

## Summary of The Twelve Articles ...*Peasants' demands of the Swabian League 1525*

*(These are considered the first draft of human rights and civil liberties in continental Europe.)*

1. Every municipality shall have the right to elect and remove a preacher if he behaves improperly. The preacher shall preach the gospel simply, straight and clearly without any human amendment, for, it is written, that we can only come to God by true belief.
2. The preachers shall be paid from the great tithe. A potential surplus shall be used to pay for the poor and the war tax. The small tithe shall be dismissed, for it has been trumped-up by humans, for the Lord, our master, has created the cattle free for mankind.
3. It has been practice so far, that we have been held as villain, which is pitiful, given that Christ redeemed all of us with his precious bloodshed, the shepherd as well as the highest, no one excluded. Therefore, it is devised by the scripture, that we are and that we want to be free.
4. It is unfraternal and not in accordance with the word of God that the simple man does not have the right to catch game, fowls, and fish. For, when God our master created man, he gave him power over all animals, the bird in the air and the fish in the water.
5. The high gentlemen have taken sole possession of the woods. If the poor man needs something, he has to buy it for double money. Therefore, all the woods that were not bought (relates to former community woods, which many rulers had simply appropriated) shall be given back to the municipality so that anybody can satisfy his needs for timber and firewood thereof.
6. The matter of excessive services demanded of us should be properly looked into as we are only required to serve according to God
7. The nobility shall not force more services or dues from the peasant without payment. The peasant should help the lord when it is necessary and at proper times.
8. Many properties are not worth the rent demanded. Honest men shall inspect these properties and fix a rent in accordance with justice
9. There are constantly new laws being made. One does not punish according to the offence but at discretion (raising fines and arbitrary punishment was common). It is our opinion that we shall be judged according to the case's merits, and not with partiality
10. Several have appropriated meadows and acres (community land that was at the disposition of all members), that belong to the municipality. Those we want back to our common hands.
11. The "Todfall" (a sort of inheritance tax) shall be abolished altogether and never again shall widows and orphans be robbed contrary to God and honour.
12. It is our decision and final opinion that if one or several of the articles mentioned herein were not in accordance with the word of God, those we shall refrain from if it is explained to us on the basis of the scripture. If several articles were already granted to us and it emerged afterwards that they were ill, they shall be dead and null. Likewise, we want to have reserved that if even more articles are found in the writ that were against God and a grievance to though neighbour.