

Chronicles by Jean Froissart

Writings by Jean Froissart that cover the years 1322 until 1400 and describe the lead up to the progress of the first half of the Hundred Years' war.

Froissart recorded the happenings of the 1381 English Peasant Revolt. Among those recordings is this "sermon" from John Ball given to the masses within the English market places.

- John Ball is said to have gained considerable fame as a roving priest without a parish or any cure linking him to the established order - by expounding doctrines of John Wycliffe, and especially by his insistence on social equality. These utterances brought him to conflict with the archbishop of Canterbury, and he was thrown in prison on three occasions. He also appears to have been excommunicated; owing to which, in 1366 it was forbidden to hear him preach.

"My good friends, things cannot go on well in England, nor ever will until every thing shall be in common; when there shall be neither vassal (a landowning warrior) nor lord, and all distinctions leveled; when the lords shall be no more masters than ourselves. How ill have they used us! and for what reason do they hold us in bondage? Are we not all descended from the same parents, Adam and Eve? and what can they show, or what reasons give, why they should be more the masters than ourselves? Except, perhaps, in making us labor and work, for them to spend.

"They are clothed in velvets and rich stuffs, ornamented with ermine and other furs, while we are forced to wear poor cloth. They have wines, spices, and fine bread, when we have only rye and the refuse of the straw; and if we drink, it must be water. They have handsome seats and manors, when we must brave the wind and rain in our labors in the field; but it is from our labor they have wherewith to support their pomp (the fancy clothes and expensive material had by landowning nobility and wealthy merchants) .

"We are called slaves; and if we do not perform our services, we are beaten, and we have not any sovereign (supreme political authority) to whom we can complain, or who wishes to hear us and do us justice. Let us go to the king, who is young, and remonstrate (protest) with him on our servitude, telling him we must have it otherwise, or that we shall find a remedy for it ourselves.

If we wait on him in a body, all those who come under the appellation of slaves, or are held in bondage, will follow us, in the hopes of being free. When the king shall see us, we shall obtain a favorable answer, or we must then seek ourselves to **amend** (change) our condition."