

***Fiere* = 2nd-Person Singular Future?**

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It has long been recognized that in Late Latin *fiere* can be used in place of *fi* as second-person singular imperative of *fio*.¹ Very recently however Jacobson has argued that the same form *fiere* can also be a second-person singular future.² For this putative use Jacobson adduces only a single text: here however such a future sense is in his view “virtually certain”. The passage at issue occurs in the Pseudo-Philonian *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (*LAB*), which is a 4th-century translation of a Greek work that was in turn translated from the Hebrew; neither of these *Vorlagen* is extant. The particular wording in question runs as follows (44, 2): *accipe aurum istud et confla illud et facies tibi idola et erunt tibi in deos et tu fiere eis sacerdos*.³

Here Jacobson’s case for a future is twofold. In the first place he points out that “*fiere* is clearly parallel to *erunt*”. In this connection reference should however have been made to Hofmann-Szantyr, who note that future and imperative can stand “gleichwertig nebeneinander”: such is particularly the case in Late Latin, “z. T. als Hebraismus der Übersetzungsliteratur”.⁴ Hofmann-Szantyr themselves refer to Süss, who cites the beginning of the Decalogue (Exod. 20, 3ff.).⁵ These biblical verses have evidently influenced the present passage of *LAB*.⁶ It is therefore noteworthy that this text of Exodus caps a sequence of

¹ Cf. *TLL*, 6, 1, 85, 6f. For additional instances in Jerome cf. the present writer, *Jerome on Virginity: A Commentary on the Libellus de Virginitate Servanda* (Letter 22), Cambridge 2003, 146.

² H. Jacobson, ‘*Fiere*’, *Class. Quart.* N. S. 55 (2005) 651f. His reference here to Neue-Wagener is wrong: for “269” read “629”.

³ Ed. D. J. Harrington, *Pseudo-Philon: Les Antiquités Bibliques*, I, Paris 1976, 298.

⁴ J. B. Hofmann and A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik*, Munich 1972, 311.

⁵ W. Süss, *Studien zur lateinischen Bibel*, I, Tartu 1932, 99.

⁶ Cf. in particular *LAB* 44, 6f.

futures with an imperative: *non erunt tibi dii alii praeter me. non facies tibi idolum neque ullum simulacrum ... non adorabis ea ... non assumes nomen Dei tui in vanum ... memento diem sabbatorum sanctificare eum.*⁷ It would therefore be quite natural if such a string of futures were succeeded by a similar imperative in the present passage of the *LAB*.⁸

If then Jacobson's first argument is invalid, the same would seem to be true of his other one. Here he notes that instead of *fiere* some MSS of the *LAB* read *eris*: from this he concludes that *fiere* itself must also be a future. Such an inference would however seem to be unwarranted: an imperative could easily be replaced by a future like *eris*. A convenient example is supplied by the Decalogue's afore-cited *memento*, for which Sabatier adduces the future *observabis* substituted by Ambrosiaster (*In Eph.* 6, 3, 1). A banalizing succedaneum like *eris* is all the more to be expected with such an unusual form as *fiere*. The conclusion may accordingly be drawn that this passage of *LAB* furnishes no evidence for *fiere* as a second-person singular future after all. It does however provide a further instance of imperatival *fiere*, which should be added to the dossier.

⁷ Old Latin text, as given by P. Sabatier, *Bibliorum Sacrorum Latinae Versiones Antiquae*, I, Reims 1743, repr. Turnhout 1991, 174f. For *memento* he records the variants *in mente habe / habeto*.

⁸ Two further points may be made in this connection. Firstly the two futures at issue in the *LAB* are themselves immediately preceded by two indubitable imperatives (*accipe aurum istud et conflagra illud*): a third imperative would accordingly be unsurprising. Secondly this section of the *LAB* has been directly inspired by the first six verses of Judges 17 (cf. the *apparatus fontium* in Harrington, *op. cit.* [n. 3], 299). It is accordingly significant that Judges 17, 10 should read *et esto mihi ... sacerdos*. Here imperatival *esto* would seem to provide support for the view that *fiere* in *LAB*'s *et tu fiere eis sacerdos* is likewise imperative.