

*Petition of John Whitbey and others to the Legislature.*

TO THE HONORABLE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE  
COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY.

WE, the undersigned petitioners, feeling ourselves much aggrieved by the fraudulent conduct of those who hold the reins of government in a society of people called Shakers, residing at Pleasant Hill, Mercer county, do respectfully implore your honorable body to take our case into consideration, and if it is not inconsistent with the powers confided to you by the Constitution, we humbly pray that you may devise, in your wisdom, some plan whereby our distresses may be alleviated.

Your petitioners do solemnly declare, that some years previous to this, from honest and conscientious views, they were induced to unite themselves to that Society on certain principles which they considered were best calculated to promote their happiness. We were told by them that as the work of their institution was progressive in consequence of its members increasing in knowledge and virtue, they had no creed or articles of faith, neither any written laws by which their Society was governed. That no coercive or arbitrary measures were ever taken in the government of this Society—that conscience was entirely free, that all required of each individual was always to act honestly according to that degree of faith which he or she should at any time possess. And that usurpation of authority over the conscience, among them was never known. That each individual had an indefeasible and equal right to all property belonging to the Society, and that no member was ever expelled from the Society for any cause whatever. The above stated conditions, with others of the same import, we considered to be sufficiently liberal, and when we compared them with their written