A NOTE ON A STRIKING JOHANNINE MOTIF
FOUND AT CG VI: 6, 19

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In "The Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles", the first tractate in Codex VI of the Nag Hammadi Coptic "Gnostic" corpus, the mysterious figure "Lithargoel" tells Peter that since he is a believer in Jesus he should know of the great power Jesus can give. (CG VI: 6, 14-17) "Lithargoel" then adds: "I indeed believe in the father

1) The text of this tractate has been established, and published with a German translation, in MARTIN KRAUSE and PAHOR LABIB, eds., Gnostische und hermetische Schriften aus Codex II und Codex VI, Abhandlungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts Kairo, koptische Reihe, Bd. 2 (Glöckstadt: Verlag J. J. Augustin, 1971), pp. 107-21 (hereafter cited as Schriften). The tractate's enumeration, according to the now standard system of designating texts in the corpus, is CG VI: 1, 1-12, 22.

2) The literal translation of the Coptic of CG VI:6, 17, as KRAUSE has established the text, is: "He [i.e., Jesus] is a great power to give power." (translation my own.) KRAUSE conjectures, however, that at 17b one might be meant to read etti for eti. (Schriften, p. 114, note 1.) If one takes that reading, 6, 17 should be translated: "It is a great power which I give." (translation my own.) At CG VI:9, 11b-14 the mysterious "Lithargoel" does finally identify himself as: "Jesus Christus, der Sohn des lebendigen Gottes, ..." (KRAUSE'S translation, Schriften, p. 117.) It might, therefore, appear that the reading KRAUSE conjectures in the footnote is, on the basis of context, to be preferred to that he actually offers in the established text. In light, however, of the apostles' awe-struck reaction at 9, 19ff. to Jesus' self-identification, it is difficult to reconcile the conjectured reading with Peter's reaction (or rather non-reaction) to the statement at 6, 17. It is true that KRAUSE has argued that this tractate originally consisted of three independent narratives (CG VI:1, 3-29; 1:30-7, 23; 7:24-12, 19) which were redacted to form the text as it now stands. ("Die Petrusakte in Codex VI von Nag Hammadi," in MARTIN KRAUSE, JAMES M. ROBINSON, and FREDERIK WISSE, gen. eds., Nag Hammadi Studies, in progress. [Leiden: Brill, 1971-], vol. 3: Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Alexander Böhlig, ed. MARTIN KRAUSE, 46-51.) Whether or not the details of KRAUSE'S analysis of the exact division of the sources and of the process of redaction are correct, several facts make it clear that the present text has been edited from sources. For example, as KRAUSE points out, there are inconsistencies, and even contradictions, within the "plot" of the text as it now stands. Therefore, if KRAUSE is correct and 9, 19ff. is part of a narrative originally independent of the narrative of which 6, 17 is a part, one might argue that there is no need
who (has) sent him” 8). The Coptic of that crucial statement, a part of which is the subject of this study, is: anok hō tinahte epiōt pē etaftauof 4). KRAUSE indicates, by a footnote to 6, 19: “vgl. Joh. 5, 23 u.ö.” 5). Jn. v 23b reads: “He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him [italics mine] (ton patera ton pem- ρσαντα αυτον—mπιōt ntaftauof).” Such a striking Johannine echo should not be totally unexpected in this tractate, which displays other signs of knowledge of special Johannine material 6).

The thesis of this note is that the Coptic of the phrase, “the father who sent him”, (6, 19) 7) appears to reflect strongly the traditional Sahidic Coptic translation of a central, special Johannine motif. The use of pē etaftauof (“who sent him”) seems, in all likelihood, to show the influence of the use of the verb tauo, in the Sahidic Coptic version of John, to translate a special (technical) Johannine use of pemπo. That is, the use of tauo by the translator of the Vorlage of CG VI: 6, 19 strongly indicates that he interpreted this statement of “Lithargoel” as reflecting the Johannine tradition in which Jesus constantly speaks of: “him (he) (the Father) who sent me (him)”. The evidence supporting this thesis is quite strong.

to be surprised at finding differing reactions to “Lithargoel”’s identification of himself as “Jesus” at 6, 17 and at 9, 11b-14. On the other hand however, one must also take into account the fact that there is no indication at all until 9, 19ff., in either what KRAUSE would call the second narrative or in the opening part of the third (7, 24-9, 11a), that Peter and the other apostles realize they have met “Jesus.”

3) CG VI:6, 18-19 (translation my own).


5) “ΑΝΟΡ ΤΗΓΑ ΕΠΙΟΤ ΝΗ ΕΤΑΦΤΑΟΤΟΤ.”

6) For example, Yohannēs is the only apostle, other than Peter, mentioned by name in the tractate. (11, 4, 6, 15.) Also, at 1, 2 KRAUSE reconstructs [K]εφας. (Schriften, p. 107.) In the gospels it is only in John (i 42) that kέphas is used of “Simon Peter.” (J. B. SMITH, Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament [Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1955], p. 202 [hereafter cited as SMITH, Concordance].)

7) KRAUSE notes that it is not certain whether the crucial phrase at 6, 19 should be read as he has established it in the text, etaftauof (“who sent him”), or as etaftauoi (“who sent me”). (Schriften, p. 114, note to 6, 19.) The evidence to be cited will show that the special Johannine tradition to which we refer only makes use of the phrase “...who sent him” three times (at Jn. v 23; vii 18 and xii 16), while employing the phrase, “...who sent me,” twenty-two times. If one were to accept KRAUSE’s alternate reading at 6, 19 it, therefore, would conform to a more common form of the Johannine phrase in question than does the established reading. If, however, “Lithargoel” had thus spoken of himself as sent by “the Father,” one again would wonder at Peter’s lack of reaction to the statement. (See note 2 above.)