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## A Rhetorical Analysis of the Preaching of Asahel Nettleton in The Second Great Awakening

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ABSTRACT

A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PREACHING OF ASAHEL NETTLETON IN THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017

Chairperson: Dr. Timothy K. Beougher

This dissertation examines the life and ministry of American revivalist Asahel Nettleton (1783-1844) with special attention given to his preaching. The project is a rhetorical analysis seeking to dissect and understand what made Nettleton's preaching so effective during the Second Great Awakening and analyzing whether his rhetoric in preaching was consistent with his stated theological system.

Chapter 1 introduces the project by pointing out rising tensions created by the resurgence of Calvinistic theology in American churches in

recent years, especially among Southern Baptists. Nettleton, a Calvinist, is presented as a model of a preacher who was evangelistically passionate and theologically consistent.

**Abstract:**

Chapter 2 gives an overview of Nettleton's life and ministry. Special attention is given to his revivals in New England between 1812-1822 and theological controversies in which he was engaged throughout his career, particularly his conflict with Charles Finney over the "new measures."

Chapter 3 establishes Nettleton's theological system. With emphasis given to his own preaching and notes, his theological system is ascertained in key areas and placed within the broader theological context of his times.

Chapter 4 begins with a preliminary discussion of the role of classical rhetoric in Christian homiletics. From there, a detailed analysis of Nettleton's preaching is performed, using Aristotelian categories and the traditional canons of invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. Conclusions are drawn that show a consistent relationship between Nettleton's theological Calvinism and his passionate preaching. Also, conclusions are drawn concerning what made Nettleton's preaching successful, with attention given to the elements of arrangement and style in his sermons.

Chapter 5 begins with a necessary critique of Nettleton's ministry and methods. Implications for contemporary ministry follow with an emphasis on improving contemporary evangelistic preaching and challenging contemporary preachers to consider the cautious use of classical rhetoric as a tool to help become more effective and precise preachers. The chapter ends with personal reflections and suggestions for future studies.

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