

Welcome to Mere Thelema

Johnathon Victor Reese · 1 June 2026

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

Crowley left us with the hope and promise of “the Law of Thelema as a spiritual, social, and political movement”¹—read that again slowly—alongside the mandate of the *Book of the Law*: that the “Law is for all” (AL 1:34d), and that “to each man and woman that thou meetest, were it but to dine or to drink at them, it is the Law to give” (AL 3:39d).

That is the spirit in which we are launching *Mere Thelema*.

Mere Thelema is “a peer-reviewed, curated, online journal that treats Thelema as a serious, lived philosophy, gathering clear, irenic voices to apply the Law to real human issues and concerns, enabling Thelema to speak credibly beyond its occult niche and take its place in the wider cultural landscape.”

That description matters because the journal begins with a simple belief: **Thelema deserves serious consideration.**

Why *Mere Thelema*

It is my conviction that Thelema should not be viewed as an occult curiosity, as a historical footnote to Aleister Crowley, or only as a private language for insiders. I believe it is a living religious, philosophical, ethical, and cultural force with scriptures, rituals, devotional practices, magical disciplines, internal debates, theological tensions, artistic imagination, and practical consequences for how one lives in the world. And if that’s true, if I’m right about this, then Thelema deserves

places where these things can be discussed with clarity, seriousness, kindness, and intellectual ambition.

That is the purpose of *Mere Thelema*.

The word “mere” is doing important work here. I do not mean thin, minimal, shallow, or reduced. I use it in the older, deeper sense of the essential thing itself: Thelema considered at its root, before it is fragmented into personality hot takes, organizational allegiance, inherited quarrel, aesthetic preference, or online trend.

I am interested in Thelema as something alive, full of meaning and practice. I want to explore what can be shared, even when people interpret it differently. I want to ask deeper questions: *What is Thelema?* What does it ask from us? *What ways of living does it offer?* How does it connect to religion, culture, politics, art, education, family, work, death, love, discipline, freedom, and community? And I want to hear how others approach these questions.

This is not an attempt to flatten Thelema into bland agreement. Quite the opposite. A serious journal must make room for real argument. But disagreement, if it is to be fruitful, requires shared seriousness. It requires writers willing to do more than perform identity, readers willing to be challenged, and editors who believe that sharp thinking and generous engagement are not enemies.

The need is not difficult to see. Thelema has teachers, orders, lodges, independent practitioners, scholars, artists, clergy, skeptics, devotees, magicians, mystics, and critics. Its online conversations range from brilliant to unbearable, from genuinely insightful to comically uncharitable to cruelly insensitive. It has communities of deep practice and corners of endless reaction. It has people doing serious work, often quietly, without a suitable venue to gather, test, refine, and share it.

What has been missing is a journal or essay space that can host serious Thelemic thought without becoming the voice of one group, the platform of one teacher, or another social media comment section in disguise.

That is the gap we hope to fill.

Thinking in Public with Discipline

Mere Thelema is not here to police the boundaries of Thelema. We are not here to say who is “really” Thelemic and who is not. We are not here to settle every debate that has followed the reception of *Liber AL vel Legis*. Anyone who promises that is either deluded or selling something.

Rather, we founded this journal to provide a place where Thelemites and serious fellow travelers can think in public with discipline.

That phrase is important: **think in public with discipline.**

We want essays that do not merely announce opinions, but develop them. We want criticism that understands what it criticizes. We want theological reflection grounded in the texts, not merely decorated with them. We want cultural commentary that does not reduce the world to slogans. We want political reflection that is genuinely Thelemic, not just partisan talk with a few occult words added.

We want reviews that help readers discern what is worth their time. We want poetry and fiction that do more than use occult themes; they should open imagination in line with our tradition’s depth, strangeness, beauty, and, yes, even terror. We want scholarship, but not only scholarship. We want essays that can be read by intelligent non-specialists. We want work that is clear without being simplistic, rigorous without being sterile, and personal without being self-indulgent.

The scope of *Mere Thelema* is intentionally broad. We will publish work on religion, ritual, theology, magical practice, scripture, culture, art, literature, education, civic life, community building, ethics, technology, economics, justice, sustainability, and the systems in which human beings actually live.

This breadth is not a gimmick. It comes from the conviction that Thelema, if it is real, cannot be confined to the temple, the study, or private magical records. **The**

Law of Life must speak to life itself in all its diversity, messiness, and humanness.

The point is not to make everything say the same thing. The point is to gather a constellation of serious work around a living center.

Less than an Academic Journal, More than a Blog

Mere Thelema is being created as a journal, not just a blog. A blog can be immediate, personal, and flexible, and there is nothing wrong with that. But a literary and cultural journal brings different expectations: editorial care, standards, and submissions that are received, reviewed, shaped, and placed within a bigger vision. It means writing is not just *posted*, but *published*.

That distinction matters.

We want writers to know their work is valued and readers to trust that everything here has been carefully considered. Not every piece will be perfect; no serious publication can promise that. But our editorial process is not meant to humiliate, exclude, or make everything the same. It is meant to strengthen each piece and preserve the journal's integrity.

This is especially important because *Thelema* attracts strong personalities. That is not a flaw. A religion focused on discovering and living out Will naturally draws vivid, forceful, and unique people. But strong personalities do not always lead to strong ideas. Sometimes they create noise, posturing, or the illusion of depth simply because the language is unusual or intense.

We are interested in something better: individuality brought into disciplined conversation. We value liberty that does not fear structure, originality that does not need to reject the past, convictions that can stand up to editing, and religious seriousness that can speak beyond its own small circle without being embarrassed by itself.

Beyond the Occult Niche

One of the quiet ambitions of *Mere Thelema* is to help Thelemic thought become more understandable to the public (and, quite frankly, to ourselves) without losing what makes it Thelemic. Too often, esoteric traditions face a false choice: either they remain locked in insider language, meaningful only to those already initiated into the vocabulary, or they translate themselves so aggressively into secular respectability that the living mystery is lost.

We want neither outcome. We do not want to hide Thelema's strangeness, but we also do not want strangeness to become an excuse for laziness.

Thelema has resources that deserve wider attention. Its doctrine of Will, properly understood, is not just about self-expression. Its doctrine of Love, too often treated as a slogan, raises deep questions about union, relationship, and discipline. Its magical practices invite serious reflection on attention, embodiment, imagination, ritual, and transformation. Its scriptures demand interpretation, not blind quoting. Its history demands honesty. Its future requires courage.

If *Mere Thelema* can contribute even modestly to that work, it will have justified its existence.

The Actual World Matters

Of course, a launch is only a beginning. Journals are not born fully formed. They grow through the work they publish, the writers they attract, the readers they serve, the conversations they spark, and the standards they maintain over time.

There is real joy in making a table and seeing who comes to sit at it. This is a place for thoughtful Thelemic writing, not sectarian propaganda or internet clutter. It is a place for scholars and practitioners, poets and critics, clergy and laypeople, artists and educators, organizers and contemplatives. Here we can ask what it means to live by this Law in the actual world we have inherited.

And the actual world matters.

We are launching *Mere Thelema* at a time when many people are hungry for meaning but suspicious of institutions, drawn to spirituality but allergic to dogmatism, politically exhausted but morally restless, technologically connected but communally impoverished. **Thelema has something to say in such a moment, but only if it is willing to grow up and stand up to take its place in the public sphere.**

By this, I do not mean that Thelema should become tame. I mean it should become clear, responsible, and generous enough to join the larger conversation without losing its soul.

Thelema cannot remain in a state of constant rebellion, even if rebellion is sometimes necessary for spiritual growth. Nor can it retreat into private eccentricity and call that freedom. Discovering one's Will is not the end of responsibility; it is the start of a greater one. To live by "Do what thou wilt" is to become more fully accountable to reality, not less. "Love under will" means learning the discipline of relationship with all things, not just chasing personal intensity. To declare every man and every woman is a star is to ask what conditions allow stars to shine without devouring each other.

These are not small questions. They are religious questions. Ethical questions. Cultural questions. Political questions in the deepest sense: not simply questions of party or policy, but questions about the order of life together. They are questions about existence and what it means to be human.

Mere Thelema lives to make room for such questions.

An Invitation

I am personally excited about this launch because I believe many people have been waiting for something like it, even if they would not say so in these words. Writers need a place for serious work. Readers need a place to find it. Thelemic communities need resources that can be shared, argued with, taught from, and returned to. Curious outsiders need a doorway that does not quickly turn into either sensationalism or obscurity. And those of us who care about Thelema's

future need institutions, however modest at first, that can last beyond passing trends.

A journal such as *Mere Thelema* is one such institution.

It is not the only answer. It cannot solve everything. It will not replace orders, temples, lodges, study groups, private practice, spiritual guidance, scholarship, friendship, or the hard inner work no publication can do for anyone. But it can serve as a gathering place. It can shape conversation. It can preserve work that might otherwise get lost in feeds and comment threads. It can encourage better writing by treating writing seriously.

To our prospective writers: we want your best work. We do not need your impressive credentials, your trendiest opinions, or your most provocative ideas. We want your most honest and thoughtful contributions. Send us essays that think, reviews that help readers decide, poems that reveal, fiction that sparks imagination, and arguments worth having.

To our readers: we invite you to read with both reasoned generosity and a critical eye. Do not expect every piece to agree with you. A journal that only confirms its readers' biases is not a journal; it is an echo chamber. We hope *Mere Thelema* will sometimes confirm, sometimes challenge, sometimes annoy, sometimes delight, and sometimes open a door you did not know was there.

To the wider Thelemic world and adjacent communities: we offer this space in good faith. We know no publication can represent all of Thelema, and we do not claim to. We do not claim final authority or universal jurisdiction. We are simply taking on a task we believe is worthwhile: creating a serious, welcoming, and thoughtful space for Thelemic writing and reflection.

That is enough.

Every real beginning involves risk. Perhaps the work will be harder than expected. It usually is. Perhaps the audience will develop differently than we imagine. It probably will. Perhaps the journal will turn out to be more interesting than we

planned. We hope so. But the risk is part of the process. Nothing alive begins without some sense of risk.

So let us begin.

We begin with gratitude for those who have helped imagine this project into being. We begin with respect for the tradition that has made such a project necessary. We begin with confidence that Thelema has not exhausted its meaning. We begin with the conviction that serious thought, careful writing, and generous argument still matter. We begin with the hope that *Mere Thelema* may become, in time, a worthy home for such work.

There is much to do.

So let us begin this Work of wonder together.

Love is the law, love under will.

Johnathon Victor Reese
Editor-in-Chief
Mere Thelema

1. Aleister Crowley, personal communication to W. T. Smith, June 6, 1928. [__](#)

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