an equivalent side by side with eligere, proferre, and dicere.

There is one way out, viz. Anderson’s suggestion that nominato = praefto, ‘the aforesaid’. Anderson himself added: ‘although I scarcely think so’, and I think he is right. Sidonius, at least, offers no parallel.

licet necdum nostrae professionis, ‘though not yet a member of our (clerical) order’: The fact that Simplicius is a layman, and not yet a priest, should be no impediment to his nomination – just as had been the case for Sidonius himself (see Bellès 3: 50 n. 87 ad loc.). The official line
was different: outsiders had to hold the lower ecclesiastical offices before being chosen as a bishop. Cf. e.g. the council of Serdica (342 AD), can. 16 si forte aut dives aut scholasticus de foro aut ex administratore episcopus fuerit postulatus, ut non prius ordinetur nisi ante et lectoris munere et officio diaconi aut presbyteri fuerit perfunctus, et ita per singulos gradus, si dignus fuerit, ascendat ad culmen episcopatus. See for more detailed information the Introduction to letter 5, section 4 The election and consecration of bishops, esp. ‘Background of the candidates’.

For neqdum = nondum, see my comment on 7.1.1 neqdum.

Nostrae professionis: Nostrae comprises both the recipient and the sender. For professio, see 7.5.1 utriusque professionis ordinibus, with comment.

opponi, ‘is alleged against’: For opponere, ‘to interpose’, ‘put in the way’, esp. of legal impediments, cf. e.g. Gaius Inst. 4.163 si calumniae iudicium ei oppositum fuerit, ‘if he be convicted for vexatious proceedings’.

animum adverti exactissimum virum posse censeri, de quo civis malus loqui, bonus tacere non posset.

animum adverti, ‘I concluded’: Somewhat different from the usual ‘to notice’, ‘observe’, which Sidonius uses elsewhere, viz. 1.2.4 animo advertere, 5.10.1 animum adverterit.

exactissimum, ‘irreproachable’, ‘supremely excellent’: The superlative is found since Sen. Contr. 7.5.11 Vinicius, exactissimi viri in genere, as an adjunct of the noun vir in Plin. Ep. 8.23.5 Serviano, exactissimo viro. Sidonius uses it three more times, in 2.2.5 exactissima spatiositate, ‘the perfect size’, 3.11.1 viri optimarum ... exactissimarumque partium, ‘men of the best and most distinguished class’, and 5.11.2 pascis ut qui exactissime, ‘you entertain to perfection’ (Anderson). From these examples the implied notion appears to be that one is socially acceptable, presentable in high society. That is why the judgement of the civis now follows as the decisive argument.

de quo civis malus loqui, bonus tacere non posset, ‘as the bad citizens could not say a word, and the good ones could not keep silent about him’: The preferred reading of all editors, civis, is not supported by all of the manuscripts: civis LNT: quivis MFP (vel civis s.l. add. M1), vis C.

Note the symmetrical conclusion. The civis malus is the body of opponents who remained silent at (the consultations about) the nomination of Simplicius, the civis bonus is the company of leading citizens who recommended him.

Compare Sidonius’ description of the situation at the election in Chalon, a few years earlier, 4.25.4 stupentibus factiosis erubescentibus malis, acclamationibus bonis reclamationibus nullis collegam sibi consecravere, ‘while the schemers were dumbfounded, the bad blushed, the good approved, and nobody disapproved, they consecrated him as their colleague’. For this variation technique, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

We have an original elaboration here of the archetypical opposition loqui – tacere. In other cases it is either the dilemma of saying too much or too little, e.g. 3.9.1 loci mei aut ordinis hominem constat inconciliari, si loquatur, peccare, si taceat, ‘a man of my rank and dignity seems to incur unpleasantness if he talks, but to fail in his duties if he keeps silent’ (a dilemma which the sensible man knows how to solve: Enn. Ann. 7.250 (Vahlen) prudentem, qui dicta loquive tacereve posset), or the quasi-proverbial, embarrassing scene of a person who is a
nitwit, but cannot keep his mouth shut, e.g. Quint. Inst. 8.5.18 quid quod miser, cum loqui non posset, tacere non poterat?, ‘what to say of the wretch who is not able to speak, but cannot keep silent either?’ Cf. Plin. Ep. 7.6.7, Mart. 6.41.2, Gel. 1.15.

Section 4

sed cur ego ista haec ineptus adieci, tamquam darem consilium qui poposci?

sed cur ...?, ‘but why ...?’: For the quasi-colloquial interruption of the writer by himself, see my comment on 7.10.1 sed quid de Amantio loquar? Cf. 7.7.6 sed cur dolori nimio frena laxamus?

ista haec codd Luetjohann: istaec Mohr Anderson Bellès. Mohr’s conjecture istaec was accepted by later editors. Yet we should certainly retain the lectio difficilior ista haec. The same pleonastic accumulation is found since Apul. Met. 1.2.5 in verba ista haec tam absurda tamque immania, where see Keulen 2007: 108 with comment. Cf. e.g. Aug. Mag. 5 ista haec similitudo, Claud. Mam. Anim. 3.11 l. 13 per ista haec puncta pupillarum. The manuscripts in these cases are unanimous. (Ultimately, the question is a palaeographic one. Variants may arise easily. Take for example Ter. An. 28 istaec, which is the undisputed reading. But in Priscian’s commentary the manuscripts VB present a variant ista haec. See J.D. Craig, ‘Priscian’s Quotations from Terence’, CQ 24 (1930) 67.) Because ista haec is certain – at least in a number of cases –, I prefer reading also Sidon. (Claud. Mam.) Ep. 4.2.1 ista haec eadem remissibilia sint necne, tute iudicaris, against modern editors, but with the support of the manuscripts MTFP. For this question see also Engelbrecht 1898: 296. See Lofstedt 1956, 2: 191 ff. on the free, colloquial character of the pleonastic use of pronouns (he does not, however, produce examples of demonstrative pronouns). For the comparable pleonastic use of adverbs and conjunctions, see Lofstedt 1911: 59 ff., in cases like Var. R. 1.2.19 itaque propter hoc, L. 5.112 itaque propter hoc. See also my comment on 7.11.1 sed de his ista haec.

ego ... ineptus adieci The usual urbanitas causes the author to stop and realize that he has gone too far. Cf. the conclusion of 9.3.7 sed cur ista quorsum stolidus allego? Compare these two instances from Cicero, one from a letter, the other from a speech (the convention is not limited to epistolography): Cic. Att. 4.15.6 redii Romam Fontei causa a. d. VII Id. Quint. veni spectatum, primum magno et aequabili plausu - sed hoc ne curaris, ego ineptus qui scripserim, Q.Rosc. 18 sed quid ego ineptus de Roscio apud Pisonem dico? ignotum hominem scilicet pluribus verbis commendare.

Ineptus is the word for anybody who does not react adequately to a situation: Cic. de Orat. 2.17 nam qui aut tempus quid postulet non videt aut plura loquitur aut se ostentat aut eorum quibuscum est vel dignitatis vel commodi rationem non habet aut denique in aliquo genere aut inconcinans aut multus est, is ineptus esse dicitur. Here the ineptia consists in the author’s professed failing to acknowledge the character of the relationship with Euphronius, which is one of asking advice from a superior. It is not polite to ask for advice, and then give it instead.

tamquam darem consilium qui poposci, ‘as if after asking for advice I were now giving it’ (Anderson): For the phrasing with tamquam, see my comment on 7.4.1 tamquam non ... sit. Euphronius might have said, in the words of Aug. in evang. Ioh. 49.8 nolite mihi consilium dare, quos a me consilium oportet accipere, ‘don’t give me advice, as you ought to get advice from...
me’. Cf. an exchange of advice on an equal basis, Cic. Fam. 13.4.3 reliqua sunt quae pertinent ad rogandum, ut non solum tua causa tibi consilium me dare putes sed etiam quod mihi opus sit me a te petere et rogare, ‘what remains are requests to you, so that you know that not only do I counsel you for your sake, but that I must also ask and request advice from you’.

quin potius omnia ex vestro nutu, arbitrio litterisque disponentur sacerdotibus, popularibus manifestabuntur.

quin potius, ‘rather’: After the rhetorical question, and leading up to the conclusion, the author corrects himself. For this same situation, see 7.7.6 with my comment. See also 7.6.4 and 7.8.1.

ex vestro nutu, ‘according to your wish’: The preposition ex is unusual in classical prose, which prefers a simple ablative or ad + acc., cf. e.g. Nep. Lys. 2.1 ipsius nutu omnia gerebantur, Caes. Civ. 2.12.3 si imperata non facerent ad nutum, Liv. 35.31.12 omnia ad nutum Romanorum fieri. For its occurrence since the third cent. AD, cf. e.g. Hil. in Psalm. 91.4 verum haec ex nutu Dei Patris et in caelis et in terra manent atque existunt, Hist. Aug. Comm. 15.1 cubicularios suos libenter occidit, cum omnia ex nutu eorum semper fecisset. There is no parallel in Sidonius, who has 8.4.1 Dei nutu, ‘God willing’.

(ex) arbitrio, ‘(in line with) your decision’: Cf. e.g. Sen. Dial. 11.6.4 aut ex tuo arbitrio diem disponere, Apul. Met. 10.18 ex arbitrio dispositis coemptisque omnibus, ‘after he had organized and bought everything according to his mind’. Sidonius himself offers no parallels.

litterisque, ‘and your letter’: So Euphronius is not expected to come, but to write. For the canonical obligation for the bishop who cannot attend an election to send a written opinion, see the canons of the council of Riez (439 AD), can. 5, Conc. Gall. 1: 65 (an ordination is illegal if, among other things) nec expetitis comprovincialium litteris, ‘the provincial bishops have not been asked for a written statement’, and of the so-called second council of Arles, can. 4, Conc. Gall. 1: 114 ita ut alii comprovinciales epistolis admoveantur, ut scripto responso consensisse significet, ‘so that the provincial bishops have to be requested by letter to return their written consent’.

In epistolography, the convention is for the sender to acknowledge the authority and effectiveness of the letter he receives, e.g. 6.9.1 litterarum mearum obsequium, vestrarum reportat effectum, ‘(the letter-bearer) hands you my obedient letter, and brings back your imperative’.

For this less common tripartite clause, its third member connected by –que, cf. e.g. 8.11.9 annum, mensem diemque, and, with adjectives, 2.2.18 incisus, flexuosus nemorosusque. Syndetic sequences are discussed in Appendix F. In his prose Sidonius clearly favours asyndetic (‘zero-phase’) sequences, followed by the much less frequent syntetic collocations with –que. According to a study which I cite there (Pinkster 1969), the situation for ‘classical’ Latin was the other way round: –que seems to have been most normal, followed by zero. See also General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style: ‘Sequences’.

disponentur sacerdotibus, popularibus manifestabuntur.

disponentur, ‘will be prescribed’: Disponere in the sense of ‘to ordain’, ‘prescribe’ is already used by classical authors. Sidonius uses the verb several times, mostly as ‘to arrange’, once ‘to decide’ (+ inf., a usage of later Latin), but only here in this way, and of the bishop. Cf.
6.12.4 (about the regulations of bishop Patiens) *cumque multa in statu fidei tuis dispositionibus augeantur*, ‘and while many things concerning faith are improved by your measures’.

**sacerdotibus, popularibus,** ‘the priests, the people’: In a chiastic arrangement we again find the *duo ordines*, clerics and laymen, who play their part in the nomination of the future bishop. Cf. 4.11.4 *clericos opere, sermone populares ... consolabatur*, ‘he helped the clergy by his work, the laity by his discourse’, 7.9.11 *vel popularium cervicositas vel licentia clericorum*, ‘both the obstinacy of the laymen and the unruliness of the clerics’. See my comment on 7.5.1 *utriusque professionis ordinibus*. But in 7.1.3 *discessu primorum popularum populi* the distinction is between the leading stratum and the populace (elsewhere *plebs*).

Sidonius often uses *populus* for ‘community’, ‘laymen’, e.g. 6.1.6 and 7.5.1. Rhythm and parallelism may have caused him to prefer *popularibus* to *populo* here.

**manifestabuntur,** ‘will be laid down’: *Manifestare* occurs three times in the correspondence, twice meaning ‘to show’, ‘reveal’, but here probably in the legal, technical sense ‘to lay down’, ‘prescribe’, which is used in imperial rescripts, cf. CIL 5.532 *ut manifestatur caelestibus litteris Antonini Aug. Pii*, ‘as is laid down in the sublime letter of the Emperor Antoninus Pius’, Ulp. Dig. 1.6.2, 48.22.7.4. Thus *disponentur* and *manifestabuntur* are synonyms. For this variation technique, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 *Style*.

neque enim *ita desipimus in totum*,

**desipimus**, ‘I am foolish’: The verb is a hapax in Sidonius. It is in use since Pl. *Epid*. 138 *desipiebam mentis*, ‘I was out of my mind’, frequent in Cicero and Augustine, but rare in later authors. The construction with *ita ... ut* is characteristic for it, e.g. Cic. N.D. 1.123 *neque enim tam desipiens fuisset ut homunculi similem deum fingeret*, ‘indeed he could not have been so senseless as really to imagine god to be like a feeble human being’ (transl. Rackham, ed. Loeb), and Aug. Ep. 237.6 *an usque adeo desipiant, immo insaniunt, ut audiant dicere...* etc., ‘or are they so silly, or rather crazy, that they dare say, etc. (Note: *desipere* is less strong than *insanire.*) *Desipere in totum* is found only here.

The plural *desipimus* is striking, because Sidonius has written ‘I’, first person singular, during the whole of the letter. For the subdued effect it creates of retiring into the background, see above at sect. 3 *scitote*.

**in totum**, ‘completely’: For this circumlocution of the adverb, see Mossberg 1934: 67, e.g. 3.13.3 *nec est ... in totum silenda frugalitas*, ‘I must not entirely fail to mention his sobriety’; cf. 7.7.4 and 7.9.3 *in commune*, and my comment there.

ut *evocandum te primum, si venire possibile est, deinde, si quid sequiur,*

certe *consulendum decerneremus, nisi in omnibus obsecuturi*.

**evocandum**, ‘to invite to come’: *Evocare* occurs one more time: 5.14.3 *citius venies, quando non ad epulas sed ad lacrimas evocaris*, ‘you will come all the more promptly now that you are summoned not to a feast but to tears’ (Anderson). For the noun *evocatio*, cf. 7.5.1 *Biturigas decreto civium petitus adveni: causa fuit evocationis titubans ecclesiae status*, with my comment.

**consulendum**, ‘to consult’: The verb *consulere* categorizes the letter - in Fernández’ categories: ‘Ecclesiastical salutation: request for help’. It occurs three times, at the outset in a general way, sect. 1 *consulerem*, ‘if you lived nearby, I would always consult you’, and then
directed towards the question of the candidature, sect. 2 consulentem, ‘I consult you on a difficult matter’.

certe, ‘anyhow’, ‘at least’.

decerneremus, ‘we would decide’: The verb as above, in sect. 2 decernas, where the subject is Euphronius. Both Euphronius and Sidonius, as bishops, are entitled to take this kind of decision. Here, at the end of the letter, Sidonius underlines that he had taken the decision to consult Euphronius in function. Eventually, he is not the inferior of Euphronius, as both his and Euphronius’ diocese belong to the second rank in their province.

For the gerund with decernere, see the example cited at sect. 2 decernas, and e.g. Liv. 5.1.6 gens ... auxilium Veientibus negandum ... decrevit, ‘the people [= the Etruscans] decided to withhold support from the city of Veii’.

The conclusion of the letter refers to its beginning, the dilemma between coming in person and giving written advice. The circle is closed.

possibile is a typically post-classical word. Quintilian, who is our first witness, still felt he could not use it easily: Quint. Inst. 3.8.25 (one of the three topics in suasoria is:) δυνατόν, quod nostri possibile nominant: quae ut dura videatur appellatio, tamen sola est, ‘the “dynaton”, in Latin called the “possible”; this is a harsh term, but it is the only one there is’. See Amherdt 2001: 99 ad 4.2.1 si possibile factu esset, and for the suffix –bilis p. 199 ad 4.6.1 culpabiles. In Sidonius also 5.17.9 possibilia factu, and 4.14.2 possibilitas tua, ‘your ability’.

si quid sequius, ‘if not so’, ‘failing that’ (= sin minus): Sequius is the least common spelling and hence lectio difficilior. The manuscripts have sequius LR et ut vid. N: secus N MCTF. In all of the other eight occurrences in Sidonius’ letters, the manuscripts write secus.

For a similar shorthand, see Ep. 2.8.2 si quod secus, ‘if <you feel> otherwise’, and e.g. Cic. Att. 5.21.4 confirmas moram mihi nullam fore, deinde addis, si quid secus, te ad me esse venturum, ‘you confirm that nothing will impede me; then you add that – if things turn out differently – you will come my way’. Compare for the full phrase e.g. 4.6.2 si quid secus viantibus accidisset, ‘if anything untoward had happened to the travellers’.

nisi in omnibus obsecuturi, ‘if I had not the intention to obey you in everything’: With obsecuturi, the final word is polite obedience. It creates a subtle paradox with decerneremus.