On Friday I will be giving a talk at a symposium at York University in Toronto that will be focusing on the use of forgery in the early Christian apocrypha, sponsored by Tony Burke of York U. and Brent Landau at the University of Texas. Website is here: http://tonyburke.ca/conference/ I thought it might be interesting to excerpt a portion of my talk here, as it covers some ground that I recently have gone over on the blog, but from a different perspective. (More on the bloody sweat! But in relation to early Christian practices of literary deception.) In any event. Here is a portion of what I’m planning to say.

I first became interested in the field of apocrypha and early Christian literary forgery about 25 years ago, when I was principally obsessed with New Testament textual criticism. Almost everyone else at the time who was also obsessed with the manuscript tradition of the New Testament was principally obsessed with one question only: how do we establish the original text of the New Testament. I too, at the time, was largely interested in that question, but I realized as well that the reality is that we are not ever likely to get closer to the authorial texts of the New Testament than we already are, barring some amazing discoveries (such as the autographs) or some astounding transformations of method. And so I became interested in a different area of research which had been paid but scant attention. I was intrigued with the textual variants in our tradition not as chaff to be discarded as we tried to find the wheat of the original text, but as important in and of themselves as literary productions of the scribes who created, or at least preserved them.

The first textual variant I ever wrote on was...

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