Abstract for short paper. OTSEM II, Skálholt, September 2010
Lasse Berndes, Lund University

Presentation of the paper and the doctoral project

The paper presents work done for chapter 2 of my coming dissertation, *The Sennacherib Episode: A Dialogic Exegesis of 2 Kings 18:13–19:37*. There will be three main chapters in the book. **Chapter 1** ('Author, text, reader, and other slippery words') presents Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of double-voiced discourse, in the context of a discussion of the importance of the pragmatic perspective for biblical exegesis ('pragmatic' here refers not to philosophical pragmatism, but to pragmatics in the linguistic sense, i.e. the view of language as a means of communication between people).

In **Chapter 2** a translation of 2 Kings 18:13–19:37 is presented and I try to work through some exegetical problems in the text. The chapter is meant to function for two purposes: to illustrate the problems discussed in chapter 1, and to lay the groundwork for the analysis in chapter 3.

Chapter 3 contains the analysis of double-voiced discourse in the Sennacherib episode.

In my paper I present some ideas about how the Sennacherib episode grew to its now extant form(s). I try to explain why I consider some arguments concerning the growth of the text more valid, and others less so. Since the analysis in chapter 3 will concern not only the narrative world of the story, but also the world 'behind' the text – the world of the writers and the original audience – I will for heuristic purposes need a model for how the text grew and took on the form that it now has.

Among the issues discussed in the paper, I compare two ways of responding to the need for a new approach to the text when the older form of source criticism has run into what looks like a dead end, because of the gathering evidence of connections between the purportedly independent sources. One way is to argue that the text presents us with a unified narrative that does not give us any reason to look 'behind' the text for earlier stages. Another way is to argue that the text grew through a process of augmentation, rather than through the combination of previously independent sources. I try especially to discuss the question of narrative integrity and the importance of that question for the choice of approach.

Other issues that come up for discussion are:

Was the Sennacherib episode originally written for Kings, or Isaiah (2 Kings 18:13–19:37 has a parallel in Isaiah 36–37), or for some other context?

Is the text in part related to the ספר דברי הימים (*NRSV:* 'the Book of the Annals [of the Kings of Israel/Judah]') or other purported sources?

What is the import of features in the text that would seem to reflect later times?

How do we handle the fact that there are features in the text that could look like the results of purposeful composition, but was probably rather the unintended consequences of other decisions during the process of growth?

I am not sure, at the time of writing this abstract, if I will be able to squeeze all these questions into a short paper.

It is my hope that the response I get from the session will give me guidance as to which ideas and lines of reasoning I should stick to, and which I can do better without. I welcome all comments. In the preface, I suggest some questions for discussion at the session.