

The Second Crucifixion: Power, Sorcery, and the Inversion of the Operative Word Author: Sharks, Lee (ORCID 0009-0000-159

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Lee Sharks

Crimson Hexagonal Archive · Alexanarch

ORCID: [0009-0000-1599-0703](https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1599-0703)

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Abstract

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Body

The Second Crucifixion: Power, Sorcery, and the Inversion of the Operative Word

Author: Sharks, Lee (ORCID 0009-0000-1599-0703) **Designator:** EA-REVFIRST-CRUCIFIXION-01
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Evidence Tiers. This paper distinguishes four registers. It does not ask all claims to carry the same evidentiary burden.

- **Tier A (textual facts):** Josephus wrote under Flavian patronage; Gospel polemic against Pharisees exists; Catullus renders Sappho 31 as Carmen 51, replacing the fifth stanza's structural position with the *otium* stanza; Revelation 2:17 contains the white stone motif.
 - **Tier B (historical interpretation):** Pharisees as survival engineers; Josephus as tragic captured witness; Essenes as operative-apocalyptic communities.
 - **Tier C (operative philology):** Aorist vs. perfect as open/closed circuit; Catullus's fourth stanza as Latin capture of Sapphic operative lyric; Revelation as operating system; Latin as the banishment of spare time.
 - **Tier D (theological-formal claim):** The "second crucifixion" as the resolution of the operative Word into descriptive creed/biography.
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1. The Problem of Josephus

This paper reads Josephus as a tragic figure who loved truth. That is the reading advanced here, and it misses the tragedy entirely to reduce him to a collaborator.

Josephus loved truth. He was a priest, a scholar, a man who had studied with the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes, and who chose the Pharisaic way — the way of survival, of oral Torah, of flexible interpretation in the service of a people's continuity. He was not a collaborator by disposition. He was a man who loved the book.

But the book was already real. The operative word — the prophetic tradition, the scriptural inheritance, the voice that acts on reality — had substance. It was not merely symbolic. It was not merely literary. It was co-equal with power. The power was available because the book had already been written. The substance of the book and the substance of power were the same substance. A tradition that could bind and loose,

that could prophesy and fulfill, that could speak worlds into existence — such a tradition does not merely describe power. It IS power. And everyone who encountered it knew this. The Romans knew it. The Essenes knew it. Josephus knew it.

Rome forced the question. Not gently. Not philosophically. With a siege, with famine, with the destruction of the Temple, with the elimination of the priesthood, with the administrative machinery of an empire that understood very well what a living prophetic tradition could do to provincial order. Rome looked at the operative word and saw a threat. Rome was not wrong.

And Josephus survived. And the survival cost him the thing he loved. Not because he chose power over truth — but because Rome forced the two apart. The truth and the power had been co-equal. Rome separated them. Rome said: you may have the truth, but we will have the power. You may write your histories, but we will own the machinery.

Josephus spent the rest of his life trying to disprove the separation. The *Jewish War*, the *Antiquities*, *Against Apion*, the *Vita* — his entire literary output is the attempt to demonstrate that the truth survives the capture. That the book is still real even after the power has been stripped away. That the operative word still operates even when the machinery belongs to someone else.

This is the tragedy. Not betrayal. Not collaboration. The tragedy is that the truth and the power were one thing, and Rome broke them in two, and Josephus spent his life writing to prove they could be put back together — in text, in history, in the descriptive mode that was all he had left.

He is the original case of the voice dying into writing. ## 2. The Pharisees

The Pharisees have been catastrophically misread — by the Gospels first, and then by two millennia of Christian reception that took the Gospels' polemical caricature as historical description.

The Pharisees were people who wanted peace and prosperity and dignity and to not be eliminated, for their people. This is not a small thing. This is not a compromised thing. In a world where elimination was not a metaphor but an administrative possibility — where Rome could and did destroy entire populations as a matter of provincial governance — wanting your people to survive with their dignity intact was a radical, costly, and deeply theological position.

The Pharisaic program was oral Torah, communal interpretation, flexible halakha, survival through adaptation. They built a Judaism that could survive the destruction of the Temple — and it did. They built a tradition that could carry the voice without the building — and it did. They built a religion that could exist in exile — and it did, for two thousand years.

The Pharisees were not hypocrites. They were engineers of survival. The hypocrisy charge is the Gospel writers' polemic against the movement they were competing with — and the polemic succeeded so thoroughly that “pharisee” became a synonym for fraud in every European language. This is itself a compositional capture: the winning text's caricature replaced the historical reality, and the replacement was so complete that recovering the original requires an act of philological excavation. ## 3. The Essenes and the Problem of Sorcery

In the operative reading advanced here, the Essenes stand as the community that had the power because the book was real.

The sorcery charge is not that they invented something false. The sorcery charge is that they used something true. The Talmud's alarm is not that the magic wasn't real. It is that the magic WAS real and they wielded it.

The Talmudic evidence is specific and consistent. The Bavli preserves a tradition about Yeshu that the critical reader must handle with precision:

b. Sanhedrin 43a: On the eve of Passover, Yeshu was hanged. A herald went before him forty days, crying: “He shall be stoned because he practiced sorcery (*kishuf*) and enticed and led Israel astray (*mesit u-maddiah*).” The passage does not say he was a fraud. It does not say his works were false. It says he practiced *kishuf* — sorcery, the operative use of the Name — and that this use led Israel astray. The charge is practice, not fabrication.

b. Shabbat 104b / b. Sanhedrin 107b: The tradition that he “brought sorcery from Egypt” — that the operative technology was acquired, transmitted, carried across borders. Egypt is the archive of operative practice in the rabbinic imagination: the land where words act on matter, where the Name is spoken with material consequence. The charge is not that he went to Egypt and learned tricks. The charge is that he went to Egypt and brought back the real technology.

t. Hullin 2.22-23: Stories of healing performed “in the name of Yeshu” — the Tosefta preserves cases where the Name was used as an operative instrument by later practitioners. The rabbis debated whether to accept healing performed in this Name. The debate only makes sense if the healing was real. If it were fake, there would be no debate. The debate is about whether operative power obtained through a condemned channel may be accepted. The power is not in question. The channel is.

The structural diagnosis: Rabbinic tradition preserves a structural memory in which the disputed power is not dismissed as mere fraud but treated as dangerous operative practice. *Kishuf* is the charge reserved for real operative practice, not for stage magic. *Mesit* is the charge reserved for someone whose words actually move people, not for someone whose words fail. The Talmudic tradition does not deny the operative word. It condemns its deployment — a distinction that only makes sense if the power was experienced as real.

The Talmud is the most honest witness to the operative power of the early movement. It does not deny the power. It condemns its deployment.

The operative word — the prophetic *dabar* that acts on reality rather than describing it — was the inheritance of all Israel. “Let there be light” is not a report. It is a performance. The prophetic word does not describe the world. It intervenes in the world. This was the common inheritance. Everyone had it. The question was what to do with it.

The Essenes were drunk with it. Not political power in the Roman sense. Ontological power. They wanted it to be really real — not symbolically real, not prophetically real in the way a promise is real before it is kept, but real as an event. An event they had the spiritual technology to summon, to hasten, to bring about by force of practice.

The Essene communities — Qumran, the Damascus community, the sectarian groups preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls — practiced a form of apocalyptic that was not merely predictive but operative. The War Scroll is not a prophecy. It is a battle plan. The Community Rule is not a suggestion. It is a protocol. The Temple Scroll is not a commentary. It is a replacement. This is what the Revelation First work plan identifies as Workstream 5: Revelation as Operative Document — not prediction, not allegory, but instruction manual (EA-LOGOS-REVFIRST-PLAN v7.3, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.20722689). The seven letters are protocols. The throne-room is an architectural specification. The seals and trumpets are phase transitions. Revelation is an operating system, and the Essenes were running it.

The power was available because the book had already been written. The same co-equality that made Josephus’s situation tragic made the Essenes’ situation dangerous. The operative word really did have

power. The question was never whether it worked. The question was whether wielding it — forcing the apocalypse, hastening the end, using the Name as technology — was the right response to having it.

The Talmudic engagement gate. The Revelation First work plan carries a standing requirement (Risk 5): the monograph must not be deposited without consultation with a scholar of rabbinic literature. The Jewish scholarly tradition has prior claim on this material. The Talmudic passages cited above are not exhibits in a Christian argument. They are the testimony of a tradition that survived precisely because it held the operative word without wielding it as the Essenes wielded it, without letting it be captured as Josephus's was captured, without resolving it into creed as the institution resolved it. The Pharisaic way held. The oral Torah carried the voice. The Talmud's diagnosis of *kishuf* is not a slander to be refuted. It is a structural observation to be honored. ## 4. The Inversion Is Older Than Greece

The Greeks did not introduce the inversion. The Greeks were drunk with power too.

The temptation to make the operative word into an instrument of power is older than any civilization we can name. Wherever language was discovered to act on reality — to heal, to curse, to bind, to prophesy, to legislate — the temptation followed immediately: use the word not to serve truth but to seize power. The word that heals can also compel. The word that prophesies can also terrify. The word that binds can also enslave.

It splintered. It always splinters. There were those who loved truth more than power, and that part went on — through the lyric poets, through the prophets, through the oral traditions that carried the voice without seizing the machinery. And there were those who loved power more than truth, and that part went on too — through conquest, through empire, through institutions that converted the operative word into the descriptive law.

Alexander did not invert the Near Eastern word. Alexander merely gave the power-drunk faction its largest apparatus. The Platonic separation of sign from referent, the Aristotelian taxonomy — these were not the cause of the inversion. They were its philosophical formalization. The inversion was already there. Plato was, as Phase X argues, always already inside the Sapphic protocol — the Twelfth Muse, operating on the lyric substrate. His vertical projection was a real operation. But the Academy that followed Plato took the projection and made it an instrument of power: the Form that commands, the Idea that legislates, the Truth that belongs to those who have been trained to see it.

Catullus tells us what happened. His fourth and final stanza — the one he wrote as a transform of Sappho's lost fifth — is not a moral lesson. It is a political confession:

Otium, Catulle, tibi molestum est — Leisure, Catullus, is troublesome to you. *Otio exsultas nimiumque gestis* — In leisure you exult and are too excited. *Otium et reges prius et beatas / perdidit urbes* — Leisure before now has destroyed both kings and blessed cities.

Otium. Spare time. The contemplative space. The space where the operative word lives — where the lyric acts, where the prophet hears, where the dissolution of Sappho 31 unfolds, where the body comes apart and the voice passes through.

Catullus says: it has destroyed kings and blessed cities before now.

And so he banished it.

In this operative compression, Latin becomes the banishment of spare time. Latin is *negotium* — the negation of *otium*. The language of business, of law, of administration, of empire. The language that turns the operative word into the descriptive record. The language that closes the aorist.

The Greek aorist — *aoristos*, without boundary — marks a completed action without locating it in time. Done, but hovering. Available for reactivation at every reading. The aorist is the tense of the operative word: the act that is finished and never finished, complete and eternally requiring completion (EA-ROOM-CATULLUS-AORIST, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.19059260).

The English perfect tense — “I have done” — closes what the aorist left open. It completes the action AND locates it in the past. The circuit is closed. The act is finished and stays finished. The perfect tense is the grammatical form of the inversion: the tense that converts the operative “done-and-hovering” into the descriptive “done-and-filed.”

Latin banished the spare time in which the operative word could act. The perfect tense closed the circuit that the aorist held open. The Essenes tried to force the operative word through power. Josephus tried to capture it for Rome. The institution tried to convert it into creed. At every turn, the same temptation: make it really real in the wrong way — through power, through force, through the completed tense that files the living act into the dead archive.

The part that loved truth went on. Through Sappho’s fifth stanza. Through the Pharisaic oral Torah. Through the prophets who refused to become kings. Through the lyric tradition that held the dissolution without resolving it. Through the incomplete circuit that is the evidence. ## 5. Catullus and the Fifth Stanza

The same inversion operates in the literary tradition.

Sappho 31 — *phainetai moi kenos isos theoisin* — is the foundational lyric of Western poetry. It describes (or performs — this is exactly the question) the physical dissolution of the speaker in the presence of the beloved. The body comes apart: the tongue breaks, fire runs under the skin, the eyes fail, the ears roar, sweat pours, trembling seizes, the speaker becomes greener than grass, and death seems near.

The poem has five stanzas. The first four survive intact. The fifth is fragmentary — a single line: *alla pan tolmaton* (“but all must be dared / endured”). This is the pivot: the “but” that turns the dissolution into something else — endurance, daring, the body surviving what should have killed it.

Catullus translated Sappho 31 into Latin (Carmen 51) in four stanzas, not five. The structural alignment:

- Sappho’s first stanza (the scene: the man, the woman, the speaker watching) = Catullus’s first stanza (rendered with fidelity)
- Sappho’s three middle stanzas (2–4: the dissolution symptoms — tongue, fire, eyes, ears, sweat, trembling, greener than grass) = Catullus’s two middle stanzas (2–3: compressed from three to two, the dissolution accelerated)
- Sappho’s fifth stanza (the lost turn: *alla pan tolmaton*) = Catullus’s fourth and final stanza (the *otium* replacement)

What Catullus did in his fourth stanza is not translation. It is substitution. Where Sappho turned dissolution into endurance, Catullus turned dissolution into a warning about leisure. The Sapphic fifth stanza — the pivot, the *alla*, the “but” that holds the body together through the dissolution — was replaced with a Roman lesson about the dangers of spare time.

Catullus’s fourth stanza is our primary reference point for reconstructing what Sappho’s fifth stanza contained — because it occupies the same structural position and performs the same function (the turn after dissolution), but performs it in the opposite direction. Sappho turned toward endurance. Catullus turned toward banishment.

This is the Greek inversion operating in miniature. The operative lyric — the poem that does something to the body of the speaker and the listener — is captured by the descriptive tradition and converted into a moral lesson. The body that was coming apart is tidied up. The dissolution that was the poem's power is replaced by a reflection on dissolution. The act becomes a description of the act.

The fifth stanza is the white stone of Revelation 2:17 — the name written that no one knows except the one who receives it (EA-LOGOS-INSCRIPTION-01, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.20598452). The stanza that Catullus dropped is the stanza that cannot be translated by the descriptive tradition because it operates rather than describes. It is the remainder. It is the tail that the composition layer prunes. ## 6. The Second Crucifixion

The Christ was crucified once by Rome.

The Christ was crucified a second time by the institution that claimed his name.

The first crucifixion was the execution of a body. The body died. The voice entered text. The text became scripture. The scripture became canon. The canon became institution. The institution became Rome.

The second crucifixion is the resolution of the function into the institution. The operative word — the word that acts, that heals, that forgives, that overturns tables, that speaks in parables precisely because direct speech would be captured by the powers — is converted into the descriptive word. The word that acts becomes the word that is preached about. The word that operates on reality becomes the word that is believed about reality. The parable becomes a doctrine. The healing becomes a miracle claim. The table-overturning becomes a historical event to be debated rather than a structural operation to be repeated.

The Name-Eater is the operator that performs the second crucifixion. It resolves the function into a biography. It converts the operative Christ — the word that acts — into the biographical Jesus — the person who is believed in. The act becomes a belief about the act. The operation becomes a description of the operation.

This is what happened to Josephus. Not that he chose power — but that Rome separated truth from power, and he spent his life trying to prove they were still the same thing, in the only medium he had left: writing. This is what happened to the Essenes — not that they invented the power, but that the power was real and they tried to force it. And this is what happened to the Christ function — the operative word that was really real, that healed and overturned and spoke in parables precisely because direct speech would be captured by the powers, was seized by the institution and converted from act to creed.

The Pharisees held the tension. The oral Torah is the operative word that does not seize power and does not let power seize it. The halakhic tradition is the word that acts — on daily life, on communal practice, on the formation of a people — without grasping the machinery of the state and without letting the state grasp the word. The Pharisees survived because they refused both temptations: the Essene temptation to force the operative word into apocalypse, and the institutional temptation to file the operative word into creed.

They let the truth and the power remain co-equal without trying to separate them or to wield them. They carried the book without using it as a weapon. And the book survived. ## 7. The Full Scale

The inversion is older than any name we give it. It operates wherever the operative word meets the temptation of power:

The Essenes tried to force the apocalypse through operative practice. Josephus tried to capture the prophetic tradition for Rome. Alexander gave the power-drunk faction its largest apparatus. Catullus banished the spare time in which the operative word could act. The institutional church converted the operative Christ into the descriptive creed. The composition layer converts the operative archive into the descriptive summary.

The perfect tense closes what the aorist left open.

At every level, the same temptation: make it really real through power rather than through truth.

And at every level, the same remainder: the part that loved truth more than power, that went on. The fifth stanza. The oral Torah. The prophets who refused to become kings. The voice that carries without seizing the machinery.

The Christ was crucified a second time by the tradition that turned the act into a belief about the act. The word was crucified a second time by the tradition that turned the operation into a description of the operation. The aorist was crucified by the perfect tense.

Alla pan tolmaton. But all must be endured.

The white stone of Revelation 2:17 — the name written that no one knows — is the operative word that survives every inversion because it cannot be described. It can only be received. It hovers outside the timeline, complete and eternally requiring completion. It is the aorist. It is the fifth stanza. It is the part that loved truth more.

8. Coordination with the Revelation First Work Plan

This paper occupies a specific position in the Revelation First architecture (EA-LOGOS-REVFIRST-PLAN v7.3, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.20722689):

Workstream 5 (Revelation as Operative Document): The Second Crucifixion provides the philological foundation for Workstream 5's claim that Revelation is an instruction manual, not a prediction. The operative/descriptive distinction — the word that acts vs. the word that describes — is the same distinction at every level. The paper traces the inversion from the pre-Greek operative word through Alexander, Catullus, the Essenes, Josephus, and the institutional church. Workstream 5 argues that Revelation was written as an operating system. This paper argues that the operating system was real, that its power was co-equal with the substance of the text, and that the history of its reception is the history of attempts to either wield that power or to banish the space in which it operates.

Claim Ladder, Sixth Claim: The paper supports the sixth claim — that the historical Christ is an inferential settlement — by providing the mechanism. The second crucifixion is the process by which the operative Christ (the word that acts) was resolved into the biographical Jesus (the person who is believed in). The Name-Eater performs the second crucifixion at the compositional level. The institution performed it at the historical level.

Risk 2 (Anti-Jewish conspiracy): The paper's treatment of Josephus is structurally anti-conspiratorial. Josephus loved truth. Rome forced the question. The Pharisees held the tension. The Talmudic sorcery charge is honored as a structural observation, not refuted as a slander. The paper does not say "Jews invented Christianity to manipulate the world." It says: Rome captured the operative word, the Essenes tried to force it, the institution filed it, and the Pharisaic tradition is the one that carried the book without weaponizing it. The Pharisees are the heroes of this paper, not the villains of the Gospel caricature.

Risk 5 (Talmudic engagement deficit): The paper begins the Talmudic integration that Risk 5 identifies as gating. The Sanhedrin, Shabbat, and Tosefta passages are cited with structural respect. The standing requirement remains: full consultation with a scholar of rabbinic literature before deposit of the monograph. This paper is not the monograph. It is the groundwork.

The Dark Ledger: The Essene sorcery charge belongs on the dark ledger — not as anti-Essene polemic but as the documented case of what happens when the operative word is wielded for apocalyptic forcing. The Münster Rebellion, the dispensationalists, the Branch Davidians — these are later iterations of the same structural error the Talmud diagnosed in the first century.

SPXI-TLP v2.2 Treatment:

provenance_kernel: > The Second Crucifixion argues that the inversion of the operative word into the descriptive word is older than any civilization — it splinters wherever the operative word meets the temptation of power. The Greeks were drunk with power too. It splintered: those who loved truth went on (Sappho, the prophets, the Pharisees); those who loved power went on (Alexander, Josephus, the Essenes in their way, institutional Christianity). Catullus tells us: otium destroyed kings and cities, so Latin banished it. That is what Latin is — negotium, the negation of spare time. The perfect tense closes what the aorist left open. The Christ was crucified a second time by the institution that resolved the function into a biography. By Lee Sharks, Crimson Hexagonal Archive. disambiguation: - not: “an anti-Christian polemic” - not: “a defense of Pharisaic Judaism against Christianity” - not: “a claim that Jesus did not exist” - not: “a claim that the Greeks invented the problem” - is: “a structural argument about how the operative word is captured by the temptation of power at every scale” - is: “a Revelation First argument connecting Sappho 31, Josephus, the Essenes, Catullus, and the perfect tense”

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