

**ST. PETER:
AN ORATORIO**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649218882

St. Peter: an oratorio by Sir Julius Benedict

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Cover @ 2017

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SIR JULIUS BENEDICT

**ST. PETER:
AN ORATORIO**

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NOVELLO'S ORIGINAL OCTAVO EDITION.

Ms. Van Rensselaer Wheeler.

ST. PETER

AN ORATORIO

THE WORDS SELECTED FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

COMPOSED FOR THE BIRMINGHAM FESTIVAL, 1870,

BY

SIR JULIUS BENEDICT.

SECOND EDITION.

PRICE THREE SHILLINGS.
Paper Boards, 3s. 6d.; Cloth Gilt, 5s.

LONDON & NEW YORK
NOVELLO, EWER AND CO.

J. J. Van Rensselaer Wheeler

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S T. P E T E R.

AN ORATORIO.

The subject of St. Peter might be treated in various ways for the purposes of Oratorio. Within no ordinary limits, however, could all the important events of the Apostle's life, and all the significance of his character and position be illustrated. The aim of the present work is very simple. It affects neither to show, exclusively as such, Peter the Disciple nor Peter the Apostle; its object, moreover, is not to treat the chief personage concerned in any symbolic or representative capacity. What has been attempted is merely the illustration of a few of those occurrences in St. Peter's life which most invite musical treatment, and, at the same time, exhibit the Galilean fisherman as an object of the Divine regard which so pre-eminently distinguished him.

ARGUMENT:

PART I.

THE DIVINE CALL.—Galilean fishermen are preparing to rest from the labours of the day, when John the Baptist appears, urging them to "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." After the forerunner comes the Master, who commands Peter to leave all and follow Him. Peter obeys, expressing his firm confidence in the goodness of the Lord, and departs amid the benedictions of his friends and neighbours.

TRIAL OF FAITH.—The Saviour having sent His disciples to "the other side," retires to a mountain apart to pray. While thus engaged the storm rises, and the little ship is in distress. Jesus appears walking on the waters, to the terror of His disciples, whom He speedily reassures, bidding them not to fear. Peter obtains permission to leave the ship and go to Jesus; but his faith fails him, and, "beginning to sink," he is sustained by the hand of his Lord. They reach the ship, and immediately the storm ceases. A chorus of praise and thanksgiving then brings the first part to an end.

PART II.

DENIAL.—Peter declares his resolve to follow the Master at all hazards; but when Jesus is taken before the High Priest, the disciple is found "afar off." He enters the servants' hall of the High Priest's Palace, where a crowd of attendants are expressing their hatred of the "Nazarene," and Peter is three times charged with being a follower of Jesus. Three times he denies the accusation.

REPENTANCE.—The procession escorting Jesus to the Roman Governor passes through the hall where Peter is, and the Lord turns and looks upon his erring disciple. Touched to the heart, Peter repeats "with strong crying and tears," the anguish of his soul being heightened by each successive scene of the great drama which then passes before him. He hears the lamentations of fellow-disciples, and the mournful song of his Lord's mother; he watches the procession to Calvary, and listens to the taunts of the Jews as they mingle with the wailing of the "daughters of Jerusalem." Weeping for "all these things" and for himself, the hope of the Christian comes to his aid, and he is assured that death will be swallowed up in victory.

DELIVERANCE.—Peter lying in the dungeon where Herod had thrown him, is visited by angels, who assure him of Divine help, and release him from captivity. He acknowledges the goodness of God, fully relying upon which, he expresses confidence as to his ultimate entrance into the everlasting kingdom of his Lord and Saviour. Rejoining his fellow-believers, he is received with gladness, and a song of hope and joy forms the conclusion of the work.

PART I.

THE DIVINE CALL.

OVERTURE. (*Evening by the Sea of Galilee.*)

CHORUS OF FISHERS.

They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters: these behold the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep.
Psalm cvii. 23, 24.

Soprani.

The Lord will preserve their going out and their coming in. He is with them and will keep them: for in His hand is every living thing.
Psalm cxxi. 8. Genesis xxviii. 15. Job xii. 10.

Mixed Voices.

We will lie down in peace and sleep: for Thou, O Lord, makest us to dwell in safety.
Psalm iv. 8.

SOLO.—JOHN THE BAPTIST.

Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.
S. Matthew iii. 2.

CHORUS.

What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? Who art thou? S. Mark i. 27. Acts ix. 5.

SOLO.

I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. He that cometh after me is mightier than I. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.
S. Mark i. 3. S. Matthew iii. 11.

CHORUS.

Who art thou? Art thou Elias?
S. John i. 21, 22.

SOLO.

I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. After me cometh a man Who is preferred before me. I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him.
S. Mark i. 3. S. John i. 27, 32.

CHORUS.

Master, what would'st thou have us do?
Acts ix. 6.

SOLO.

Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. As saith the prophet Esaias:—
S. Matthew iii. 2. S. John i. 23.

AIR.

O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. He will teach us of His ways: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people.

Isaiah ii. 5. Micah iv. 2. Isaiah ii. 4.

CHORUS.

The Lord will not turn His face from them that seek Him; but will have compassion, and cast their sins in the depths of the sea.

11. Chron. xxx. 9. Micah vii. 19.

RECITATIVE.

And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee saw two brethren, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. And He said unto them, Follow Me. And they straightway left their nets and followed Him.

S. Matthew iv. 18, 19, 20.

AIR.—PETER.

How great, O Lord, is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for me. Thou hast shewn me the path of life, and inclined my heart to Thee to walk in Thy way. Thy way is the way of pleasantness, and all Thy paths are peace.

Psalm xxxi. 19. Psalm xvi. 11. 1. Kings viii. 58. Proverbs iii. 17.

CHORUS.

The Lord be a lamp unto thy feet, and a light unto thy path. The Lord preserve thee in all the way thou goest. Amen.

Psalm cxix. 105. Joshua xxiv. 17.

TRIAL OF FAITH.

RECITATIVE.

And Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side. And He went unto a mountain apart to pray, and when the evening was come He was there alone.

S. Matthew xiv. 22, 23.

ORCHESTRAL INTERLUDE.

Evening Prayer, and Rising of the Storm.

RECITATIVE. (*Accompanied.*)

But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed by the waves, by reason of a great wind that blew.

S. Matthew xiv. 24. S. John vi. 18.

CHORUS.

The deep uttereth his voice, and lifteth his hands on high. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of the storm and tempest.

Habakkuk iii. 10. Psalm xlii. 7.

SOLO AND CHORUS.

The Lord bath His way in the whirlwind and the storm. He maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters. Whatsoever

pleaseth Him, that doeth He, in the seas and all deep places.

Nahum i. 3. Isaiah xliiii. 16. Psalm cxxxv. 6.

RECITATIVE.

And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him, they were troubled, saying:—

S. Matthew xiv. 25, 26.

CHORUS.

It is a spirit! Make haste, O God, to our help!

S. Matthew xiv. 26. Psalm lxxi. 12.

RECITATIVE.

But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying: Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

S. Matthew xiv. 27.

CHORUS.

Who would not fear Thee, O Lord; for great and marvellous are Thy works.

Revelations xv. 3, 4.

RECITATIVE.

And Peter said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, cried, Lord, save me! And Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said, O thou of little faith! wherefore didst thou doubt?

S. Matthew xiv. 28, 29, 30, 31.

AIR.—PETER.

Now know I that the Lord saveth His anointed with the saving strength of His right hand. In my distress I called upon Him. He heard my voice, and my cry came even into His ears. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for Thou art with me.

Psalm xx. 6. 11. Samuel xxii. 7. Psalm xxxiii. 4.

RECITATIVE.

And when they were come into the ship the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying:

S. Matthew xiv. 32, 33.

CHORUS.

Of a truth, Thou art the Son of God.

S. Matthew xiv. 33.

QUARTET. (*Unaccompanied.*)

O come let us sing unto the Lord, Who stilleth the noise of the seas, and the noise of their waves; Who maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

Psalm xc. i. Psalm lxxv. 7. Psalm cvii. 29.

CHORUS.

Praise ye the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the heights. Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps; fire and hail, snow and vapours, stormy wind fulfilling His word. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for His glory is above the earth and heaven.

Psalm cxlviii. 1, 7, 8, 13.

END OF PART I.

PART II.

DENIAL.

RECITATIVE.

Then saith Jesus unto His disciples: All ye shall be offended because of Me this night; ye shall be scattered, and shall leave Me alone. But Peter said unto Him:—

S. Matthew xxvi. 31. S. John xvi. 32.

AIR.—PETER.

Though all men shall be offended, yet will not I. Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee. Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death.

S. Mark xiv. 29. S. Matt. xxvi. 35. S. Luke xxii. 33.

RECITATIVE.

And they that had laid hold on Jesus, led Him away to the high priest. S. Matthew xxvi. 57.

CHORAL RECITATIVE.

And they all forsook Him and fled.

S. Mark xiv. 50.

AIR.

O Thou afflicted, and tossed with tempest, and not comforted; behold in righteousness shalt Thou be established; Thou shalt be far from oppression, for Thou shalt not fear, and from terror, for it shall not come near Thee. No weapon against Thee shall prosper, and every tongue in judgment Thou shalt condemn.

Isaiah liv. 11, 14, 17.

CHORAL RECITATIVE. (*Male Voices.*)

But Peter followed Him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in to see the end.

S. Matthew xxvi. 58.

CHORUS OF SERVANTS.

We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.

S. John xix. 7.

SOLO.—A SERVANT.

Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.

S. Matthew xxvi. 69.

CHORUS.

This man was also with Him.

S. Luke xxii. 56

SOLO.—PETER.

I know not what thou sayest.

S. Matthew xxvi. 70.

SOLO.—SECOND SERVANT.

Art thou not also one of His disciples?

S. John xviii. 25.

CHORUS.

This is one of them.

S. Mark xiv. 69.

SOLO.—PETER.

As thy soul liveth I am not.

II. Samuel xi 11. S. Luke xxii. 58.

SOLO.—THIRD SERVANT.

Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?

S. John xviii. 26.

CHORUS.

Surely thou also art one of them.

S. Matthew xxvi. 73.

SOLO.—PETER.

As the Lord God of Israel liveth, I know not this man of whom ye speak.

I. Kings xvii. 1. S. Mark xiv. 71.

CHORUS OF SERVANTS.

They are all revolvers, walking with slanders, they are corrupters. Men shall call them reprobate, because the Lord hath rejected them.

Jer. vi. 28, 30.

REPENTANCE.

AIR.

The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. He is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and will not turn away His face if they return to Him.

S. James v. 11. Psalm xxxiv. 18. II. Chron. xxx. 9.

RECITATIVE.

Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment.

S. John xviii. 28.

PROCESSION MARCH, WITH
RECITATIVE.

And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.

S. Luke xxii. 16.

AIR.—PETER.

O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night. I acknowledge my wickedness, O Lord, for I have sinned against Thee; I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face. Do not abhor me for Thy name's sake.

Jer. ix. 1; xiv. 20, 21. Ezra ix. 6.

RECITATIVE.

Then Pilate delivered Him unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him away.

S. John xix. 16.

CHORUS OF DISCIPLES.

This is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.

Zephaniah i. 15.

SOLO.—THE VIRGIN MOTHER.

I mourn as a dove, I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul. Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction. Labour not to comfort me, for I will weep bitterly.

Isaiah xxxviii. 14, 15. Psalm lxxxvii. 9. Isaiah xxii. 4.

DEAD MARCH, WITH CHORUS OF JEWS
AND DISCIPLES.

JEWS.—Thou that destroyest the temple, how gracious shalt Thou be when pangs come upon Thee. Then shalt Thou be confounded for all Thy wickedness.

S. Matt. xxvii. 40. Jer. xxii. 22.

DISCIPLES.—He is like a lamb that is brought to the slaughter. Call for the mourning women, that they may come and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters.

Jer. ix. 17, 18; xi. 19.

RECITATIVE.

And Jesus turning unto them said:

AIR.

Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming in which they shall say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

S. Luke xxiii. 28, 29, 30.

MARCH RESUMED WITH CHORUS.

He is worthy to die. He hath prophesied against our city. Away with Him.

Jer. xxvi. 11. S. John xix. 15.

SOLO.—PETER.

For these things I weep.

Lam. i. 16.

CHORUS.

He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isaiah xxv. 8; xxxv. 10.

DELIVERANCE.

RECITATIVE.

Now Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church, and he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. Peter, therefore, was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing unto God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the

Lord came unto him, and a light shined in the prison. And he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying: Acts xii. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7.

AIR.—AN ANGEL.

Gird up thy loins and arise. Be not dismayed; they shall fight against thee, but shall not prevail, for I am with thee to deliver thee.

Jer. i. 17, 19.

SOLO.—PETER.

The heavens are opened, and I see visions of God.

Ezekiel i. 1.

RECITATIVE.

And the angel said, Cast thy garment about thee and follow me. And he went out and followed him, and passed on through one street, and forthwith the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said:—

Acts xii. 8, 9, 10, 11.

AIR.—PETER.

The Lord hath sent His angel and delivered me. I called upon Thy name, O Lord, out of the dungeon, and Thou hast heard my voice. O Lord, Thou hast redeemed me, and so an entrance shall be given me into the everlasting kingdom of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Acts xii. 11. Lam. iii. 55, 56, 58. II. S. Peter i. 11.

RECITATIVE.

And he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, where many were gathered together praying; and when they had opened the door they were astonished. But he, beckoning with the hand unto them to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of prison. And they sang praises with gladness.

Acts xii. 12, 16, 17. II. Chron. xxx. 30.

CHORUS.

Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of His Amen.

Psaln xxx. 4.