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

van Waarden, J.A.

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Letter 9

‘Modestly Presenting a Masterpiece’

Introduction

1 Overview

This letter accompanies the despatch to the metropolitan of Tours, Perpetuus, of the address Sidonius has made to the community of Bourges. In it he has announced his choice of the town’s next bishop and given his reasons for it. His intervention has been successful, which fills him with great pride. The subsequent publication in extenso of the speech and the significant role it plays in the composition of Sidonius’ ‘credentials’ as a bishop, the episcopal letters of book 7, are proof that he was aware of its importance – and prospects – as a masterpiece of both diplomacy and literature.

In accordance with the requirements of polite manners, this triumph is presented modestly to Perpetuus. Perpetuus’ role – different from the two other colleagues Sidonius has already involved in the election, Agroecius in letter 5 and Euphronius in 8 – seems to be to ‘audit’ the proceedings.

2 Date

According to Loyen 3: 215, the letter was written in Clermont in the beginning of 471 AD, not long after the previous one, to Euphronius of Autun: ‘The election is finished and Sidonius has returned to Clermont. At the time of the election, Sidonius is still a tyro (incipienti, speech in Bourges sect. 7).’ In the Introduction to letter 5, section 2 Date, I have brought forward an argument for an earlier date for the proceedings in Bourges: spring – summer 470. This means the current letter was sent in the autumn of 470 or a little later.

3 Addressee

With this letter, as with numbers 5 to the metropolitan of Sens, and 8 to the bishop of Autun, we find ourselves in the circle of Sidonius’ northern connections.

The addressee is Perpetuus, bishop of Civitas Turonorum (present-day Tours, dept. Indre-et-Loire) and metropolitan of Lugdunensis III for thirty years, from 458/61 to 488/91. According to Greg. Tur. Mart. 1.6, the year of his consecration as bishop is the forty-sixth after the death of St Martin, hence 461. His thirty years in office are mentioned in Greg. Tur. Franc. 2.26. On closer inspection, the years 461-91 do not fit in well with the rest of the chronology of the bishops of Tours. There is a discrepancy of some two or three years; hence the alternative 458-88.\(^1\) In any case, he was bishop in 461 as he presided over the council of Tours in November of that year. However, I would like to give a possible indication for an earlier date. In the Vita sancti Martini by Paulinus of Périgueux, Paul. Petric. Mart. 6.111-56, it is related how, by St Martin’s intercession, the town of Arles was once relieved from the

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Visigoths. Paulinus had been commissioned by Perpetuus to write the *Vita*. In a difficult passage, lines 145-7, Paulinus seems to address Perpetuus and credit him with part of the success because of his prayer: *hanc quoque praesenti sociatus, sancte, patrono / eripis, et cogis trepidum tua vota fateri, / quae nollet donata tibi*, ‘you sided with your powerful patron [= Martinus], saintly man, and captured it too [i.e. the bridge of Arles]; then you forced the nervous man [= the man who has come to relate the story willy-nilly] to confess it had happened because of your prayer which he resented being granted to you’. Pietri in GC 3:226 f. concluded that Perpetuus must be credited for having seen the imminent danger for Arles on that occasion, which was the siege by king Theodoric in 458/9 who beleaguered the garrison of *magister militum* Aegidius in the town (cf. Greg. Tur. *Glor. Mart.* 1.2). Following this interpretation, we can accept the earlier date of 458/9 for the beginning of Perpetuus’ episcopate with more confidence. And Perpetuus appears to have won his spurs in the Gallo-Roman resistance against the Visigoths in the name of St Martin.

Of senatorial descent, he was a landowner with extensive possessions. As a bishop he undertook important building activities, in Tours and elsewhere. His testament provided for large grants to the churches in all the communities in his territory, not least in Tours itself (the fact is attested in the catalogue of the bishops of Tours, Greg. Tur. *Franc.* 10.31 VI; the existing text of the testament, however, is a modern forgery).

He was the fifth or sixth successor to Saint Martin, the illustrious and always present predecessor whose modest chapel he replaced ca. 460/70 with a *magna basilica*, as Gregory of Tours called it in his description (*Franc.* 2.14: length 160, width 60, height 45 feet), a *magnum ... opus*, according to Sidonius (*Ep.* 4.18.4). He assured himself of the support of other venerators of the saint, among whom Euphronius of Autun, Paulinus of Périgueux and Sidonius (see introduction to letter 8). Euphronius contributed the tombstone, Paulinus the *Versus de orantibus* to adorn a wall in the new church, and Sidonius wrote a poem in honour of the building and its founder, for the same purpose (preserved in *Ep.* 4.18.5 = *Carm.* 31). 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*.

A new festival was created celebrating the dedication of the new church. Caseau 1999: 43 expressly mentions bishop Perpetuus as one who ‘understood the power of festivals for gathering Christian pilgrims’, to localize ‘the *virtus* and goodwill of the saint … in time as well as in space’. The faithful benefited in the form of the saint’s intensified presence, and the town and its bishop benefited because an increased importance was conferred upon them.

Furthermore, according to Greg. Tur. *Franc.* 10.31 VI, *hic instituit ieiunia vigilasque*, ‘he regulated the days of fasting and the vigils’. See Duval and Barral i Altet 1991: 39. Compare the activities in this field by bishops like Mamertus of Vienne and Sidonius himself (see Introduction to letter 7.1, section 3 *Addressee*), and see General Introduction, ch. 4 *The church*, for contemporary building activities and liturgical initiatives.

181 Paulinus’ epic *De vita sancti Martini* was commissioned by, and is dedicated to Perpetuus (edition CSEL 16, 1888; see also Van Dam 1986 (for Sidonius’ contribution, and the date of the building activities in Tours, esp. p. 571)). The *Versus de orantibus* is in the CSEL volume on p. 165.

182 Ian Wood in CAH 14: 510 about this church, which was built during precisely the years that there was a lot of fighting in the Loire valley: ‘it was truly a capsule of eternity in a very unstable world’.

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4 Theme and function

- A justification

This letter justifies the policy Sidonius has pursued regarding the episcopal election in Bourges. As I have argued in the Introduction to letter 5, section 4 The election and consecration of bishops, a reasonable case can be made for the hypothesis that, ideally, previous to the final decision of the responsible bishops, the plebs should have selected three candidates. Due to the violence of the factions, this procedure had broken down, and the people had agreed to Sidonius’ proposal to omit the preliminary election and let him choose the right candidate.

To keep as close as possible to the canonical rules about the role of the bishops – the upheaval caused by the Gothic-Roman hostilities prevented a smooth functioning of the regulations –, he had invited two more distant colleagues, Agroecius and Euphronius, to supervise the election. We must suppose that they had given Sidonius their consent, or, at least, had not prevented him from taking the final decision, which was then presented by Sidonius to his public. Through the dispatch of a copy of this contio, the speech held in the cathedral of Bourges, attached to letter 9, Sidonius subsequently informed another colleague, the influential Perpetuus of Tours, metropolitan of the adjacent province of Lugdunensis III. 183

In sect. 3 quia plerique non minus, Sidonius argues that he could not have chosen a different tactic in Bourges from the one he has used. He has eliminated successively two of the three ordines: first the common people, then the clerus who protested but were divided. The reader infers that the boni remained, the senatorial honorati and the town council. Advised and backed by them, he has decided on a candidate from their ranks, Simplicius. In the wider context of book 7, the message is: the political and spiritual mess in Gaul is not the fault of the Gallo-Roman nobility. They make every possible effort to stabilize society, but it is the central government which lets them down, at the mercy of the pestering – and Arian – Visigoths.

- Letter and speech together

The letter is a so-called literary accompanying letter (see the Introduction to letter 3, section 1 Overview). It presents the addressee with the work it introduces, and thus dedicates it to him. 184 Except for smaller poems, which are incorporated in the body of several of Sidonius’ letters, more voluminous works were usually attached to the accompanying letter, like the

183 For further detail on the election of bishops, see the introduction to letter 5. Pietri in GC 3: 229 f. draws attention to Perpetuus’ side of the matter. He may have asked for the speech out of concern for the Arian threat, and the relief he felt at Sidonius’ success.

184 See Van Dam 2008: 15-21.
Panegyric on Anthemius, *Carm. 2*, and its accompanying letter, *Ep. 1.9* 185, or the collection of *Contestationes*, now lost, and its letter, *Ep. 7.3*. When publishing his correspondence, Sidonius separated these works from the introductory letters. The letters went into the letter collection, except for *Carm. 14* and *22*, where the letters, together with the poems they introduced, were incorporated into the volume of *Carmina*.

The case of the current letter is unique because it preserves the only prose work by Sidonius handed down to us apart from his correspondence. As Sidonius – as far as we know – did not envisage a separate edition of his orations, the collection of letters was the obvious place to publish the speech of Bourges. That he published it himself 186 and did not leave it to the hazards of being neglected by the addressee, had – I think – at least two reasons: firstly, because he saw the installation of his *alter ego* Simplicius as a telling event to crown the message of the letters concerning the resistance against Euric; secondly, out of sheer pride because, as a novice in the office of bishop, he had managed to pacify a whole population in a dangerous, warlike situation, only months after he had had to leave Rome as a disillusioned *praefectus urbi*, entangled in the Arvandus affair. See General Introduction, sect. 2.2 *Life*.

### 5 Position

The traditional order of the letters of book 7 makes it plausible that this letter and the previous one were deliberately set in a frame by the author, consisting of a first letter on the Bourges episode (5) and, after the Clermont letters (6, 7), two more on Bourges (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*.

Fernández López 1994: 62 n. 22 was struck by the symmetry – accompanying letter plus elaborate attachment – between the ninth letter of book 1 and the ninth letter of book 7, the first and the last book in the first collection Sidonius edited. One might even go beyond this formal argumentation, and add that *Ep. 1.9* marks the summit of Sidonius’ official career (*praefectus urbi*; see Küppers 2005: 267) and 7.9 of his career as a bishop. The first imploded, the latter he saw as a possibility to avenge himself. I would, however, not stress this point. In Sidonian criticism it is difficult to determine the turning point between ‘coded communication’ intended by the author, and exaggerated subtlety on the part of the critic. See General Introduction, par. 5.4.2 *Coded communication and allusive technique*. In this case I take the symmetry to be a coincidence.

### 6 Manuscripts

The letter is found in all of the manuscripts.

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185 Note esp. 1.9.7 *carmen ipsum ... in consequentibus charta deportat*, ‘this ... sheet carries you the poem itself added at the tail-end’ (Anderson).

186 Although theoretically we cannot exclude the possibility of a posthumous conflation from separate sources.
7 ‘You’ and ‘I’

Sidonius addresses Perpetuus throughout in the second person singular (personal and possessive pronouns as well as verbs). For himself he employs the first person singular (personal pronoun and verbs), except in sect. 3 valuissemus. There it may be inclusive, ‘we bishops’, i.e. Sidonius and Agroecius who supervised the election (see Introduction to letter 5, section 3 Addressee).

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

8 Epitome

To Perpetuus, bishop of Tours.

Sect. 1: ‘You are a man of wide reading in Catholic literature. The address I delivered in Bourges is not in the same class, but nevertheless you have asked me to bring it to your attention. Be prepared: it is down-to-earth, lacking in literary embellishments.’

Sect. 2 - 3: ‘The reason why is that I was completely occupied with the rivalries of the parties. There was a plethora of candidates, none of them prepared to give in. Fortunately, I had managed to get the consent of the people to cede their right to decide. Some priests were dissatisfied, but on the whole the parties were paralysed by mutual suspicion and could not but approve of my decision.’

Sect. 4: ‘Attached you will find the speech. I wrote it in no more than a couple of hours. I am afraid reading it will convince you of that, rather than my saying so.’ 187

Commentary

Section 1

Desiderio spiritalium lectionum,

spiritalium lectionum, ‘spiritual, edifying reading’: Viz. of the Bible and of Christian authors. The phrase is Sidonius’ own. One usually finds collocations such as Aug. Serm. 21D.1 divinae lectiones, Hil. in Psalm. 127.10 lectionum dominicarum, and in Sidonius Ep. 4.9.3 sacrorum voluminum lectio, and 7.18.4 lectionis sacrae, of reading the Bible. Cassiod. Inst. praef. 1 opposes institutionem … divinarum … lectionum, ‘the instruction in divine reading [in Cassiodorus: the Bible plus the patres]’, and septem titulus saecularium lectionum, ‘the seven branches of secular reading’.

A predilection for the Bible and ecclesiastical authors of course characterizes a priest, like Himerius about whom Sidonius writes in 7.13.2 summa homini cura de litteris, sed maxime religiosis, ‘the man cares much for literature, but chiefly religious literature’.

187 On p. 48, Fernández López 1994 assigns this letter to subcategory 1.3.1.5, ‘Letter including a discourse’. She analyses it on pp. 61-65. For her method, see General Introduction, sect. 5.3 Classification and analysis.
Note that the *lectio* of edifying writings often took place during meals, and was a reading out aloud – a habit of cultivated people. See below on *aurium ... censuram*, ‘the criticism of your ears’. Cf. Amherdt 2001: 260 on 4.9.3 (at the home of a country gentleman who lives as a *conversus*) *inter haec sacrorum voluminum lectio frequens, per quam inter edendum saepius sumit animae cibum*, ‘moreover, frequent readings of the Scriptures by which, at meals, he time and again consumes food for his soul’.

**quarum tibi tam per authenticos quam per disputatores bybliotheca fidei catholicae perfamiliaris est**

‘through whose components – both the Biblical authors and their commentators – the library of Catholic faith is perfectly familiar to you’

From the outset this letter, and the *contio* which it accompanies, are tied up with the doctrinal and political dispute which is the theme of much of book 7, the struggle against Arianism and Visigothic aggression. The keynote is struck by *fidei catholicae*. The failure of those *qui fidelem fovent Arrianorum*, described in the previous letter (7.8.3), lingers in the reader’s mind. The cycle of the letters 5 to 9 is going to end with the triumph of *fides catholica* through the election of Simplicius. And the eminent addressee Perpetuus, central to Catholic orthodoxy as an influential venerator of St Martin, is going to be a witness to it. The Scriptures and the true theologians are on their side.

**quarum ... tam per authenticos quam per disputatores bybliotheca fidei catholicae**

*spiritales lectiones* consist of two parts: the bible and the theological reflections upon it. Withal, he is familiar with the whole library of Catholicism. The *spiritales lectiones* and the *bybliotheca fidei catholicae* coincide. I endorse Semple’s interpretation (note ad loc.: ‘I think that, if *quarum* is retained, it must depend on *authenticos* and *disputatores*; and then *fidei catholicae* will depend on *bybliotheca* which is its natural concordance’). For a similar case of a genitive of the relative pronoun which defines a noun at some distance, with a personal pronoun in between, cf. e.g. 1.5.8 (*Roma*) *cuius mihi non solum formas verum etiam naumachias videatur*.

The text constitution and the interpretation of this phrase are controversial. Other editors make *quarum* define *bybliotheca fidei catholicae*, and translate ‘the spiritual reading among which the library of Catholic faith is perfectly familiar to you, both through the Biblical authors and through their commentators’. This has two drawbacks: one, to pile two genitives, *quarum* and *fidei catholicae*, on *bybliotheca* is not really defendable; two, it would be discourteous – and improbable – for Sidonius to say that Perpetuus knew only a part (i.e. the Catholic one) of all edifying literature. In that case, non-Catholic theology would also be classed as edifying reading.

Luetjohann did not believe *bybliotheca fidei catholicae* belonged together, and suggested either to move *fidei catholicae* and let it follow *disputatores*, ‘defenders of the Catholic faith’, or to rule it out altogether. Nobody has followed him in this radical solution, but the unease is there all the same.

Anderson came up with the solution to replace *quarum* with *quoniam*, which comes down to: ‘You are fond of edifying reading. You have read everything a Catholic might wish to read. That’s why you have also asked for my speech.’ That makes sense (Sidonius’ speech as a collector’s item) and makes for an easier reading of the subordinate clause. If an emendation is really necessary, I think *quamquam* would be preferable, because it better preserves the
taste of socially desirable modesty: ‘You are fond of edifying reading. Of course you have read everything a Catholic might wish to read. Nevertheless, you are so kind as to ask also for my speech.’ (Sidonius had no objection to the sound of quamquam – tam – quam; cf. 9.11.9 ecce habes litteras tam garrulas ferme quam requirebas; quamquam sunt omnes ... loquacissimae.) However, Semple’s solution seems to me to remove any serious doubts as to the correctness of the manuscript tradition.

authenticos, ‘Biblical authors’, ‘Holy Scripture’: So called because of the primordial and authoritative status of the Biblical writers, esp. the prophets, the evangelists and the apostles. This meaning was in common use in Sidonius’ circle, cf. Claud. Mam. Anim. 1.2 sed video prophetas, evangellistas, apostolos, post etiam authenticoorum plurimos tractatores, ‘I see the prophets, the evangelists and the apostles, and later also many commentators of the Scriptures’. (See also Engelbrecht 1886: 465.) The word is first found in Tertullian and Cyprian, its meaning ranging from ‘original’ to ‘primordial’ and ‘authoritative’. Cf e.g. Tert. Praescr. 36 (visit the churches of the apostles with their seats still in place) apud quas ipsae authenticae littere eorum recitantur, ‘where their primordial writings are being read’. For the underlying notion ‘authoritative’, cf. e.g. Conc. Afr. SL 149 p. 91 l. 78 hoc authenticum concilium Nicaenum, and see the glossographers, Gloss. 2.250.47 auctoraticium, 4.473.9 auctoritate plenum. See also Gualandri 1979: 146.

Claudianus Mamertus distinguishes further on in his work, when he presents his argumentation, between, firstly, the ideas of the philosophers, secondly, the contribution of the Bible commentators, or, more generally, of the Christian theologians, which ranks higher, and, finally, at the top of the pyramid, the Scriptures themselves: Anim. 2.9 sed istic nunc locus et tempus est, ut sicut a philosophis ad tractatores, sic a tractatoribus ad authenticos gradum consequa ratione faciamus. Incidentally, the explanation of authenticos by TLL 2: 1598.79 ‘i. apostolos’ is too narrow: the authentici the author is about to discuss, are the deutero-canonical ‘Book of Wisdom’, Sapientia, as well as the apostle Paul.

Catholic faith and the Scriptures are easily associated in a polemic context, see e.g. Aug. Ep. 36.12 detestabilis multumque fidei catholicae scripturisque divinis apertissime contraria haeresis Manichaeorum, ‘the despicable heresy of the Manichaeans, diametrically opposed to Catholic faith and Divine Scripture’.

disputatores, ‘exegetes’, ‘commentators’: Having given examples of the connotation ‘feri i.q. interpres’, TLL 5/1: 1442.53 in this case suggests ‘is qui evangelium praedicat’. With Savaron, I prefer, ‘commentator’, or even broader: ‘theologian’, as a synonym of tractator, cf. Sidon. Ep. 2.9.5 Origenes ... sacerdos cavendusque tractator, and the passages from Claudianus Mamertus cited above. For the meaning ‘exegete’, cf. e.g. Aug. in Psalm. 87.1 psalmi huius ... titulus habet aliquid quod novum negotium disputatori afferat. As an alternative, one might prefer the more common connotation ‘debater’, ‘advocate’, esp. in doctrinal debates, as e.g. Aug. c. Iulian. 1.44 (PL 44, c. 671 l. 22) tam invictum ad eos [sic! Manichaeos] debellandos catholicis disputatoribus praebet auxilium, ‘it provides the catholic debaters with unsurpassed help to beat them’. The stem disputa- is found one more time in Sidonius, viz. Ep. 9.9.10 disputatorie, ‘controversially’, ‘in the manner of a debate’.

bybliotheca, ‘collection (of books)’: Cf. Petr. 48.4 (Trimalchio boasting he loves erudition:) tres bybliothecas habeo, unam Graecam, alteram Latinam, ‘I’ve got three libraries, one Greek, and one Latin’, and Sidon. Ep. 4.11.6 (= Carm. 30), v. 4-5 triplex bybliotheca quo magistro, / Romana, Attica, Christiana, fulsit, ‘under his [Claudianus Mamertus’] teaching, the triple library of
Roman, Greek and Christian literature flourished’. The word also means ‘literature’, ‘learning’, in Macr. Sat. 6.9.9 *nam quia saeculum nostrum ab Ennio et omni bibliotheca vetere descivit, multa ignoramus, quae non laterent si veterum lectio nobis esset familiaris*. Note the similarity between the current passage and the words *si veterum lectio nobis esset familiaris*, ‘if we were familiar with reading the ancients’.

In the phrase under consideration, the Christian ‘library’ of Perpetuus consists of biblical and theological books.

Separate sections for Greek and Latin literature were a feature of Roman public libraries (e.g. the famous Bibliotheca Ulpia, with two halls facing each other, and the column of Trajan in between) and of some private libraries as well (see the above cited arrangement in Trimalchio’s house). See DNP 2: 634-47 s.v. ‘Bibliothek’, esp. 636. On a more sober scale, as in the villa of Sidonius’ relative Ferreolus, the home library contained two collections on different sides of the reading room, one for edifying reading (where the ladies sat) and one for Latin literature (reserved for the gentlemen) (cf. Ep. 2.9.4).

*perfamiliaris*, ‘very familiar’: Note the repetition *per- per- per-*, which adds to the stylistic brille of the clause.

*etiam illa, quae maxume tuarum scilicet aurium minime digna sunt occupare censuram, noscere cupis*;

*maxume*, ‘particularly’: It reinforces *tuarum*: ‘especially your (ears)’. The combination with *scilicet* feels somewhat tautological though. Alternatives in the MSS are *maxime* MTCFP: *maxumum* LN. Wouweren conjectured *maxumam*, which might well be right: *maxumam tuarum scilicet aurium … censuram*, ‘the penetrating judgement of such ears as yours’. Cf. 3.7.3 *summa censura*, ‘strict criticism’. For different endings in the wordplay *maximus-minimus*, cf. 8.6.11 *ut tibi … quam minimum blandiaris, maxume iniungo*. Note the balancing of *maxume* and *minime* to the detriment of immediate clarity.

*tuarum … aurium … occupare censuram*, ‘to be heard by your critical ears’, ‘to be subject to your expert observation’: Cf. Ep. 4.3.1 *cum in examen aurium tuarum quippe scriptus adducitur*. The phrase *aurium censuram*, either with *censura* or with *examen*, is not found outside Sidonius. One need not interpret *aurium* as metaphorical. It may be an indication that Sidonius expected the text to be read out aloud, as was the practice during meals. See above on *desiderio spiritualum lectionum*.

*Aurium* is gen. inversus (see my comment on 7.1.5 *orationum frequentia*). *Aurium censuram* is equivalent to *aures censentes*. *Aures occupare* is found e.g. Verg. A. 3.294 *incredibilis rerum fama occupat auris*, and Curt. 10.1.36 *falsis criminibus occupant aures*. In the context of the dedication of a literary work, Phaedr. 3 prol. 6 f. *non ergo causa est manibus id tangi tuis, / quod occupatis auribus non convenit*, ‘so do not feel obliged to touch what does not suit your busy ears [the dedicatee has said he has more urgent concerns than reading poetry]’.

For the context of literary production and its social implications, see my comment on 7.3.2 *doctissimo examini tuo*. Compare 7.2.2 *salva vestrarum aurium severitate*, with my comment.
siquidem iniungis, ut orationem, quam videor ad plebem Biturigis in ecclesia sermocinatus, tibi dirigam;

iniungis, ‘you ask’: For the iubes – pareo motif in the exchange of literary production, see the referral at 7.3.1 parendi.

orationem quam videor ... sermocinatus, ‘the speech which I am supposed to have delivered’: The use of videor may seem strange because it is certain that Sidonius has held this speech. It was understood well by Warmington, who remarked in his additional note ad loc., p. 613 f.: ‘Quam videor looks troublesome. But it simply introduces a (mock-)modest colloquial understatement like the common interjection of opinor “I think”, “I believe”, when I with everyone else know.’ I suggest for comparison English usage in an utterance like: ‘A couple of years ago, I wouldn’t have believed I would be digging borders. Well, that’s what I seem to be doing now.’ There ‘to seem’ expresses astonishment and (self-)irony rather than modesty – which would also suit very well in the current phrase. Cf. 3.1.2 ecclesiam Arverni municipioli, cui praepositus, etsi immerito, videor, ‘the church of the small town of Clermont of which I seem to be the head – undeservedly though’: socially desirable modesty in the guise of astonishment at one’s position. Finally compare 7.17.4 praepositos illis quidem videtur sanctus Auxanius, where videtur is used to create politeness and diplomacy, because Auxanius is an ineffective abbot and has to be supervised.

An imitation of the phrase is found in Alc. Avit. Ep. 57.1 in homilia, quam nuper ad populum Lugdunensem in dedicatione basilicae videor concionatus.

On this interpretation, there is no need for Bellès’ note ad loc., which supposes that videor does not so much qualify the fact of Sidonius having pronounced the address, as the way in which it was done, in a colloquial tone, sermocinatus. It would have been more of a sermocinatio than an oratio (see below).

Sermocinatus: The verb sermocinari is the word for speaking in public in an informal way. See my discussion of it on 7.2.2 quodcumque mihi sermocinaturo. For sermocinari + acc. we have no examples with orationem, but pronouns are regularly found, cf. e.g. Apul. Met. 2.15 haec Milone diutine sermocinante tacitus ingemescbam, Claud. Mam. Anim. 3.17 quidquid illud ampliuscule sermocinati sumus, and Sidon. Ep. 5.17.2 idque ... sermocinemur, 7.2.2 quodcumque mihi sermocinaturo.

ad plebem Biturigis, ‘to the people in Bourges’: Plebs is here loosely ‘the inhabitants of the town’, cf. 7.8.2 populus Biturix, with my comment. As a rule, plebs denotes more specifically the ordinary people, the populace – with its specific role in the procedure of the nomination of a bishop; see the Introduction to letter 5, section 4 The election and consecration of bishops. We will have to discuss the level of complexity of the speech in relation to its public.

Biturigis is abl. loci, cf. e.g. Greg. Tur. Glor. mart. 79 a sancto Ursino, qui ... eclestian Biturigis primum instituit restitque. For the town of Biturigae see my comment on 7.5.1 Biturigas decreto civium petitus adveni.

non rhetorica partitio, non oratoriae m[ach]inae, non grammaticales figurae

As will appear from my discussion of the address, later on, its stylistic level is quite high (Gualandri 1979: 14), so here again we meet with the usual amount of ritualized
understatement. In this special case of a public speech by a bishop, the speaker carefully steers a midway course between pious bareness and profane exuberance. He applies what Banniard 1992: 423 has called ‘une éloquence religieuse d’apparat’. A particularly clear case in point is Sidonius’ description of the oration at the dedication of the new church of Lyon by his mentor Faustus, a celebrated preacher at the time: 9.3.5 ubi te inter spiritales regulas vel forenses medioximum quiddam contionantem, quippe utrarumque doctissimum disciplinarum, … ambiebamus, ‘there we admired you as you spoke steering a middle course between religious and forensic usage, being a master of both disciplines’. Jerome, when writing to Eustochium on virginity, promised that his style – in keeping with the subject – would be sober: Hier. Ep. 22.2 nulla erit rhetorici pompa sermonis. For the obligatory modesty with regard to one’s own accomplishments, see General Introduction, par. 5.1.2 Epistolary characteristics.

rhetorica partitio, ‘rhetorical partition’: Called διαίρεσις in Greek, partitio is the rhetorical division into parts or heads. See the treatment in Cic. Inv. 1.31-33., which begins recte habita in causa partitio instillurem et perspicuam totam efficit orationem, ‘an adequate partition makes the whole of the speech clear and convenient’, and the whole of his Particiones oratoriae, which begins like any catechism (sect. 4) orationis quot sunt partes? quattuor: ... narratio et confirmatio ... principium et peroratio, ‘How many parts does an oration have?’ ‘Four: narrative and proof, beginning and end’. Cf. Quint. Inst. 1.2.13 taceo de partitionibus et declamationibus rhetorum. In Sidonius cf. 8.6.6 dixit disposite graviter ardenter, ‘he spoke well ordered, seriously and enthusiastically’. In other similar enumerations it is grammar which has the role of dividing and defining, e.g. 5.2.1 grammatica dividit ... oratoria declamat, 4.1.2 si quid orator declamatorium ... grammaticus regulare ... considerunt.

oratoriae minae, ‘oratorical fireworks’: Anderson translates: ‘shocks’, Bellès: ‘intimidacions’. Minae is among the technical terms, one of the lumina sententiarum and schemata, in Quint. Inst. 9.2.103 minas, id est κατάπληξιν. See Semple 1930: 41 f. in his defence of minae: ‘the common forensic trick of browbeating and terrifying his audience’. The conjecture machinae was introduced by Mohr (and adopted by Loyen) on account of Quint. Inst. 11.1.44 nam ut orantem pro capite sollicitudo deceat et cura et omnes ad amplificandam orationem quasi machinae, ita etc.: an advocate, pleading for the life of his client, will apply every trick and artifice he knows, ‘like siege engines’. However, as we have Quintilian’s definition of minae, there is no need for this change.

grammaticales figurai, ‘grammatical figures’: Figura is defined by Quint. Inst. 9.1.11 as follows: (figura dictur) in sensu vel sermone aliqua a vulgari et simplici specie cum ratione mutatio, ‘(“figure” means) a rational change in meaning or language from the ordinary and simple form’ (transl. H. E. Butler, Loeb edition of 1920-22). A distinction is made in ancient theory between figurae verborum and figurae sententiarum. Figurae verborum, σχήμαν λέξεως, concern the embellishment of words or word groups, figurae sententiarum, σχήμαν διανοίας, the ways of expressing a thought. Figurae verborum, in their turn, are divided into grammatical and rhetorical figures. The grammatical ones are about departures from regular morphology and syntax. Thus, e.g., Serv. Gramm. 4 p. 448 l. 2 Keil defines: nam cum dico ‘pars in frusta secant’, quoniam in verbis est quaeoestio, figura grammatical est – a question of singular/plural –, which he constrasts with an example of praeritio, of which he says: ad oratores pertinet haec figura. For the theory and ample references see Lausberg: 308-455.

Servius and Sidonius are the only ones to write the exact phrase figura grammaticalis, although in the case of Sidonius, as I see it, with a less restricted and technical meaning. The
succession of *rhetorica partitio*, *oratoria minae*, *grammaticales figurai* is from large to small, first the general layout of the speech, then the compelling course of the argument, and finally the wording in detail.

Note that all three of the parallel phrases *rhetorica partitio*, *oratoria minae*, and *grammaticales figurai*, have the adjective first (‘premodifier structure’). Whether or not this is significant can only be proved by an in-depth study of the word order in Sidonius, which is of prime importance to make progress in understanding his style. See my remark in General Introduction, sect. 7 Future research.

congruentem decorum disciplinamque suppeditaverunt
decorem disciplinamque, ‘beauty and professional skill’, ‘elegance and expertise’: For this use of *disciplina* in Sidonius, cf. 1.1.1 Gai Plinii disciplinam maturitatemque, ‘Gaius Plinius with his highly developed artistry’ (Anderson); see Köhler 1995: 106 ad loc.: ‘vollendet entwickelte (Brief-)kunst’. Cf. 8.6.6 dixit disposite graviter ardenter, magna acrimonio maiore facundia maxima disciplina, ‘he spoke well ordered, seriously and enthusiastically, with great energy, even greater fluency and the greatest possible expertise’ (Anderson translates disciplina with ‘artistry’). Also 8.10.1 quamquam in epistula tua servant caritas dulcedinem, natura facundiam, peritia disciplinam, ‘although in your letter affection maintains constant charm, natural talent a flow of eloquence, and experience an unfailling correctness’ (Anderson). See TLL 5/1: 1318.62 ‘metonymice … i.q. … ars … peritia’. There is a link between *disciplina* here and exacte, ‘according to the rules’, in the next section.

The phrase is a collocation of Sidonius’ own brand, primarily dictated by elegance of expression (note the alliteration), rather than a clear-cut difference in meaning. Strictly speaking, providing *decor* is part of an orator’s *disciplina*. For this stylistic idiosyncrasy, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

For a different connotation of *disciplina* in my corpus, see 7.6.9 clericalis … *disciplina*, with comment.

**Section 2**

*neque enim illic, ut exacte perorantibus mos est, … libuit aptari.*

With cultivated irony the author says he has not delivered a polished speech – he did not feel like it and had no time for it because of the complex situation in the town –, whereas in fact it is as polished a speech as anyone could wish for. Apart from that, Sidonius appears to be conscious of the different requirements of speaking in church and in court, and the need for a priest to steer a mid-way course at public occasions; see above my introduction to the phrase *non rhetorica partitio … non grammaticales figurai*.

*neque* = *non*: See my comment on 7.1.1 *neccum*.

*enim*, ‘you know’: Three successive times the argument will be carried on by means of ‘for’: *neque enim … libuit aptari, nam …subtrahebat, and etenim … erat*. Note the fundamental difference between *enim* and *nam*. The character of *enim* is interactional. In the current clause it ‘tones down a challengeable utterance’, according to the definition by Kroon 1995: 196-98. Sidonius says: ‘I have not embellished my speech. *Of course I should have done so, but, you know, I didn’t feel like it.*’ Then *nam* takes over and presents the reader with a factual
explanation: ‘I didn’t feel like it, because my energy was absorbed by the quarrel.’ See Kroon 1995: 147 f. Finally, *etenim* in Sidonius seems to share the presentational character of *nam*. It provides background information. It occurs seven times in the correspondence (against eighty-one for *enim*). Take e.g. 1.5.10 (I have not visited the court yet; it is so overcrowded there) *interveni etenim nuptiis patricii Ricimeris, ‘it so happens that I have arrived at the moment of the marriage of Ricimer*. Likewise in the current phrase *etenim tanta turba erat: ‘My energy was absorbed by the quarrel. The number of competitors was actually overwhelming.’

*illic*, ‘there’, ‘in it’: Viz. in the *oratio ad plebem*.

**ut exacte perorantibus mos est**, ‘as is usual for consummate speakers’: *Exactus*, ‘perfect’, ‘scrupulous’, ‘precise’, occurs nine times in the correspondence, which is a high rate, compared to its relative rarity in other authors. The word itself is attested since the first century AD, but the positive of the adverb is used only by Sidonius. Earlier authors have *exactius*, e.g. Mela 1.24 *exactius oras situsque dicturo*.

*Exactus* is applied to literary production by Sidonius in 4.22.6 *si quid simpliciter edamus, insani, si quid exacte, praesumptiosi vocamus*, and 8.11.5 *faciebat siquidem versus oppido exactos tam pedum mira quam figurarum varietate*. From these passages it appears that its opposite is *simplex*, ‘unadorned’, and that poetry can be called *exactus*, ‘consummate’, on account of the variety of its metres and figures of speech.

*Exacte* is linked with *disciplina* in the previous section.

*Perorare*, ‘to plead’, ‘harangue’, is classical, e.g. Nep. *Phoc*. 4.2 *ne perorandi quidem et data est facultas et dicendi causam*. It is the t.t. for the pleading of advocates, e.g. Sidon. *Ep*. 6.3.2 *togatorum ... perorantum peritiam, ‘the skill of practising advocates’, and, more in general, describes oratory, e.g. 8.3.3 *suspending perorandi illud ... celeberrimum flumen*, ‘stop that famous flow of oratory’. The verb is combined with *exacte* only by Sidonius.

*aptari*, ‘to apply’: Late antique authors have a marked preference for the (already classical) usage of passive infinitive with impersonalia (*licet, contingit* etc.). See LHS 2: 353 and e.g. Den Boeft et al. 2002: 173 ad Amm. 24.6.2 *eadem loca purgari*. Cf. *Ep*. 7.10.1 *contigit ... videri*, with my comment.

**aut pondera historica aut poetica schemata scintillasve controversialium clausularum**

This triad of history, poetry and forensic oratory credits the orator with a generous share in the literary spectrum.

*pondera historica*, ‘important examples from history’: As so often Sidonius combines two current words into a new phrase. *Pondera historica* is new, but we have e.g. *Cic. de Orat*. 2.73 *omnia sentientiarum gravitate, omnia verborum ponderibus est utendum*. *Pondus*, ‘gravity’, ‘dignity’, has to do with the orator’s *auctoritas*, with the weight his opinions carry, cf. *Cic. Part*. 19 *auctoritas ac pondus in verbis*, see Lausberg: 182. There is a typical collocation with *sensus, sententia, ‘thought’, ‘idea’, e.g. Quint. *Inst*. 9.3.74 *rem alioqui levem sententiarum pondere implevit*, Jul. Vict. *Ars* 27 *sententiarum pondera*, Sidon. *Ep*. 9.7.2 *pondus in sensibus*. *Pondus* is about content, see Loyen 1943: 175, e.g. *Ep*. 4.3.1 *ponderis Apuleiani fulmen*, because of Apuleius’ erudition as a philosopher, and *Carm*. 2.190 *quo pondere Varro* (scil. *placet*).
The task of history is to provide examples, e.g. Quint. *Inst. 12.11.17 rerum exempla ab historicis ... petuntur*, Plin. *Nat. 1 per exempla historica*. Its aim is veritas, as Sidonius himself defines in *Ep. 4.1.2 historicus verum* (scil. condidit), 4.3.8 *historica veritate*. For its ‘weight’, compare the Greek term ὄγκος as a characteristic of historiography, cf. e.g. Cass. Dio 66.9.4 (mentioning banal details) ἀνάξιον τοῦ τῆς ἱστορίας ὄγκου ἐστίν, ‘is beneath the dignity of writing history’. Thus, in this collocation, *pondera* is a substitute for *exempla*, ‘serious, weighty, authoritative examples’.

Note the technique of constant rearrangement on the lexical level, when comparing this phrase, and the following *poetica schemata*, with 4.3.8 *amoenitate poetica et historica veritate* and 9.7.2 *opportunitas in exemplis .. pondus in sensibus*. See General Introduction, sect. 6.2 *Style*. The parallel with 9.7.2 goes even further. See below.

*poetica schemata*, ‘poetical ways of putting things’, ‘poetical turns of style’ (Semple): *Schema, Latin figura*, is a figure of speech, a rhetorical figure, cf. e.g. Quint. *Inst. 4.2.118 figurae ... poeticae* (which deviate from natural usage), 9.1.13 (schema) *quod sit a simplici atque in promptu posito dicendi modo poetice vel oratorie mutatum*. See Lausberg: 184. It belongs to the field of *ornatus*, contributing to *voluptas*. Semple 1930: 42 aptly cites Tac. *Dial. 20.5 exigitur enim iam ab oratore etiam poeticus decor*, ‘for we now expect from a speaker even poetic beauty’.

*scintillas(...)* *controversi alium clausal um*, ‘brilliantly acute final flourishes’: This expresses the same idea as in *Ep. 9.7.2 fulmen in clausulis*, with the more subtle *scintilla* instead of *fulmen*. In his discussion of *sententiae*, γνώμαι, ‘pointed observations’, ‘maxims’, Quintilian calls them *lumina*, ‘highlights’, which are used for special effect in rounding off a period: Quint. *Inst. 8.5.2 sed consuetudo iam tenuit, ut mente concepta sensus vocaremus, lumina autem praecipue in clausulis posita sententias*. Cf. ibid. 13 f. and 28 f. Cf. Symm. *Ep. 7.9 scintillare acuminibus atque sententiis epistulas tuas gaudeo*. Santelia 2005: 38 n. 4 called it ‘la battuta a sorpresa finale’ and pointed out its popularity in Late Antiquity. Indeed, Quintilian had already criticized its excessive use in his own time.

The noun *scintilla*, ‘sparkle’, ‘flash’, here only in Sidonius, and seldom applied to oratory, but cf. the warning in Quint. *Inst. 8.5.29* (in the case of an excess of *sententiae*) *lumina illa non flammae, sed scintillas inter fumum emicantibus similis dixeris*, ‘you can say those “highlights” are not like a flame, but like sparkles which flash forth between the smoke’, meaning ‘too much of ought is good for nought’.

I translate the adjective *controversi(alis), ‘controversial’, with ‘acute’, ‘brilliant’. It stems from the *controversiae*, the debates in which students of rhetoric were trained. In these, the essence was to hit home effectively with unexpected, dazzling formulations. TLL 4: 787.82 unhelpfully has ‘i. de quo controversia existit’. Fernández López 1994: 62 n. 24 preferred to tone down the meaning of the adjective here to a generic ‘rhetorical’. The adjective is further attested in Agenn. *Grom. p. 71* (‘controversial’, ‘disputed’) and once more in Sidonius, *Ep. 8.11.6* (the deceased rhetorician Lampridius was) *in materia controversi ali fortis et lacertosus*, where Anderson translated ‘in argumentation’.

For the combination of *controversia* with *sententiae*, cf. e.g. Petr. 118.2 *controversiam sententiolis vibrantibus pictam*, ‘a forensic exercise speckled with glittering points’.

The *clausulae* are not rhythmical sentence endings in a narrow sense, as Merchie 1921: 169 thought, although, of course, rhythm is part of the effect of a ‘final flourish’. Thus correctly Belles 3: 51 n. 91 ad loc.
This discussion of *scintillas controversialis clausurarum* is based on Semple 1930: 42 f. who pointed out its roots in Quintilian.

**nam cum me partium seditiones studia varietates in diversa raptarent,**

*nam*, ‘because’: See above on *enim*.

**partium seditiones studia varietates**, ‘the discord, bias and divergence of the parties’: About the same situation in Bourges 7.5.1 has the phrase *fremit populus per studia divisus* (see my comment ad loc.). A similar uproar at the election of a new bishop in Chalon is evocatively described in *Ep. 4.25*. For a discussion of episcopal elections, see the Introduction to letter 5, section 4 *The election and consecration of bishops*.

For *varietas*, ‘divergence of opinion’, cf. e.g. Cic. *Nat. 1.1.2 in varietate et dissensione*. The remaining five occurrences in the correspondence have different meanings.

The beginning and end of the ternary group have fives syllables each and a rhythmically similar form. For the use of virtual synonyms in this kind of group, see General Introduction, sect. 6.2 Style.

**in diversa raptarent**, ‘tore me apart’: The intensive-frequentative *raptare*, here only in the correspondence, is expressive of the stress Sidonius says he was under. For the phrase cf. e.g. Amm. 17.13.7 *sed fluctuantes ambiguitate mentium in diversa rapiebantur*.

**sic dictandi mihi materiam suggerebat iniuria, quod tempus occupatio subtrahebat.**

*sic ... quod* instead of *sic ... ut* is specific to Sidonius, treated by Amherdt 2001: 129 ad 4.3.3 *tota illa dictio* etc. A list is provided in Grupe’s index p. 476 s.v. ‘*quod* post *ita*’. See LHS 2: 581 for linguistic context.

**iniuria**, ‘outrage’: Translators have hitherto failed to appreciate correctly the legal character of the word *iniuria*. They are either too vague (Loyen: ‘le spectacle de l’injustice’) or miss the point (Anderson translates: ‘sense of grievance’). *Iniuria* is, as OLD 4 defines: ‘Any act, insulting in kind and intention, calculated to injure a person’s reputation or outrage his feelings (ranging from physical assault to defamation of character)’. Cf. e.g. Ulp. *Dig. 47.10.1.1/2 iniuriam fieri Labeo ait aut re aut verbis*; *re, quotiens manus inferuntur, verbis, quotiens convicium fit*; *omniaque iniuriam aut in corpus inferri aut ad dignitatem aut ad infamiam pertinere*. By using the word here, Sidonius suggests that party strife resulted in a gamut from slander to violence.

**occupatio**, ‘my busy existence’ (Anderson), ‘my preoccupation’: Already classical, e.g. *Rhet. Her. 3.40 sicut a ceteris studiis abducimur nonnumquam occupatone*.

The conclusion of the sentence is carefully composed. *Dictandi materiam* and *tempus* are aligned and have contrastive focus; *suggerebat iniuria* and *occupatio subtrahebat* form a chiasmus, with alliteration and end rhyme in *suggerebat* and *subtrahebat*.

**etenim tanta erat turba competitorum,**

*etenim*, ‘the fact was that’: See above on *enim*.
ut cathedrae unius numerosissimos candidatos nec duo recipere scamna potuissent.

The conceit, playing on the the metaphorical resp. literal meaning of *cathedrae ... scamna* ‘chair/office ... benches’, underlined by the chiasmus which highlights *unius, numerosissimos* and *duo*, graphically represents the excessive number of candidates. Here again, we see how carefully contrived this short letter is, a sumptuous platter on which the allegedly poor *contio* is being served.

**cathedrae unius ... duo scamna**, ‘one episcopal throne ... two benches (for the priests)’:

*Cathedra* is ‘chair of the bishop’ as well as ‘the bishop’s office’: see my comment on 7.6.9 *cathedris sibi traditis eliminatos*.

The *scamna* are probably not just any benches, but the only benches which the church interior in fact provided for, the two rows of seats for the co-celebrating priests on both sides of the bishop’s throne at the back of the apse. This ensemble is called the synthronos/on (σύνθρονος/ον). It is found in early Christian churches in East and West. A striking example is the synthronos in the central apse of San Vitale in Ravenna (sixth century). In Gaul remains are attested in, e.g., the ancient cathedrals of Nice/Cimiez and Riez, and in churches in Vienne and Lyon. See Duval and Barral i Altet 1991: 216 ff. Ibidem pp. 190 and 193 for the floor plans of the cathedral of Riez and of Saint-Ferréol in Vienne. In Greg. Tur. Franc. 2.21 we get a fleeting glimpse of, at least, the bishop’s throne in the cathedral of Clermont – occupied by the devil’s unholy bottom.

There are astonishingly few descriptions of this widespread arrangement, and consequently the designation of the seats of the priests remains vague. The nun Aetheria once uses the term *cathedrae* for the priests’ seats, but the impression is of a temporary arrangement: *Peregr. Aeth. 45 ponitur episcopo cathedra media ecclesia maiore, id est ad martyrium, sedent hinc et inde presbyteri in cathedris et stant clerici omnes*. Therefore we have to turn to the similar secular organisation of law courts. For *scamna* as the benches of the assessors of a judge, probably in the apse of a basilica, see 1.3.2 *scamnis tamen amicalibus deputabuntur*, ‘they will be given places on the benches reserved for his friends’. The situation is as follows: Gaudentius has been promoted to the rank of *vicarius*, probably of the Seven Provinces; as a Lord Chief Justice, he from then on thrones above his admiring *amici* (suspiciunt), who flank him as advocates; the same *amici* despised him before his promotion when they were on the same level, next to him on the benches (consessu despiciebant). Cf. Mart. 5.41.7 f. *sedere in equitum liceat an tibi scamnis / videbo, Didyme, non licet maritorum*, ‘whether it is correct that you sit on the benches of the *equites*, Didymus – I’ll look into that, but it’s not correct that you sit on those of the husbands’. See Köhler 1995: 172 ad 1.3.2.

As earlier with *cathedra*, ‘seat of the bishop’ and ‘the bishop’s office’, now there is a play on *cathedra* and *scamna* together. We can imagine Sidonius sitting on the bishop’s throne (the congregation all standing in the nave) and indicating the benches to his left and right, saying (as he does now to his correspondent): ‘There are more candidates for my seat among you than both of these benches could have taken.’ That is a metaphor for ‘there are too many candidates’, but the literal sense is also present, because the candidates for the episcopate come in principle from the clerics – who normally sit there. Put differently, from a historian’s vantage point: there were simply too few episcopal posts to compensate for the lack of career perspective in Gaul (Mathisen 1988: 50).
For synthronon see LexMA 8 (1997) 380; for the arrangement around the bishop as a successor to that around the magistrate, DACL 2/1b: 585.

omnes placebant sibi, omnes omnibus displicebant.
‘everybody was pleased with himself, everybody was displeased with everybody else’

Hereafter in the speech Sidonus says (sect. 13) sufficere omnes sibi, omnibus neminem. The pun may stem from Cypr. Ep. 11.1.2 nos non facimus dei voluntatem ... unusquisque sibi placentes et omnibus displicentes. Cf. Aug. Conf. 10.39 insanescent qui placent sibi de se, quamvis aliis vel non placeant vel displicant nec placere affectent ceteris. sed sibi placentes multum tibi displicent. The inverse, self-criticism, counts as a virtue in Christian perspective, e.g. Cassiod. Anim. 13 r. 7 vir denique fixus, purus, innocuus, omnes laudat, se semper accusat, et cum placeat universis, sibi soli displicet. There is no indication that Sidonius meant to confer the theological background as well.

Section 3

neque enim valuissemus aliquid in commune consulere,
‘as you can imagine, we would not have been able to take a decision in the interest of all’

neque enim, ‘for of course not’: I expressly retain enim which has massive – if not complete – manuscript support: neque VM: neque enim ceteri codd. (enim s.l. add. M’): enim secl. Luetjohann Mohr Anderson Loyen.

Enim, ‘as you can imagine’, ‘clearly’, aims to make acceptable in the light of what precedes the sombre observation that it was virtually impossible to reach consensus. The argument so far is: ‘I have written a simple speech. I had no time to adorn it with the usual embellishments, because the fierce competition between candidates kept me busy.’ Now to continue: ‘Clearly (enim), in those conditions it was impossible to reach a settlement. But, fortunately, the people ceded their right to vote to me.’ About this empathetic aspect of enim, which asks the addressee for involvement and comprehension, consult Kroon 1995: 199-201.

Until now editors have found it difficult to cope with enim. Taking the traditional view of enim as a causal connective, and rightly supposing that the sentence under consideration does not explain the preceding one, but rather continues and enhances the argument, most of them regretfully decided to drop enim, in the wake of Luetjohann. Shackleton Bailey 1982: 170 defended it: ‘neque enim = etenim non’.

valuissemus, ‘I/we would have managed’: The plural may include bishop Agroecius, who in all probability was present in Bourges. See the Introduction to letter 5, section 1 Overview.

aliquid in commune consulere, ‘to take a decision in the interest of all’: See the discussion in 7.7.4 parum in commune consulitis.

nisi iudicii sui faciens plebs lenita iacturam sacerdotali se potius iudicio subdidisset,

Note the hyperbaton iudicii ... iacturam. Iudicii sui has focus, and is opposed to sacerdotali ... iudicio.
plebs lenita, ‘the people calmed down’: For the role of the plebs, ‘the ordinary people’, ‘the populace’, in the nomination of a bishop, see the Introduction to letter 5, section 4 The election and consecration of bishops.

The verb lenire is found only here in Sidonius. The collocation with plebs is unusual. Lenire, indeed, is typically used of the magistrate who refrains from fully exercising his power, e.g. Liv. 4.51.3 summa moderatione ac lenitate (about the consuls), and Liv. 43.4.5 haec lenitas praetoris, qua sine sanguine ferocissimam gentem domuerat.

iudicii ... faciens ... iacturam, ‘sacrificing its right to elect’: Iudicium, ‘the right to decide, elect’, cf. e.g. Liv. 23.23.4 iudicium arbitriumque. For the context of the election of a cleric cf. e.g. Ferrand. Canon. 105 (sixth cent.) (Conc. Afr. 296) ut diaconi iudicio populi non eligantur.

For facere iacturam iuris, ‘to sacrifice one’s right’, cf. Liv. 3.45.3 placere itaque patrem arcessiri, interea iuris sui iacturam adsertorem non facere. For facere iacturam + gen. in Sidonius see 7.7.3 nostri ... facta iactura est.

presbyterorum sane paucis angulatim fringultientibus,

presbyterorum, ‘the priests’: The noun put first in opposition to plebs. Being prime candidates, the priests view with diffidence any development they cannot influence. See my comment on sect. 12 si clericum dixero.

angulatim fringultientibus, ‘twittered in holes and corners’ (Anderson): Angulatim, ‘in a corner’, = clam, opposed to palam further on. The word is very rare. It is an Apuleian neologism (Apul. Met. 3.2 pererratis plateis omnibus et ... circumductus angulatim, and 9.41 angulatim cuncta sedulo perlustrari iubent), there meaning ‘from corner to corner’, ‘from one end to another’. Sidonius applies it with a different nuance. It is the only other occurrence we know of. Adverbs in -(t)im are among the characteristics of archaic and late Latin, see Gualandri 1979: 177 n. 111 and Amherdt 2001: 130 ad 4.3.3 caesuratim.

The onomatopoetic verb fringultire occurs in several variants: frigutio, friguttio, fringutio, fringultio, fringultio, fringulo. It denotes the (unpleasant) sound of birds, also transferred to human beings, in a pejorative sense, ‘twitter’, ‘prattle’, ‘twaddle’, e.g. Pl. Cas. 267 quid frigutitis? Apuleius and Fronto made it fashionable, e.g. Apul. Apol. 34 quod qui eloquentiae patrocinium vulgo profiteatur ... saepe in rebus nequaquam difficilibus fringultiat vel omnino commutescat, ‘that, even though he professes to be a representative of the rhetorical tradition, in cases which are not at all difficult he stammers or is even completely silent’, and Front. Ep. 2.13, p. 141 l. 14 v.d.H. (of one who mistakes speaking affectedly for real oratory) loqui te quam eloqui malle, murmurare potius et friguttire quam clangere. I think Van den Hout 1999: 338, in his comment ad loc., is right in calling it a colloquialism, rather than an archaism, as is generally done, e.g. Gualandri 1979: 101 n. 97 and 173 n. 98. See also Engelbrecht 1886: 447. For its interpretation here, see Colton 2000: 21 n. 26: ‘Sidonius sarcastically uses fringultire, “to twitter”, of people who refrain from expressing their opinions openly.’ We find it one more time in Sidonius, Ep. 9.2.2 inproborum passerum fringultientes susuros (the chirping of sparrows is unfavourably compared with the melodious sound of the nightingale).

Considering it as a colloquialism, not as a deliberate archaism, Van den Hout 1999: 618 f. ad 272,7 refrains from ranking the use of this verb by Sidonius – as others have done – with the proofs that he has read Fronto’s letters. Sidonius may well have read these, but the real
number of likely borrowings from Fronto is limited to one or two. For another similarity which is not a borrowing, see below on sect. 18 tractatu consiliosiore.

porro autem palam ne mussitantibus quidem,

*porro*, ‘at the same time’, ‘on the other hand’: Introducing a new consideration, with an implied contrast, OLD 6c.

*ne mussitantibus quidem*, ‘not daring so much as to open their mouths’: *Mussitare*, freq. of *mussare*, ‘make a sound’, ‘breathe a word’, continues the cluster of archaisms, resp. colloquialisms, in this sentence. Köhler 1995: 171 ad 1.3.2 *mussitat* defines: ‘Unterdrückte Äußerung des Unmutes oder der Unsicherheit.’ Of impotent jealousy, as here, *Carm. 41.9 f. (= Ep. 9.16.3) mussitans quamquam chorus invidorum / prodat hirritu rabiem canino,/ nil palam sane loquitur pavetque / publica puncta.* The same e.g. *Claud. Mam. Anim. 2.9 qui … mussitant, aut palam loquantur aut taceant*, ‘those who grouse, let them speak out frankly or else keep their mouths shut’. *Mussitare* is found in comedy (though mostly meaning ‘to keep quiet’, cf. Paul. Fest. p. 131 *Lindsay mussare murmureare … vulgo vero pro tacere dicitur*), once in *Livy 1.50.3*, and then from Apuleius onward, *Apol. 71 hunc ille timorem mussitabat: adversari propalam non audebat.* See also Engelbrecht 1886: 456. *Mussare* is more commonly found, e.g. *Enn. Ann. 6.182 intus in occulto mussabant, and Liv. 33.31 clam mussantes.*

*quia plerique non minus suum quam reliquos ordines pertimescebant.*

One had to meet the competition within one’s own class, as well as between classes.

*reliquos ordines*, ‘the other orders’: In *Ep. 7.5.1 Sidonius had written that ‘the ranks of both orders’ aspired to the episcopate: (ecclesia, quae) utriusque professionis ordinibus ambiendi sacerdotii quoddam classicum cecinit*, where *utriusque professionis* meant ‘clerical and lay’. In the current phrase, however, Sidonius thinks of the same tripartite division of areas of recruitment as later on in the speech: monk (sect. 9), cleric (12), and civil servant (14). For the notion of *ordo*, see my comment on 7.1.5 nostri ordinis viri.

*igitur, dum publice totos singuli cavent, factum est,*

*totos = omnes*, ‘all’, ‘everybody’: Is found several times in Sidonius, e.g. below 7.9.13 *totos episcopos esse non posse.* It has colloquial roots and is found in comedy and then in later Latin. See for references Köhler 1995: 272 ad 1.9.4 *totis et cito*, and Amherdt 2001: 362 f. ad 4.15.1 *fidei totos.* Here it comes in handy because of *omnes* which follows immediately.

*ut omnes non aspernanter audirent quod deinceps ambienter expeterent.*

Loyen reads *exponenter*. The *narratio* ends on a serene parallelism.

*aspernanter*, ‘dissimissively’: Adverbs ending in -ter occur frequently in archaizing and later Latin in general. See my comment on 7.2.4 *haud aspernanter.*

*ambienter*, ‘with zeal’, ‘eagerly’: This is probably a Sidonian neologism, favoured by the preceding *aspernanter*. The same process is seen at work in 7.14.4 *non tam iudicialiter quam oculariter.* Similarly 3.8.2 *fundamentaliter*, 9.11.4 *trebaciter.* It is discussed by Gualandri 1979: 178. After Sidonius *ambienter* is found in such authors as Ennodius, Avitus, Cassiodorus and Gregory of Tours, e.g. Ennod. *Opusc. 3.184 qui te videre ambienter optabat.*
The manuscripts diverge: expeterent LVMFP: exponerent NTC s.l. add. M¹, eras. M²: expenderent (vix exprimerent?) coni. Anderson. Luetjohann chose expeterent, all editors after him exponerent. The manuscripts of the first, and best, family, LVNT, are divided on this matter (compare similarly 7.10.1 excusaremur/iudicaremur). MF reinforce the case for expeterent which, indeed, makes excellent sense. I propose to retain it with Luetjohann: ‘All present listened not without sympathy to what afterwards they were going to ask for eagerly’. Sidonius means that they first meekly listened to his decision to elect Simplicius and finally even insisted on the nomination (of course full of hidden resentment, just because they could not afford to reject the candidature). The reading exponerent virtually amounts to the same, but has less manuscript support. See also Engelbrecht 1898: 307 f. who prefers expeterent. The recent suggestions expromerent and extollerent (Watt 1999: 13 f.) do not seem necessary to me.

Section 4

itaque paginam sume subditis voluminibus adiunctam,

‘so here is the piece of writing in question, attached (viz. to this letter) in the following scrolls’

Sidonius refers to the scroll containing the speech which Perpetuus receives in attachment. Loyen has seen correctly that pagina should be the contio, and not the accompanying letter, because of the adjunct which follows, quam duabus vigiliis unius noctis aestivae … dictatam: it was the speech, not the letter that was written in a great hurry. Anderson’s solution is rather fanciful. He translated: ‘Receive, therefore, the sheet appended to the accompanying roll’, which he explained as follows: ‘The volumina contained, I supposed, a detailed account of the election and of its attendant circumstances.’ However, there is no indication that Sidonius wanted to give a more detailed account of the election than the impression he had just given in the letter, or, indeed, of Perpetuus wishing to be informed in more detail. Perpetuus had asked for nothing else except the speech.

itaque, ‘therefore’: This goes back to sect. 1 siquidem iniungis, ut orationem … tibi dirigam. Itaque corresponds to the pareo part of the iubes – pareo motif.

paginam sume, ‘receive this document’: The singular pagina only here in Sidonius used for a piece of writing (not being a letter), otherwise plural, cf. 4.17.3 de paginis … spiritualibis, ‘about the Bible’, and 5.2.1 in paginis eius, ‘in his writings’. The singular usually stands for ‘letter’, which is the predominant meaning in the correspondence (30 out of 42 occurrences).

From sumere, ‘to take up’ (of a book or documents, to read), cf. e.g. Cic. Tusc. 2.8 Metrodorum [i.e. his writings] non fere praeter suos quisquam in manus sumit, the meaning ‘to receive’ (in the interchange of letters) developed; cf. in Sidonius 2.12.1 quo temporis puncto paginam hanc sumpseris, 2.12.2 litteras tuas denique cum sumeremus, 9.3.5 quod vestra quam sumpsimus epistula ostendit.

subditis voluminibus adiunctam, ‘to be found in the attached scrolls’: Subdere is said of attaching or enclosing a piece of writing, often in the letter itself, e.g. 5.17.10 subditum sic epigramma composui, ‘I have written the following epigram’, 8.11.3 ne vocabula figurata subditum carmen obscurent. Subditis voluminibus is abl. instrumenti.

Adiungere is common for attaching something to a letter, e.g. another letter, as in Cic. Ep. 3.8.10 si quid egero, scribam ad te neque domum umquam ad me litteras mittam quin adiungam eas
quas tibi reddi velim, or indeed a speech, like Fronto Ep. 2.8 adiunxi (viz. to this letter) ... orationem (cf.Fronto Ep. 1.6 for the inclusion of an extensive fragment of a speech in a letter which had pleased the sender). Cf. similarly Sidon. Ep. 1.9.7 carmen ipsum loquax in consequentibus charta deportat, ‘this garrulous sheet carries you the poem itself added at the tail-end’ (Anderson). Attachments are either separate, e.g. Cypr. Ep. 26.3 utriusque epistulae exemplum litteris meis iunxi, or a continuation of the letter, e.g. Aug. Ep. 88.3 (a letter) quarum exemplum infra scrivimus.

A volumen may be anything from a papyrus volume to a vellum codex, see Ulp. Dig. 32.52 librorum appellatione continentur omnia volumina, sive in charta sive in membrana sint sive in quavis alia materia. The volumina in the current text may have been papyrus scrolls or codices, the usual writing material for every day use, even in Late Antiquity. Alternatively, we might think of the tabellae or pugillares, ‘books’ of waxed wooden tablets, or the pugillares membranei, vellum notebooks, which were modern in Martial’s day (Mart. 14.3 ff.). If Sidonius meant to give a lasting present, he might have had the text copied on vellum. See e.g. how Avitus had his Spiritualis Historia transcribed as a premium copy for Sidonius’ son Apollinaris (Alc. Avit. Ep. 51 p. 80 l. 31).

In this case, the news value – and hence its ‘every day’ quality - of the contio and its limited size may have resulted in a copy on papyrus, as the continuation of the letter, on a further series of leaflets. The plural voluminibus remains somewhat grandiloquent. At a rough estimate the text will have occupied no more than seven/eight pages (on ‘Buchzeile’ and ‘Buchgrösse’ see Birt 1882: 157-222 and 286-341).


quam duabus vigiliis unius noctis aestivae Christo teste dictatam plurimum vereor ne ipsi amplius lectioni, quae hoc de se probat, quam mihi credas.

The author takes pride in having written this speech of over 1300 words within a couple of hours, two watches of a short summer night. But the pride is veiled by the statement that the reader by himself will reach the same conclusion in the negative – stumbling, as is implied, over all kinds of shortcomings.

We find this complacent statement that one has finished a text, mostly a poem, in next to no time or à l’improviste, more than once in Sidonius: a distichon (1.11.14), a funeral inscription (3.12.4 carmen hoc sane ... nocte proxima feci), an occasional poem (5.17.10), an ode (9.13.4). Sidonius was well aware of the ease with which he wrote, cf. 3.7.1 cui scribendi magis est facilitas quam facultas, ‘I have greater ease than talent for writing’ (cf. Plin. Ep. 6.29.5). Being such a virtuoso of language is part of the defence of language and culture, but it is above all a literary topos, from the fifth century BC onward. See Amherdt 2001: 239 f. ad 4.8.4 quae cuncta praemissa, for a discussion and some secondary literature.
Sidonius may have had in mind especially Statius’ introduction to his Silvae, which takes its argumentation from the haste in which much of the Silvae (like the lighter poems of illustrious predecessors) has been written: Stat. Silv. 1 praef. nullum enim ex illis [i.e. the poems] biduo longius tractum, quaedam et in singulis diebus effusa. quam timeo ne verum istuc versus quoque ipsi de se probent!, ‘none of them took me more than two days; some I produced within a day; I’m afraid it is apparent from the poems themselves how true that is!’ (For another possible reference to the Silvae see my comment on 7.3.1 diu multumque deliberavi.)

Ausonius wrote in the same way: Auson. Ep. 9a eos [sc. epodos] mihi subita persuasione fluxisse ... quod sane ipsi per se probabunt, and 19a.8 isti [sc. iambi] tamen ... spatio lucubratioanulae unius effusi (quamquam hoc ipsi de se probabunt), tamen nihil diligentiae ulterioris habuerunt.

Note that Sidonius here applies the topos to his speech, i.e. to prose, as e.g. Julian. c. Cynic. 20 (203c) ἔστι γὰρ πάρεργον δυοῖν, ὡς ἴσασιν αἱ Μοῦσαι, ‘it is a by-work of two days, as the Muses know’.

duabus vigilis unius noctis aestivae, ‘two watches of one summer night’: Working by night belongs to the standard description of a writer’s hard work, e.g. Cic. Att. 7.19 epistulam quam eram elucubratus, and Tac. Dial. 9.3 cum toto anno, per omnes dies, magna noctium parte unum librum excudit et elucubravit. It was preferably done, not late at night, but early in the morning. See e.g. Plin. Ep. 3.5.8 statim a nocte multa (about his uncle Pliny, who was an extremely early riser), Cels. 1.2.5 sin lucubrandum est, non post cibum id facere, sed post concoctionem. Sidonius drives home the idea of a really short time of writing by adding noctis aestivae.

Christo teste, ‘as Christ knows’: For the use and function of this kind of assertion, see my comment on 7.1.1 sub ope Christi. Compare, incidentally, Sidonius’ Christo teste with Julian’s ὡς ἴσασιν αἱ Μοῦσαι, ‘as the Muses know’, cited above!

amplius, ‘rather’, = plus, potius: See my comment on 7.4.1 amplius dignitate quam dignatione.