

# Theological Voyage With Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Studies In Theology And The

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a prominent English poet, critic, and philosopher who lived during the Romantic era. He was a complex and multifaceted figure whose religious beliefs underwent significant transformations throughout his life. This article explores Coleridge's theological voyage, examining the evolution of his religious thought and its profound influence on his literary works.



## Mariner: A Theological Voyage with Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Studies in Theology and the Arts Series)

by Malcolm Guite

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## Coleridge's Early Religious Beliefs

Coleridge was raised in a devout Christian household and initially embraced the orthodox beliefs of the Church of England. However, his religious convictions were challenged during his time at Cambridge University, where he encountered the ideas of Enlightenment thinkers such as David Hume and Immanuel Kant. These ideas raised doubts in

Coleridge's mind about the traditional Christian doctrines of God, the soul, and the afterlife.

## **The Influence of Unitarianism**

Coleridge's religious crisis deepened after he came into contact with the Unitarian movement, a Christian denomination that rejected the Trinity and emphasized the rational nature of religion. Coleridge was drawn to Unitarianism's emphasis on reason and its rejection of dogma. He became a Unitarian minister in 1797, but his association with the movement was short-lived.

## **The Coleridgean Imagination**

Coleridge's religious experiences and intellectual struggles profoundly influenced his concept of the imagination. He believed that the imagination was a creative power that could transcend the limitations of reason and experience the divine. This concept of the imagination became central to Coleridge's poetic theory and his understanding of the nature of reality.

## **"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"**

Coleridge's masterpiece, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," is a haunting and evocative poem that explores themes of sin, guilt, and redemption. The poem's protagonist, the Ancient Mariner, embarks on a harrowing sea voyage during which he commits a terrible crime by killing an albatross. The poem follows the Mariner's subsequent journey of suffering and repentance as he seeks to atone for his sin.

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is deeply imbued with Coleridge's religious beliefs. The poem's central theme of redemption reflects

Coleridge's own struggles with sin and guilt. The Mariner's journey can be seen as a metaphor for the human soul's journey towards salvation.

## **"Kubla Khan"**

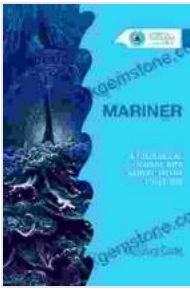
"Kubla Khan" is another of Coleridge's most famous poems. It is a fragmentary work that describes a visionary experience Coleridge had after consuming opium. The poem depicts a magnificent palace and gardens created by the Mongol emperor Kubla Khan.

"Kubla Khan" is a vivid and otherworldly poem that explores the power of the imagination to create a reality beyond the bounds of the physical world. The poem's imagery and symbolism reflect Coleridge's own religious beliefs and his concept of the imagination as a divine faculty.

## **Later Religious Thought**

In his later years, Coleridge's religious beliefs became increasingly complex and eclectic. He drew inspiration from a wide range of sources, including Neoplatonism, German Idealism, and Christian mysticism. Coleridge's later writings reflect a deep engagement with the mysteries of faith and the nature of the divine.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's theological voyage was a transformative journey that profoundly influenced his life and work. His evolving religious beliefs shaped his understanding of the imagination, reality, and the human condition. Through his poetry and prose, Coleridge explored the depths of human experience and the mysteries of the divine, leaving a lasting legacy that continues to inspire and challenge readers to this day.



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