

Papal Civil Power

The Roman Papal system became both an ecclesiastical power and a civil power particularly **from the 8th century onwards**, with its peak influence and temporal power in the **Middle Ages and Renaissance periods**.

Here's a breakdown of key events that led to this dual role:

1. The Donation of Pepin (756 AD):

- In the 8th century, the Papacy gained significant temporal (civil) power. This came about after **Pope Stephen II** (later Pope Stephen III) sought help from the Frankish king **Pepin the Short** to defend the Papal territories in central Italy from the Lombards, who had threatened Rome.
- Pepin's victory over the Lombards resulted in the **Donation of Pepin** in 756 AD, where he granted the Papacy control of a large portion of central Italy, which became known as the **Papal States**. This marked the beginning of the Papacy's territorial rule and established the Pope as both a spiritual and political leader, holding secular power over the Papal States alongside his religious authority.

2. The Papal States (756 AD - 1870 AD):

- The **Papal States** were a vast region of central Italy that the popes ruled for over a millennium, from 756 AD until the **unification of Italy in 1870**. During this time, the Pope was not only the leader of the Catholic Church (ecclesiastical power) but also a sovereign ruler with civil authority over the Papal States (temporal power). This included administering justice, taxation, and military control.

3. The High Middle Ages and the Investiture Controversy:

- During the **High Middle Ages**, the popes asserted their influence over European monarchs, often challenging royal authority. One of the most significant events was the **Investiture Controversy** (11th-12th centuries), a conflict between the Papacy and secular rulers (especially the Holy Roman Emperors) over who had the right to appoint bishops and other church officials.
- The papacy, under figures like **Pope Gregory VII**, insisted on its authority to control ecclesiastical appointments, asserting its power over the spiritual and civil realms in a manner that was deeply intertwined with the governance of the Christian world.

4. Renaissance and Papal Influence (14th - 16th centuries):

- During the **Renaissance** (14th-16th centuries), popes like **Pope Julius II** and **Pope Leo X** not only had religious authority but were also major political and military figures. They controlled large territories, engaged in diplomacy, led armies, and played key roles in European politics.
- **Pope Julius II**, for example, is famous for his patronage of the arts and for leading military campaigns to defend the Papal States and expand its territory.

5. Loss of Temporal Power (1870):

- The **Papacy's civil power** came to an end in 1870 with the **capture of Rome** by the Kingdom of Italy during the process of Italian unification. The **Papal States** were absorbed into the newly unified Italian Kingdom.
- After this, the **Pope's temporal power** was effectively reduced to the Vatican City, a small independent city-state established in 1929 with the signing of the **Lateran Treaty** between the Holy See and the Kingdom of Italy, granting the Church full sovereignty over the Vatican.

Conclusion:

The Roman Papal system was both an ecclesiastical and civil power from the **8th century (756 AD)**, with the establishment of the **Papal States**, until **1870** when the papacy lost its temporal control over Italy. During this period, the popes held not only spiritual authority but also significant political and territorial control, making them influential rulers in both religious and secular matters.