

Topic Page: [Marsilius of Padua](#)

Definition: **Marsilius of Padua (c. 1270–c. 1342)** from *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Italian scholar and jurist. Born in Padua, he studied and taught at Paris and in 1324 collaborated with John of Jandun (c. 1286–1328) in writing the *Defensor pacis/Defender of the Peace*, a plea for the subordination of the ecclesiastical to the secular power and for the right of the people to choose their own government. He played a part in the establishment of the Roman republic in 1328 and was made archbishop of Milan.

Summary Article: **Marsilius of Padua**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(märsĭl'ĕēs, pä'dyōə), d. c.1342, Italian political philosopher. He is satirically called Marsiglio. Little is known with certainty of his life except that he was rector of the Univ. of Paris c.1312. When Holy Roman Emperor Louis IV was seeking a theorist to assist him in his struggle with Pope John XXII, Marsilius composed a tract, *Defensor pacis* [the defender of peace], probably in collaboration with the Averroist John of Jandun. It was published in 1324 and proved to be one of the most revolutionary of medieval documents. The work held that all power is derived from the people and their ruler is only their delegate; there is no law but the popular will, as expressed in the ruler. The church too has no authority apart from the people, and the actual power of the Holy See is self-arrogated; the church should be under the ruler, its province should be purely that of worship, and it should be governed by periodic councils. The notion that princes derive their power from the people was current in scholasticism, but the anti-ecclesiastical argument of the work aroused great scandal. It was repeatedly condemned by the Holy See. Marsilius, however, continued under the emperor's protection and went in Louis's train to Rome for his coronation and attended him afterward. His lesser works include an argument that the emperor had final jurisdiction in matrimonial cases (1342). The *Defensor pacis* had a long life; John Gerson recommended it, and in England, during Henry VIII's fight with the church, Thomas Cromwell patronized its translation into English (1535).

See the modern edition of A. Gewirth (1967);

also Gewirth, A. , *Marsilius of Padua and Medieval Political Philosophy* (1951).

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Marsilius of Padua. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/marsilius_of_padua



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