Ever since its discovery in 1945, the Gospel of Thomas has aroused great interest, especially concerning its relationship with the tradition of the sayings of Jesus in the synoptic gospels. However, relatively little attention has been paid to the similar question of the relationship between the synoptic tradition of the sayings of Jesus and the other texts which were discovered with the Gospel of Thomas at Nag Hammadi or which are otherwise related to it. The purpose of this article is to offer a brief discussion of three of these texts with this question in mind.

1. The Gospel of Philip

The problem of determining allusions to the New Testament in the Gospel of Philip is complex. Wilson writes: "These echoes and allusions are fairly numerous, although not always easy to detect. In some cases, indeed, what appears to one scholar a clear and unmistakable echo may to another seem quite insignificant." However, a clear starting point seems to be provided by part of saying 123: "That is why the word (λόγος) says 'Already the axe is laid at the root of the trees'" (83.11-13). It is universally agreed that this is a quotation of the saying preserved in Matt. 3.10/Lk. 3.9. Although it is not clear precisely to what λόγος refers, it does seem to be the case that the writer here is quoting the words of a prior source. Whether this source was Matthew's gospel, or Luke's, or their common source Q, or even a post-synoptic harmony, cannot be determined at this stage (since Matthew and Luke are identical here). Nevertheless one can say that the author of the Gospel of Philip knows at least some of the synoptic tradition, and he feels it appropriate to use it in the form of a quotation. With this in mind, it seems reasonable to assume that other links with the synoptic tradition which can be detected in the Gospel of Philip may also be explained as
due to knowledge of that tradition. The question is what stage of the tradition is presupposed here.

Further progress can be made by considering part of saying 89: “For he (i.e. Christ) said ‘Thus we should fulfil all righteousness’” (72.34-73.1). Although there are some lacunae in the manuscript at this point, the reading of this part of the saying is not in doubt, and it seems clear that this is a quotation of Matt. 3.15. Its significance in the present discussion is that this verse in Matthew is almost universally recognised as being due to Matthew’s redaction. This means that the Gospel of Philip shows knowledge of Matthew’s redactional activity and thus of Matthew’s gospel, rather than of Matthew’s sources. In fact all the remaining allusions to the synoptic tradition are, with one major exception, all consistent with the theory that the Gospel of Philip is dependent on Matthew’s gospel alone for the material it shares with the synoptic tradition. Several of these allusions are not very clear, and I shall discuss them in an order of decreasing closeness to the synoptic tradition.

In saying 23, there is the comment: “He who receives these (i.e. the flesh of Jesus which is the word, and the blood of Jesus which is the Holy Spirit) has food, and he has drink and clothing” (57.7-8). This seems to be a clear reference to the Q sayings about cares (Matt. 6.25ff./Lk. 12.22ff.). However, it is only in Matthew’s gospel that the three items of food, drink and clothing are explicitly mentioned together. In Matt. 6.25 there is strong MSS support for the version in which Jesus tells the disciples not to worry about what they will eat, or what they will drink or how they will be clothed. Luke’s parallel here (Lk. 12.22) mentions only food and clothing. In Matt. 6.31 the three-fold form is textually certain, as the disciples are told not to worry and say “What shall we eat, what shall we drink, or how shall we be clothed?” Luke’s parallel at this point (Lk. 12.29) says “Do not seek what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, neither be of doubtful mind.” It is difficult to decide which version is more original here. Nevertheless it is only Matthew’s version which explicitly refers to the triple problem of food, drink and clothing in a single saying (though this is implicit in the sayings in Lk. 12.22,29). The Gospel of Philip thus has more affinities with Matthew’s gospel than with Luke’s, so that this example is at least consistent with the theory that the Gospel of Philip is dependent on Matthew’s gospel (though it cannot of itself give any stronger proof of this).