

The Twelve Articles of the Black Forest

Incidents

On 6 March 1525 about 50 representatives of the Upper Swabian Peasants Groups (of the Baltringer Mob, the Allgäuer Mob, and the Lake Constance Mob), met in [Memmingen](#) to deliberate upon their common stance against the [Swabian League](#). One day later and after difficult negotiations, they proclaimed the Christian Association, an Upper Swabian Peasants' [Confederation](#). The peasants met again on 15 and 20 March 1525 in [Memmingen](#) and, after some additional deliberation, adopted the Twelve Articles and the Federal Order (Bundesordnung).

These are the only programmes of many printed in the [Peasants' War](#). The Twelve Articles in particular were printed over 25,000 times within the next two months, a tremendous amount for those times and quickly spread throughout [Germany](#). Since the two texts were not developed any further in the course of the [Peasants' War](#), some sources speak of a constituent peasants' assembly in [Memmingen](#).

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. Have the high gentlemen 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. One shall have understanding (pretty much reduce) with regard to the corvee which keeps increasing from day to day to how our parents served in accordance with exclusively the word of God.
7. The nobility shall not raise the peasant's corvee in excess of what was established at bestowal. (Raising corvee without any agreement was not unusual.)

8. Many properties can not support the levies (lease fees). Honest men shall inspect these properties and shall determine the levy upon their discretion so that the peasant shall not do his work in vain, for every person is worth his pay.
9. New rules are ever made for the great outcry "große Frevel" (a fine that had to be paid to the court). One does not punish with regards to the subject but at discretion (raising fines and arbitrary punishment was common). It is our opinion that we shall be punished by old, written penalty with regards to what was done and not to favour.
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 s 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 those 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.