

APPLICATION OF THE MORAVIAN SOCIETY OF UNITED BRETHREN FOR INDEMNITY FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE INDIAN VILLAGE ON THE RIVER THAMES, BY THE AMERICAN ARMY.

COMMUNICATED TO THE SENATE, FEBRUARY 18, 1814.

BETHLEHEM, February 10, 1814.

*To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, the memorial and petition of the undersigned, acting in behalf of the directors of the missionary concerns of the society of the United Brethren, commonly called Moravians, respectfully sheweth:*

That the protestant episcopal church of the Unitas Fratrum, or United Brethren, commonly known by the name of Moravians, derive their origin from the ancient episcopal church of the Unitas Fratrum, or United Brethren in Bohemia and Moravia, who, for three centuries and a half past, formed a society under that denomination. Having, during many years, been cruelly persecuted on account of their religious tenets, and their opposition to the prevailing errors in the church by the Roman Catholics, and being on the brink of extirpation, some of their descendants, in the beginning of the last century, emigrated from Moravia to Upper Lusatia, where, having been joined by people of different religious persuasions, they built Herrnhuth, the principal seat of the present society of the United Brethren. It may, perhaps, not be improper here to observe that our society, after the most rigorous scrutiny into their origin, doctrine, and discipline, has been recognised as an ancient protestant episcopal church by an act of the British Parliament in the year 1749.

The object of our society, as well as that of the old Bohemian and Moravian brethren, has, at all times, been, and still is, strictly to adhere to the doctrine of our dear Lord Jesus Christ and of his apostles, as laid down in the sacred records of our holy religion, and, not only by profession, but also by practice, to approve themselves the humble but faithful followers of our Divine Master, and it is not so much in the theoretical, as in the practical principles, that we differ from other protestant churches. This is evident from the single fact, that our society has embraced the confession delivered in 1530, by the friends of Luther to the diet at Augsburg, as their own confession of faith, and may be further proved by our constant declaration, that we consider all these who adopt the pure fountain of the oracles of the New Testament for the only source of their faith in this life, and of their hopes hereafter, as our brethren in Christ. We are distinguished from the Lutherans and other religious denominations by our church discipline, transmitted to us by the ancient church of the Unitas Fratrum in Bohemia and Moravia, and by our regular and uninterrupted episcopal succession from the remotest times of christianity, as from a publication, entitled "Acta Fratrum Unitatis, in Anglia, 1749," which I beg leave, herewith, to present to Congress for their library, relation being thereunto had, more fully and at large will appear. An exposition of our doctrine, as taught in our church, has been laid before the public, in a work entitled "Idea fidei Fratrum," of which the undersigned had the honor to present a copy to your honorable body some years ago; and an account of our constitution and church discipline has been published in the German language, entitled "Ratio Disciplinæ Unitatis Fratrum," of which a translation into the English language not yet having been made, a copy of the original work is herewith presented.

From a very small beginning our society has spread through the four quarters of the globe, in about twenty settlements in different European countries; one in Asia near Astracan, and nine in this country, where we live unintermixed with persons of other religious persuasions. Besides, we have settled societies in many places, as well in Europe as in this country, where the members of our church continue to live in company with their fellow-citizens of other denominations. In obedience to the express command of our Lord to his disciples to preach the gospel to every creature, we have, from the earliest times of the re-establishment of the Unitas Fratrum, exerted ourselves in behalf of those heathen nations who had never been favored with the glad tidings of our salvation, by the all-atoning death of our blessed Redeemer. It is now nearly eighty-two years when our society first began their missionary labors among the negroes in the West India islands, which have since been extended to Green-



land, Terra Labrador, the continent of South America, and Africa. The word of the cross has proved, as it will in all instances, where it is preached in its purity, to be the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, and our humble efforts have been crowned by a success far beyond our most sanguine expectations. We have lived to see many thousands of the most wretched and wicked heathens turn from death to life, and from the power of satan to God, and receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ. We have actually fourteen missionary settlements in the West Indies, where upwards of twenty thousand Christian negroes live under the superintendence of our missionaries, three among the Greenlanders, three among the Esquimaux, three among the negroes in Surinam, and two among the Hottentots.

The aborigines of this country have likewise been an early object of our society. Our first endeavors were directed to the Creeks near Savannah, in Georgia, but our missionaries having repeatedly been called upon to join the British in the prosecution of the war, which at that time was carried on by them against the Spaniards, they left that country for Pennsylvania. In the progress of time the society applied their care with more success to the Mohicans, in the then provinces of Connecticut and New York, and made several attempts to introduce the Christian doctrine to the Six Nations, who, though not disposed to receive the gospel themselves, were, nevertheless, instrumental to the promotion of christianity by granting leave to our missionaries to reside among the Indian tribes then under their protection. In later times the society has principally labored among the Delawares, in the States of Pennsylvania and Ohio, who were joined by some Mohicans, and turned their attention likewise to the Shawanese, Chippeways, and other Indian nations.

In the prosecution of this very extensive undertaking, our society has often been put to very severe trials, and has had to struggle with many difficulties. This has been more particularly the case with respect to their endeavors to be useful to the aborigines of this country. By the cession of great districts of the Indian lands to the white people, our Christian Indians were continually under the necessity to change their places of residence, to leave their much improved settlements, and to begin anew in the wilderness. By the wars, as well previous to as during the time of the revolution, they not only suffered the loss of their property, and had their lives frequently put in jeopardy, but a number of them and of their missionaries actually fell victims to their faithful adherence to a peaceable deportment.

After the destruction of the three flourishing settlements of our Indian converts on Muskingum river, they were at last compelled, by dire necessity, to take refuge in Canada, where a number of them have since remained, and formed a settlement on the river Retrench, or Thames, which, at the time of the late declaration of war against Great Britain, consisted of about one hundred and fifty inhabitants, and of near fifty houses, inclusive of the church. A grant of upwards of fifty thousand acres of land had been made to our Indians by the English Government, and they had successively cleared more than two hundred acres of it, which yielded to them a yearly crop of about two thousand bushels of corn on an average. They had begun to substitute the plough for the hoe, and had actually seven ploughs in operation: their women had been taught, by the wives of our missionaries, to spin flax, and had made such proficiency in spinning, that they had it in contemplation to send their yarn to the loom to be manufactured into linen. But all their fair prospects have at once been blasted by the total destruction of their settlement by the army of the United States, under the command of General Harrison. How far such a measure is justifiable by the rules of war adopted among civilized nations, and more especially consistent with that justice and humanity which it has always been the noble pride of the United States to exercise even in their wars, it is not for the undersigned to decide; but he feels himself compelled by every sense of duty to make to your honorable body a just representation of the distressing situation of these poor fugitive Indians, who, at the approach of winter, were deprived of shelter and sustenance, and to claim for them such indemnification as Congress in their wisdom will, on a proper examination of the case, find them to be entitled to.

And your petitioner will ever pray, &c.

JOHN G. CUNOW.