

1. From the Beginnings to 1000 CE

As the history of French wine was beginning, about twenty-five hundred years ago, both of the key elements were missing: there was no geographical or political entity called France, and no wine was made on the territory that was to become France. As far as we know, the Celtic populations living there did not produce wine from any of the varieties of grapes that grew wild in many parts of their land, although they might well have eaten them fresh. They did cultivate barley, wheat, and other cereals to ferment into beer, which they drank, along with water, as part of their daily diet. They also fermented honey (for mead) and perhaps other produce.

In cultural terms it was a far cry from the nineteenth century, when France had assumed a national identity and wine was not only integral to notions of French culture and civilization but held up as one of the important influences on the character of the French and the success of their nation. Two and a half thousand years before that, the arbiters of culture and civilization were Greece and Rome, and they looked upon beer-drinking peoples, such as the Celts of ancient France, as barbarians. Wine was part of the commercial and civilizing missions of the Greeks and Romans, who introduced it to their new colonies and later planted vineyards in them. When they and the Etruscans brought wine and viticulture to the Celts of ancient France, they began the history of French wine.

Although the Romans were largely responsible for planting vineyards throughout France, the first wines known to have reached ancient France came from Etruria in central Italy, the territory that is now Tuscany. The Etruscans were producing wine by 800 BCE as a result of contact with the Phoenicians from the eastern Mediterranean, and by 625 BCE they had begun to ship it to ports on the Mediterranean coast of ancient France.¹ One shipment from sometime in the period 525–475 BCE, which never reached

its destination, lies in the wreck of an Etruscan vessel that sank in sixty meters (two hundred feet) of water off Grand Ribaud Island, a kilometer (0.6 miles) from the French coast east of Toulon. In its hold were about a thousand amphoras, pottery vessels used for storing and shipping wine, olive oil, and dry goods such as grain. The wine in this ship—which would have been sailing westward along the coast of ancient France, perhaps to the port of Lattara, where Etruscan merchants had warehousing facilities—amounted to about forty thousand liters (eleven thousand gallons), the equivalent of some fifty thousand modern bottles of wine.²

Much of the evidence of the Etruscan wine trade to Mediterranean France takes the form of amphoras excavated intact or in pieces from sea- and riverbeds and from sites on land. They were two-handled vessels with a pointed end and commonly held about forty liters (eleven gallons, or about fifty-three modern bottles), although Roman amphoras were often smaller, holding about twenty-five liters (seven gallons, or thirty-three bottles). Each center of amphora production worked its own variations on the basic shape, and some added designs, making it possible to identify their origins. Some (like those in the ship wrecked off Grand Ribaud Island) were sealed with cork stoppers, while others were sealed with clay, wood, or textiles. Stacked in layers in the hulls of ships—transportation was far cheaper by water than by land—amphoras were the principal means of shipping wine until wooden barrels replaced them in the second century CE.

Unlike ancient barrels, only parts of which have only rarely survived two thousand years,³ untold numbers of ancient amphoras have survived burial underground and in water, enabling archaeologists to identify their provenance and scientists to identify their contents from chemical residues on their interior walls. Many of those retrieved from southern France and its coastal waters show chemical and botanical residues that almost certainly derive from grapes. The amphoras might have held fresh grapes, wine, or vinegar, but there is a high probability that they contained wine, because chemical analysis also showed other characteristics common to ancient wines: tartaric acid, which is indicative of grapes; tree resin, used as a preservative or flavoring; and herbs (such as rosemary, basil, and thyme) used to enhance the aromas and flavors of wine.

The seventh-century BCE Etruscan wine trade to Mediterranean ancient France might have been robust, but it soon declined in the face of competition from Greeks. In about 600 BCE, Phocaean Greeks from Anatolia (in modern Turkey) established the settlement of Massalia (now Marseille), which became the region's main port. Given the centrality of wine to their culture and diet, it is not surprising that Greeks took it with them wherever

they went. Settlers needed a supply of wine for daily consumption, festivities, and religious purposes, and a wine trade was quickly established between Greece and its settlements throughout the Mediterranean. As the indigenous Celtic inhabitants of ancient France—the wealthier strata, at least—began to emulate the newcomers and drink wine, the trade grew so as to supply the expanded market. One sunken ship excavated by marine archaeologists was carrying an astonishing ten thousand amphoras, which would have contained as much as four hundred thousand liters (one hundred thousand gallons) of wine, the equivalent of half a million standard modern bottles. It is estimated that Greek merchants shipped ten million liters (2.6 million gallons) of wine to ancient France each year through Massalia alone.⁴ Much of it was then shipped to other towns in Massalia's trading network, including Celtic communities along the coast and up the Rhône and Saône Rivers.

The Greeks not only imported wine but began to plant vines. By about 525 BCE they were making their own amphoras in Massalia, a very good indicator that they were producing wine locally; there would have been no reason to produce amphoras if there was nothing to fill them with, and there are residues of grape seeds at a number of excavated sites in and near Massalia, including Nîmes.⁵ This local wine production undercut the Etruscan wine trade to southern France, which went into decline but did not disappear entirely. It continued through Lattara, a coastal town south of what is now Montpellier and near the modern town of Lattes, where Vins de Pays d'Oc (the association of Languedoc wines) has its headquarters. In about 525 BCE, just as wine was beginning to be produced at Massalia, a complex of structures for warehousing and shipping goods both imported and for export was built at Lattara, which became the main port of entry for Etruscan wine. There must have been vineyards at Lattara too, as a limestone pressing platform was discovered there, along with piles of grape seeds. It dates from 425–400 BCE, about a century after the first evidence of wine being made in the region of Massalia.

On the basis of current knowledge we can conclude that wine was being produced on the Mediterranean coast of ancient France by about 500 BCE, two and a half millennia ago, and that Etruscans had imported it one or two centuries before that. These are the earliest known dates of wine-related activity in France, although it is quite possible that evidence will be found of even earlier wine trade and production there. Among the current unknowns is when the indigenous Celts, rather than Etruscan and Greek settlers, began to make wine, but at this point there is no evidence that they did so before the arrival of these newcomers.

If the Celts had made wine before the arrival of outsiders, they would have had to use indigenous wild vines that produced grapes that were generally too small, with too low a ratio of pulp to seeds and skin, to make pressing them very worthwhile. Wine must have been made on a commercial scale in ancient France only after exotic domesticated varieties (with larger berries and a higher pulp content) had been introduced or indigenous varieties had been selected and bred. The earliest evidence of domesticated grapes (but not of wine making) has been found at Port Ariane, very close to Lattes, and dates from the seventh to sixth centuries BCE, when the Etruscan wine trade began. Vines were sometimes transported long distances for replanting—in ships, they were planted in soil in the cool lower levels—and it seems likely that the first wine from French vineyards came from imported vines.

The vines planted at sites along the Mediterranean coast from about 500 BCE were the forerunners of the vineyards of the massive Languedoc-Roussillon wine region, which now accounts for a quarter of France's viticultural area. We do not know the extent of the earliest French vineyards or the volume of wine that they produced, but neither is likely to have been very substantial. Given the scale of imports from Etruria and from Greek vineyards in southern Italy, there was probably enough for some better-off groups within the indigenous Celtic populations to drink wine from time to time, especially on festive and other special occasions and perhaps for medical and therapeutic purposes. But the mass of the population must have continued to drink beer, water, and occasionally some mead. Even so, the Roman historian Justin ranked viticulture, along with urban life and constitutional government, as one of the benefits of civilization that the Greek settlers of Massalia had conferred on the indigenous inhabitants of the area.⁶

The wine cultures of the Greeks (and later the Romans) who settled in ancient France are important to understanding the impetus to develop viticulture and wine making there. Undoubtedly, these settlers consumed some of the wine imported into and produced in ancient France because it was a staple of the daily diet in their homelands. In Greece, vines were planted throughout the mainland and the islands of the Aegean Sea, and wine was consumed at all levels of society. Elite males drank wine in ritualized gatherings known as symposia, where it was diluted with water and the participants occupied themselves by talking, being entertained, playing wine-related games, and occasionally having sex.⁷ Other classes in Greek society drank wine of varying quality, according to their rank and means.

Wine and the manner of drinking it were markers of social distinction in Greece, setting the upper classes off from the lower, and the Greek elites

used the same criteria to differentiate civilized people (themselves) from those who were uncivilized. The Greeks did not drink beer and were scornful not only of anyone who did but also of anyone who consumed wine improperly: by not diluting it with water or by drinking to the point of drunkenness. Scythians and Thracians were uncivilized by this count, and individuals such as Alexander the Great were despised as barbaric because they were heavy drinkers given to violence when they were drunk. In the fifth century BCE, Greek writers added a further charge against beer: that drinking it was “unmanly” and that it made men “effeminate.”⁸

Wine was one of the benefits of civilization that the Greeks wanted to confer on the beer-drinking Celts of ancient France, just as they had introduced it to southern Italy and later expanded wine production after colonizing Egypt in 300 BCE. In ancient France the Greek wine trade extended well beyond the immediate coastal regions where the Greeks settled, and hundreds of thousands of amphoras lie buried on land and in riverbeds in southern France. Concentrations can be found in such widely dispersed locations as Toulouse in the southwest and Châlon-sur-Saône, in Burgundy, in the east. There may well be hundreds of thousands of amphoras in the bed of the Saône River alone, representing between five and ten million liters (1.3 and 2.6 million gallons) of imported wine.

A particularly striking manifestation of the cultural impact of the Greek wine trade is the treasure discovered in the subterranean burial chamber of a Celtic princess of the Vix lineage near Châtillon-sur-Seine in Burgundy. The Vix treasure includes not only jewelry, statues, and other luxury objects but also a massive Greek krater, the receptacle used for mixing wine and water at a symposium. Ornately decorated, more than a meter and a half (five feet) in height, and holding more than a thousand liters (264 gallons), this krater—made of bronze rather than the usual ceramic—was clearly more decorative than functional; many kraters held less than twenty liters (five gallons) of wine and water. But together with other Greek wine paraphernalia, such as pitchers and cups, that were also found in the tomb, the Vix krater points to the high status of wine in the upper social echelons of Celtic France under Greek influence.⁹

As important as the Etruscans and Greeks were in bringing viticulture and wine drinking to ancient France, their activities pale in comparison with those of the Romans, who began to incorporate France (which they called Gallia, or Gaul) into their empire from the end of the second century BCE. A Roman army crossed the Alps in 125 BCE and within a few years Rome had control of the whole Mediterranean coastal area of Gaul as far as Spain. A land route ran from the Alps to the Pyrenees, and the Romans created a



MAP 1.1. Ancient France

massive province that covered the territory now occupied by most of Languedoc-Roussillon and Provence. Called Narbonensis, it had its capital at Narbonne, which was colonized by Romans, and it stretched from the Toulouse region in the west to the Rhône valley in the east (see map 1.1).

At first the Romans imported their own wine into Gaul, principally from their main wine-producing region in Campania, and hundreds of thousands of Italian amphoras have been found around towns such as Autun, Roanne, and Châlon-sur-Saône, as well as in western France, at the mouth of the Loire and farther upstream as far as Angers. In southern France there are concentrations in the western districts of what was then Narbonensis, near Narbonne, Toulouse, Gaillac, and Rodez, and farther east, in the Nîmes region. Amphoras inscribed with the name of Porcius, a wine merchant of Pompeii, one of Campania's major wine-exporting centers, have been found near such towns as Toulouse, Agen, Bordeaux, and Saint-Foy-la-Grande, on the Dordogne River.¹⁰ The distribution of amphoras gives us some idea of

the geographical scope of the Romans' wine trade in Gaul by the first century CE. Toulouse itself became an important center for the Italian wine trade, and wine from Campania was shipped from there down the Garonne River to Bordeaux and to communities in southwest France. André Tchernia has estimated that between 150 and 25 BCE, some twelve million liters (three million gallons) of wine were shipped annually from Italy to Gaul. This was far more than the Roman settlers and army could consume, and indicates that there was a robust local market for it.¹¹ Not only that, but it is likely that some of the Campania wine that made its way to Bordeaux was forwarded to Roman Britain,¹² a forerunner of the massive Bordeaux wine trade with England that developed in the thirteenth century.

The wine trade from Italy was important, but the Roman colonization of southern Gaul also opened the way to viticulture. The Roman Senate had declared at the time when Narbonne was colonized that the "transalpine peoples" (the populations on the other side of the Alps from the perspective of Italy) should not be permitted to grow olives and vines, so as to protect the value of these products exported from Italy.¹³ But Roman settlers were not prevented from doing so, and they soon planted vineyards (and olive trees) along the Mediterranean coast and in other areas of southern France. Within two centuries of arriving they began to extend viticulture wherever climate, soil, and other environmental conditions permitted. There was even a brief reversal of the wine trade between Italy and Gaul. When Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 CE and buried Pompeii, the important wine trading town, it also destroyed many of the vineyards of Campania. To make up for shortages, some wine was imported from Gaul, as is shown by the presence of Gallic amphoras in Rome's port at Ostia and other towns of the region. This might have been the first significant export of French wine.

Roger Dion has suggested that two of the earliest Roman wine ventures in Gaul were vineyards at Gaillac, to the northeast of Toulouse, and near Vienne in the Rhône valley.¹⁴ Gaillac was a center of amphora manufacture—a necessity for wine production at the time—and it was well situated for selling its wine: it is on the Tarn River, which runs into the Garonne River, giving easy access to markets in Toulouse and Bordeaux. In the first century BCE, Cicero wrote approvingly about the Toulouse wine trade, which most likely involved wine made in Gaillac.¹⁵ The well-off inhabitants of Bordeaux drank wine from Gaillac before vines were planted in their own environs, and Gaillac and other regions of southwest France supplied the bulk of the wine for Bordeaux's wine trade well into the Middle Ages. As for the Rhône valley, the evidence of early Roman vineyards is less clear, but in the first century CE the historian Pliny the Elder reported vines near

Vienne, which the poet Martial wrote was well known for its wine. The nearby districts where vineyards are most likely to have been located were those known today as Côte-Rôtie and Hermitage, two of the Rhône valley's most prestigious appellations.

The promotion of viticulture and wine production by the Romans was largely driven by economic considerations, because wine was a profitable product. The Romans perceived the Celts as having a thirst for wine that was as keen as that of traders for profit. In the middle of the first century BCE, the Greek historian Diodorus commented, "The natural greed of many Italian merchants exploits the passion of the Gauls [Celts] for wine. On boats that follow the navigable rivers or on carts that roll across the plains, they transport their wine, which brings them unbelievable profits, going so far as to trade one amphora for one slave, so that the buyer gives up his servant to pay for drink."¹⁶ It was not only slaves that Romans bought with wine; they used it as a medium of exchange for metals such as iron and copper and sometimes to buy entire mines.

Another driver of the trade and production of wine was the Romans' belief that consuming wine rather than beer would raise the cultural level of the Celts. It is not difficult to see in this the origins of later French claims that their wine was an important underpinning of their cultural superiority. Like the Greeks, the Romans were wine snobs who scorned beer for wine and judged other cultures partly by what they drank and how they drank it. At first, one historian argues, the Romans were caught between wanting to be part of "the civilized symposiastic world" and resisting "the libidinous associations of vinous excess"¹⁷ so graphically catalogued by many Roman writers. To resolve the tension, Romans stressed the role of wine in making life possible and highlighted the excellence of wine from their peninsula. As they later extended their institutions throughout their empire, they transferred wine consumption to the elites of other societies.

As wine production in southern Gaul increased, it represented growing competition for wine producers on the Italian peninsula. By 70–80 CE, for example, a substantial wine trade between Roman Gaul and London had begun to cut into wine exports from Italy to England.¹⁸ In 92 CE, Emperor Domitian ordered the grubbing up of half the vines in Gaul and Rome's other provinces outside Italy. Claiming that too much arable land was being turned to viticulture, he also forbade the planting of any more vines on the Italian peninsula itself. The purpose of the edict might have been to protect Rome from grain shortages, but it also protected Roman wine producers from too much competition from vineyards in Gaul and elsewhere. By the end of the first century CE, vineyards were being planted in some of the

northern regions of Gaul, cooler areas where vines had not been expected to grow and where Italian wine producers had established solid and expanding markets. The production of wines in these regions—and not just mediocre wines, but ones that earned a good reputation—was a real threat, which Domitian's decree would have reduced, to the Italian wine trade.

An alternative explanation for the decree is that it reflected concern at the spread of vineyards into unsuitable areas—good for grain but not for vines—and the proliferation of poor-quality wine. Wine of this sort could not be traded, because it did not have the quality to support the added costs of transportation and still sell at a viable price in the destination market.¹⁹ It was thus much more likely to be consumed locally. Seen from this perspective, Domitian's order was the first of many state interventions in French wine production, particularly from the Middle Ages to the present, that have aimed to shore up quality and ensure the stability of supply and demand. That said, it is not clear how effective the decree to rip up vines was. Poorly performing vines and vineyards in unsuitable locations might have been removed, but viticulture continued to advance throughout Gaul. This suggests that Domitian's order was widely ignored, and it was eventually repealed, in about 280.²⁰

As we have seen, the Romans first intensively sponsored viticulture in Gaul in their province of *Narbonensis*, and it is unlikely to have extended beyond this Mediterranean-Rhône region until the first century CE. Several accounts from the late first century BCE suggest that no vines or olive trees were to be seen beyond the Cévennes Mountains, which mark the beginning of the Massif Central, and that forests and pastures dominated the landscape of northern Gaul. By the first century CE there are records of vineyards in these northern regions, but we do not know when vines were first planted there. The first known reports might date decades or even centuries after these vineyards were established; that is a reasonable inference when the initial reports refer to old vineyards.

Vines were first recorded in Bordeaux in the first century CE. The town of Bordeaux was a significant market in its own right, and its port allowed for exports farther afield. Transportation costs encouraged the planting of vineyards close to urban centers whenever it was practicable; Bordeaux and Paris were prime examples in France. The vineyards near Bordeaux steadily expanded, and in 380 the poet Ausonius, writing about his vineyard at Nautjac to the northwest of the city, claimed that Bordeaux was already famous for its wine. It is not clear which areas near Bordeaux were first planted, but it is likely that the Romans favored the gravel soils just outside the city.²¹

Viticulture generally followed the routes of the Roman wine trade, often along rivers. In the early fourth century, vineyards were reported in Burgundy, but because the source notes that they were already old and neglected, the implication is that vines were growing there in the third century or perhaps earlier. Also in the fourth century, vines were being cultivated near Auxerre in the Yonne valley, and by the fifth century they had been planted in the Paris region. The poet and bishop Sidonius Apollinaris wrote in the fifth century of Limagne, in the valley of the Allier River, "The mountains form a belt of meadows at the top, with vineyards on the slopes, and farms in cultivated areas."²²

Viticulture seems to have reached the Atlantic districts of the Loire valley somewhat later: it was only in the late 580s that Gregory of Tours reported vineyards and wine production in Nantes, near the mouth of the Loire River. It has been suggested that the late emergence of viticulture in this region might have been due to opposition from the Roman authorities of Bordeaux, who wanted to protect their wines from competition.²³ On the other hand, wine presses dating from the first and second centuries have been identified near Saumur and Tours, farther inland along the Loire.²⁴ By 500, when the Roman domination of Gaul ended, wine production had been established in what are now France's best-known wine regions: Bordeaux, the Loire and Rhône valleys, Alsace, Champagne, and Burgundy. The Romans were also responsible for planting vineyards throughout much of western continental Europe, in England, and in central and eastern Europe as far east as Poland.

In the third century, two legal changes reshaped the pattern of viticulture in Gaul. The first was a 212 edict of Emperor Caracalla which enabled Celts to own vineyards. Only Roman citizens were permitted to own them, but Caracalla's edict gave citizenship to almost all the free inhabitants (that is, nonslaves) of the Roman Empire. Even so, it is impossible to know how many Celts planted vineyards or purchased them from their Roman owners. The second legal change was Emperor Probus's repeal in about 280 of Domitian's decree ordering the pulling up of half the vines in the empire outside Italy and a ban on further planting. It is thought that, by giving Celts the freedom to plant vines and make wine, Probus was trying to get their support against the Germanic populations that eventually destroyed the Western Roman Empire.²⁵ Yet the practical effects of his policy were probably marginal, because, as the spread of viticulture shows, the original decree seems to have been widely ignored and largely unenforced. It did, nonetheless, clear the way in legal terms for the unrestricted extension of vineyards throughout Gaul.

The spread of viticulture beyond the warm Mediterranean coastal areas to the northern regions of France by the first centuries CE meant that grapes were growing in a wide range of climatic and soil conditions. This had implications for the selection of grape varieties: vines that had flourished in the warmer conditions of Greece, southern Italy, and Mediterranean France did not do well in cooler and wetter climates and either failed to produce grapes or produced grapes that did not ripen. Anyone planning to make wine had to identify at least one variety that would not only survive but also produce satisfactory yields and wine that met minimum acceptable quality levels. The Romans understood the technique of grafting vines and undoubtedly taught it to the Celts, and it is possible that the varieties eventually selected for cultivation in each region developed as hybrids of indigenous and introduced varieties. Alternatively, farmers might have planted their vineyards with a number of varieties and selected those that proved most suitable.

Of the myriad varieties that had the potential for wine production in Roman Gaul, two in particular stood out and were mentioned by a number of authors. Biturica, which was widely planted around Bordeaux, seems to have been an exotic variety that was imported (perhaps from the Basque country of northeast Spain) and was found to ripen in the wet and windy maritime climate there. Its origins are unclear, but it is an ancestor of the carmenet family, which includes the cabernet varieties—including cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc, two of modern Bordeaux's key varieties for making red wine.²⁶

The second was allobrogica, an indigenous variety grown widely in the northern Rhône in areas now occupied by appellations such as St. Joseph, Côte-Rôtie, and Hermitage. The Roman encyclopedist Celsus was already in the first decades of the first century CE praising wine made from allobrogica, which suggests that it must have been cultivated for quite some time before. Roman writers describe it as a late-ripening black grape suitable for cool climates, which could be harvested even after the first frost—an event that would have put an end to grapes in the Mediterranean regions. The most famous wine made from allobrogica was called *picutum* (pealike) for the flavor it gained from the resin coating of the amphoras that it was kept in, and several accounts of banquets mention it.²⁷ Allobrogica might be the variety known as mondeuse noire in Savoie, or it might have been a parent of mondeuse. Either way, because mondeuse is in the lineage of syrah,²⁸ the signature black grape of the northern Rhône valley today, allobrogica cultivated there for wine in Roman times contributed to the longer-term history of the Rhône valley wine region.

Other emerging wine regions drew on either imported or indigenous varieties. Wine producers at Gaillac, for example, could have used varieties such as *fer servadou* (known locally as *braucol*), from Spain's Basque region,²⁹ and the indigenous *duras*. (Both are used in Gaillac wines today.) But there is no reason to think that vineyards anywhere were planted with only one variety, as is common today. In the early modern period, when grape varieties were identified and studied more closely for their suitability to specific climate and soil conditions, it became clear that the common practice was to interplant several varieties in each vineyard. This meant that wines tended to be field blends: blends of varieties as they were planted in the vineyard, with the proportion of each mirroring its representation there. It was only much later, starting in the nineteenth century, that varieties were commonly separated in French vineyards, enabling the production of varietal wines (made from a single variety) and blends assembled in the winery rather than in the vineyard.

There is little information on the amount of wine produced or patterns of wine consumption in Gaul during the Roman period. Once wooden barrels were used for storing and shipping wine, much of the evidence of the wine trade began to rot away. (Metal hoops, which withstand erosion longer than wood, were not widely used until the eighteenth century.) A body of wine merchants in a particular locality would suggest that it had a vigorous wine trade, but the absence of evidence of such a group might mean either that a place had no merchants or that it did but they left no surviving records. Dion suggests that the presence of a large community of merchants in Lyon trading in imported wine during the second century CE probably meant there was no significant wine production in Burgundy, not far to the north, at that time. If there had been, the nearby wine would have priced the imported wine off the market, thereby eliminating the need for so many of these wine merchants.³⁰

Not knowing how much wine was produced in Roman Gaul, we can only speculate about consumption patterns. We do not know if enough was made to enable the elites to drink wine on a regular, if not daily, basis, if people in the lower ranks of society ever drank wine, or if wine became integral to festivities. But we can be quite sure that beer remained the most widespread alcoholic beverage consumed in Gaul, and it is quite likely that Gaul resembled some earlier cultures that consumed both wine and beer. It is probable that in Gaul, as in ancient Egypt, everyone drank beer but the elites also drank wine. Alternatively, the elites might have consumed only wine, while the mass of the Celtic population drank both beer and wine. Undoubtedly there were regional variations, with wine consumption higher in wine-

producing areas, where it would have been less expensive, and lower in areas to which wine had to be shipped.

To some extent we might be able to extrapolate Celtic wine-drinking patterns from the practices of the Romans themselves, because they were the sponsors of the emerging wine culture of Gaul. We must remember, however, that cultural practices are more often adapted than adopted wholesale from one culture by another—adapted, that is, to preexisting local social, economic, and other conditions. The critical difference between Gaul and Roman Italy in this respect was that Italians did not drink beer at all, whereas the Celts had plenty of beer and a limited supply of wine. It is likely, nevertheless, that in many respects the wine that the Celts drank was like the wine consumed by their Roman mentors: containing various additives, including salt water, honey, herbs, and spices.³¹

It is quite likely too that the Celts adopted some of the Roman beliefs about the medicinal properties and health benefits of wine. Like their Greek counterparts, Roman physicians believed that wine, consumed in moderate amounts, was generally good for the digestion. It is recommended for that purpose in the Bible, where Paul advises Timothy, “You should give up drinking only water and have a little wine for the sake of your digestion and the frequent bouts of illness that you have.”³² Alcohol is an effective medium for dissolving other substances, so wine was often used as the base of medicinal potions. Cato the Elder wrote that the flowers of certain plants (such as juniper and myrtle) soaked in wine were effective against such ailments as snakebite, constipation, gout, indigestion, and diarrhea.³³ It is not that beer was not thought to have medicinal properties: a number of Roman physicians believed it was generally beneficial, as well as therapeutic for such problems as coughs, intestinal worms, and (with mustard) arrow wounds.³⁴ In short, wine was added to the beer-based pharmacy available to the Celts.

There was a hierarchy of wines in Roman society. The better-off classes drank wine that had deep color, good body, and relatively high alcohol, the sort that could be diluted without becoming insipid. Grapes used for making higher-quality wine were often dried before pressing so as to intensify the flavors and raise the alcohol level of the wine. In contrast, poorer Romans drank wine called *lora*, which was pale, weak in flavor, and low in alcohol and was made by adding water to the sediment left over from making better wine. It is reasonable to think that such practices were adopted in Gaul, although we should note that “relatively high alcohol” probably meant about 10 to 12 percent by volume at this time, with most wine in the range of 7 to 8 percent, and *lora* having perhaps 2 or 3 percent.

As vineyards and wine production extended across Roman Gaul in the first five centuries CE, they were paralleled by Christianity. Although Christianity supplanted the pagan religions of the Celtic populations throughout France, it did so slowly and unevenly. Much like vines, Christianity took root in some areas before others and flourished more in some regions than others, and even as late as the Reformation, it had a tenuous hold on some of France's more isolated populations. Even so, Christianity was an important driver of viticulture and winemaking in much of the country, because of the role that Christian ideology, imagery, and ritual give to wine. A river of wine runs through the New Testament, where it is the most commonly cited beverage—beer is not mentioned, and water appears more often as a medium for spiritual cleansing than as a drink. The first miracle that Jesus performed was to turn water into wine, and wine represents the blood of Christ in the sacrament of Communion. A common medieval genre of painting, Christ in the winepress, depicts him bearing a cross and bleeding from the nail holes in his feet and hands and from his head, which the crown of thorns has punctured. His blood flows into the vat of grapes that he is treading, and the liquid that will be fermented into wine is an undifferentiated blend of grape juice and blood.

Many pre-Christian religions had wine deities (such as Dionysus in Greece and Bacchus in Rome), and wine plays an important and positive role in Jewish ritual and doctrine. In a negative example, God's threats to punish the Jews for disobedience often refer to making grapevines barren and depriving the Jews of wine. But although such religions made an explicit link between wine and a deity, none before Christianity had given wine such a central position. It has been suggested that Christ was often viewed as a wine god, and he certainly might have appeared that way to the Celts of Gaul, who, as beer drinkers before the arrival of the Etruscans, Greeks, and Romans, did not have a wine god. The simultaneous spread of Christianity and viticulture can only have strengthened this association.

Yet as Christianity spread and reinforced the growing wine culture of Roman Gaul, a threat arose in the form of the migrations of beer-drinking Germanic tribes that occupied western Europe between 300 and 500 and destroyed the Western Roman Empire. These migrations used to be called "barbarian invasions" because, in the minds of the Romans, the Germanic newcomers had no respect for Roman culture, including wine. Edward Gibbon, the eighteenth-century English historian and author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, channeled Roman prejudices accurately. He described the ancient Germans as "immoderately addicted" to "strong beer, a liquor extracted with very little art from wheat or barley,

and *corrupted* . . . into a certain semblance of wine" (italics in the original). The resulting concoction was "sufficient for the gross purposes of German debauchery." Yet Gibbon credited these crude Germans with an almost instinctive attraction to fine wine: "Those who tasted the rich wines of Italy, and afterwards Gaul, sighed for that one delicious species of intoxication." Here was one of the reasons for the barbarian invasions of western Europe, for, according to Gibbon, the Germans would rather obtain what they wanted—in this case, wine—by force than by honest work: "The intemperate thirst of strong liquors often urged the barbarians into the provinces on which art or nature had bestowed those much envied presents [wine]."³⁵

These invasions seemed to herald an uncertain future for the survival of wine in Gaul because, according to Gibbon, the newcomers lusted after wine yet lacked the discipline and patience needed to produce it. Would the "barbarians" destroy the vineyards so painstakingly established by civilized Romans and patiently nurtured by them and by Celtic owners? Would they adopt a *laissez-faire* attitude toward them? Or would these Germanic tribes—contrary to expectations—promote the expansion of wine?

It is difficult to describe the impact of these invaders on wine production, largely because records on viticulture in this period are very patchy. If there were adverse effects, however, they are unlikely to have been the direct result of willful neglect or deliberate damage to vineyards. Ironically, if the most negative portrayal of Germanic wine drinking habits is accurate—that they could not get enough—we should expect the new arrivals to have wanted to stimulate rather than reduce wine production. Indeed, during the invasions by the Germanic tribes and the political turmoil that followed, viticulture in France seems to have not only flourished where it was already established but also spread. It was in the period of Germanic incursions that vineyards were consolidated and expanded in many regions, such as along the Seine, Yonne, and Loire Rivers.³⁶ Yet the kinds of evidence we would like to have to confirm the extent of wine production and trade are too often missing. The replacement of amphoras by wooden barrels by the end of the second century CE might have had advantages for shippers, but it has done a real disservice to historians.

The evidence, as sparse as it is, leads us to believe that there were continuities and even some regional growth in viticulture during the centuries when the various Germanic tribes vied for control of western Europe. For one thing, the newcomers seem to have supported wine production everywhere. Visigothic law codes, for example, set out severe punishments for anyone found guilty of damaging vineyards. The Visigoths who occupied the southwest of France for a century after the fall of Toulouse in 418 did not

harm the vineyards of the Gallo-Roman villas of the region.³⁷ In Portugal, the Gothic king Ordoño (who ruled from 850 until his death in 866) granted vineyards near Coimbra to a monastic order. Such examples suggest that the rulers who replaced the Romans took care to look after vineyards and that rather than the monasteries protecting wine production from the invaders, the latter might actually have expanded the church's holdings.

The Vikings, whose reputation for plundering is among the worst of those of the invading peoples, also seem to have had positive attitudes toward wine. In the northern Frankish river settlements, they developed permanent commercial interests that offset their better-known hit-and-run economic activities. In addition to consuming much of the produce themselves, they participated in the northern Frankish wine trade and controlled the river traffic to ports from which wine was shipped to England and other destinations.³⁸ In the Carolingian Empire, which dominated western Europe from the late eighth century, wine was the drink of the upper classes, and great men boasted of the quality of their wine. Powerful rulers in the German provinces tried to acquire land in the Paris basin and the Rhône valley, where vineyards flourished.³⁹

There are some examples of vineyards being destroyed. The Franks are said to have destroyed vines after the battle of Vouillé, near Poitiers, in 507.⁴⁰ But the overriding weight of the evidence suggests that if there were negative effects on wine production following the collapse of the Roman Empire, they were not the result of deliberate policies of Europe's new rulers. Rather, they were the product of the shock waves felt throughout Europe as many smaller political units replaced the political and economic unity of the Roman Empire and as existing patterns of commerce were disrupted. Bordeaux, where Romans had introduced viticulture in the first century, is a striking example of the instability that some wine-producing regions experienced in this period. In the fifth century alone it was invaded successively by Goths, Vandals, Visigoths, and Franks. The Gascons arrived from Spain in the seventh century, and the Carolingian Franks took the area in the eighth.

The disruption of commercial links does not mean that the wine production of France was in crisis for the five hundred years after the collapse of the Roman Empire. It might have stagnated or even declined in regions particularly affected by armed or political conflict, but overall vineyards seem to have continued to flourish in most areas where they were established by the time the Roman Empire began to crumble. In some localities—such as Burgundy, where forests were cut down to make way for vineyards—the land area devoted to viticulture increased. In the ninth cen-

ture, with the emergence of a stable political entity in the form of the Carolingian Empire, security and long-distance trade links were reestablished and the wine industry rebounded. A burst of population growth further stimulated the recovery of the wine trade from about 1000, the subject of the next chapter.

Perhaps the clearest evidence that viticulture prospered under the rulers who replaced the Romans was its expansion within the Christian church. Christianity, as we have seen, embraced wine, and by the Middle Ages it was common for cathedrals and other church entities to have their own vineyards. Religious houses, especially monasteries, are often credited with particular responsibility (perhaps too much) for advances in viticulture and wine making. In the sixth century, Saint Maurus founded the earliest important monastery in Gaul, on the south bank of the Loire River a few miles from Angers. Little is known about it, but tradition has it that chenin blanc, the signature white variety of many Loire valley appellations today, was first cultivated there.

We do know that Saint Maurus was a follower of Saint Benedict, whose rule for the monastic life was followed in many religious houses throughout Europe. Although some theologians thought that monks should never drink wine, each monk in a Benedictine monastery was permitted a daily ration of wine if he could not abstain from it entirely. This was a pragmatic concession to reality, for Benedict noted that “wine is no drink for monks; but, since nowadays monks cannot be persuaded of this, let us at least agree upon this, that we drink temperately and not to satiety.” In practice this meant “we believe that a hermina [about a third of a liter or a third of a quart] of wine a day is sufficient for each. But those upon whom God bestows the gift of abstinence, they should know that they have a special reward.” Because of the medicinal value attributed to it, a sick monk was to be allowed a greater wine ration at the discretion of the prior. Benedict added that when circumstances did not permit the full ration or, even worse, when no wine at all was available, the monks should not complain.⁴¹

Benedict’s rule speaks to the popularity of wine in Italy, where the first Benedictine monasteries were established, and implies that it was more appropriately reserved for Communion than for everyday drinking by monks—although the Communion wine, having been blessed and become the blood of Christ, was not considered the same as the wine served with meals. Having reluctantly conceded that monks might drink wine daily, Benedict was careful to limit their intake. Like many others with responsibility for maintaining moral and social order, he was aware that overconsumption of wine could lead to disruptive and immoral behavior. The

Benedictine rule was among the first to set down precise guidelines for moderate and acceptable levels of wine consumption; similarly, modern public health guidelines take the form of recommended maximum servings of alcohol per day and per week. When monasteries were founded in Gaul, where beer was more commonly consumed than wine, the rule was modified so that if wine were unavailable, monks were permitted two herminas of "good beer"; this was twice the permitted amount of wine, doubtless in recognition that beer was lower in alcohol by volume and less intoxicating.

We should note that in France, which still had a predominantly beer-drinking culture, monasteries were centers of brewing as well as wine production. The original rule of Benedict was silent on beer, which was not consumed in Italy, but information on monks' diets in France shows that they drank both wine and beer and that the two were sometimes not differentiated. One analysis of diets in eighth- and ninth-century western European religious houses suggests that monks drank on average 1.55 liters (0.41 gallons) of ale or wine a day, while nuns consumed a little less, 1.38 liters (0.36 gallons). Laypeople at this time drank between 0.57 and 1.45 liters (0.15 and 0.38 gallons) of wine and between 0.57 and 2.3 liters (0.15 and 0.61 gallons) of ale daily.⁴²

The caution with which Benedict approached wine drinking was in tension with the monastic calling to plant vineyards and make wine. There are scattered references to vines being cultivated at monasteries in Gaul between the sixth and ninth centuries, but we have little sense of the size of the vineyards or the scale of production. In the ninth century there is evidence of considerable production at some monasteries. In 814, the wealthy Benedictine abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés on the outskirts of Paris, owned twenty thousand hectares (fifty thousand acres) of cultivable land, three hundred to four hundred (741 to 988 acres) of which were planted with vines. These vineyards were not one single estate but were scattered among scores of small holdings throughout the countryside, none of them too far from the Seine or Marne River. Fewer than half were cultivated by the monks themselves, and most were leased to tenants who paid their rents and other tax obligations in wine. The annual yield of the vineyards directly farmed by the monks was about half a million liters (132,000 gallons) a year, and they received another hundred and forty thousand liters (37,000 gallons) from their tenants as taxes. About 20 percent of this might have been used in Communion and for normal consumption by the monks and their visitors, leaving the remainder for sale. Equally significant, the tenants who grew the vines retained at least six hundred thousand liters (160,000 gallons) for their own use or for sale, a volume

that speaks loudly for considerable peasant consumption, the existence of a wine market or, most likely, both.⁴³

Monasteries became important channels for extending viticulture throughout Gaul and the rest of Europe. Networks of religious houses, following the Benedictine and other rules, were established, and many of these monasteries planted vineyards so as to be self-sufficient in wine. No other abbey in Gaul produced as much wine as Saint-Germain-des-Prés, but many provided not only for their own needs—which included wine for Communion and for consumption by the monks and their visitors and their retainers—but also for sale on the local market. Monasteries thereby contributed to the broadening of secular wine consumption. But although wine had an important status in Christian imagery and ritual, it was not identified with Christianity in a banal sense, even though a number of Christian commentators had negative views of beer.⁴⁴ It has sometimes been thought that Celts who converted to Christianity gave up beer for wine as a sign of their rejection of paganism and embrace of the new, wine-centered religion, but Max Nelson writes that this was not so.⁴⁵ Converting indigenous elites from beer to wine might well have been more important to the Greeks and Romans as a sign of cultural maturity than to Christians as evidence of faith.

The Christian church, through its vineyard-owning bishops and monasteries, played a vital role in both the maintenance and the spread of viticulture during these times of turmoil, but it would be wrong to think that the church was alone in this.⁴⁶ The image of pious and diligent monks carefully protecting and nurturing their vines contrasts nicely with that of “barbarians” from the east looting cellars, emptying barrels of wine in drunken orgies, and lying about in intoxicated stupors. These stereotypes contribute to the notion that the period after the collapse of the Roman Empire could fittingly be called “the Dark Ages,” but it is a gross distortion of the social, economic, and political character of Europe’s new rulers.

Still, the church was intimately involved with wine. Taxes and tithes owed to it could be paid in wine, and it benefited from gifts of wine. In the sixth century, Gregory of Tours mentioned a pious widow who brought a measure of wine every day to her church. In the eleventh century, Robert, Earl of Leicester, gave the cathedral of Évreux, in Normandy, about eight hundred liters (two hundred gallons) of wine a year for the celebration of mass. This wine came from the earl’s own vineyards. In the seventh century, the bishop of Cahors sent ten barrels of wine to his counterpart in Verdun.⁴⁷

Various church entities produced their own wine, and in 816 the Council of Aachen decreed that every cathedral should have a college of canons, a group of nonmonastic clergy whose obligations would include planting and

cultivating a vineyard. Individual bishops owned vineyards in their own right. In the sixth century, Felix, the bishop of Nantes, owned vineyards near that town, while in the tenth century the bishop of Tours planted a vineyard for the abbey of Saint Julien. Other bishops are reported to have been so devoted to viticulture, or perhaps to the consumption of its product, that they moved to locations more suitable for grape cultivation.⁴⁸ Gregory of Langres (later Saint Gregory) moved to Dijon, where he was close to the vineyards of Burgundy, and the bishop of Saint-Quentin moved his residence to Noyon on the Oise River, part of a region considered favorable for grape growing.⁴⁹

The need to have wine for Communion might well have been an important motivation for cultivating vineyards, but little wine was necessary for this purpose. Early medieval Christians rarely took Communion, and church authorities often suggested that three times a year was an acceptable minimum. If every Christian who turned up to Communion took a sip of wine, the volume required would still have been negligible. Cathedrals, religious houses, bishops, and other church entities and clergy produced far more wine than was needed for this purpose, and the great bulk that the church and clergy produced was consumed in contexts that had little or nothing to do with religion. The many travelers who stopped and rested at monasteries expected to be fed and provided with wine, as did the occasional visitors (such as kings, princes, and bishops) who arrived with large and thirsty retinues, and the heads of religious houses often hosted banquets at which wine was served. Wine was needed too for daily consumption by monks and nuns. Bishops and the higher-ranking members of religious houses probably drank wine every day, and ordinary monks did so when their monastery had a vineyard. Where vineyards were less common and wine was more expensive, monks tended to drink beer on a daily basis and receive wine only on special occasions, such as feast days.

Although much attention has been paid to church (especially monastic) ownership of vineyards, many were owned by nobles and other wealthy secular proprietors who produced for their own consumption and for the market. Vineyards were as likely to be attached to the mansions and villas of these individuals as to cathedrals and monasteries. Wine was an obligatory offering to distinguished guests, and a banquet without wine became as unthinkable then as it often is now. A ninth-century monk, Héric, described cups studded with precious stones, from which members of a wealthy Gallo-Roman family in Auxerre drank wines of the highest quality, made from grapes grown in their own vineyards.⁵⁰

The problem with describing and quantifying the vineyards that were not owned by the church is that many, perhaps most, of the records of land

cultivated by secular proprietors have been lost. In contrast, the archives of monasteries have generally survived better, because religious orders have had long, continuous histories and because monks were not only highly literate but also valued and conserved the written word. If there are more records of church-owned than of secular-owned vineyards, we should not assume that they accurately or even broadly reflect actual ownership patterns. In fact, some of our knowledge of the extent of secular ownership comes from the bequest of vineyards to churches and monasteries in wills. In the sixth or seventh century, for example, Ementrud, a widowed Paris aristocrat, left property including vineyards on the banks of the Marne River to members of her entourage and to several Paris churches. She also bequeathed small vineyards to her slave, whom she emancipated. The widow's vineyards might have been quite substantial, as she divided them among eighteen individuals in addition to the churches.⁵¹ Many vineyards such as these must have remained in secular hands, passing down from generation to generation but without leaving any records.

In some respects, monasteries and bishoprics had advantages that secular vine owners did not share. They enjoyed greater continuity of cultivation, because subdivision through inheritance did not threaten their properties. Laws relating to inheritance varied from place to place, but in many regions of France, landowners had to leave their property to more than one heir, forcing the division of land into smaller and decreasingly economical plots at each generation. Moreover, although monks are often thought of as unworldly and devoted to prayer for most of each day, they were in fact intensely involved in the material and natural world around them. They studied agricultural techniques, and it is likely that they adopted scientific methods of viticulture and experimented with grapes, as they did with other produce. They learned to clarify red wines with egg whites and white wines with isinglass (fish bladder), although it is not certain that they were innovators in these techniques.

Monks put the by-products of viticulture and wine making to myriad uses. Poor or spoiled wine was used as vinegar, and grapes not used for wine were eaten or turned into verjuice (the acidic juice of unripe grapes) for pickling ham and cheeses. Grape seeds were used as flavoring or as a source of oil for making soap. Finally, the leaves and excess wood of the vines were used as, respectively, autumn cattle feed and fuel.⁵² But again, it is unlikely that these economical practices (now called "sustainable") were to be found exclusively on monastic vineyard properties.

The collapse of the western half of the Roman Empire threw much of Europe into instability, undoubtedly somewhat disrupting viticulture, wine

production, and the wine trade. In the late eighth century, production and trade began to rebound, with the emergence of the stable political system of the Carolingian Empire, which extended over most of France and much of central Europe. Its first emperor, Charlemagne, encouraged wine production. He is said to have ordered the planting of the first vines in the Rhine district and to have given a part of the famous hill of Corton, in Burgundy, to the abbey of Saulieu. (This vineyard is now known as Corton-Charlemagne.) In the calendar he drew up to replace the Romans' Julian calendar, Charlemagne designated October as *Windume-Manoth*, the month of the wine harvest. Carolingian ordinances also regulated wine making to ensure proper levels of hygiene, and one went so far as to insist that grapes be pressed, not crushed by foot. This clearly had little impact on techniques of wine production, for treading grapes by foot continued for centuries afterward.

The Carolingian period was undoubtedly beneficial to one of France's wine regions in particular: Champagne. Many of its great abbeys were founded in the seventh century, including that of Saint-Pierre d'Hautvilliers, where Dom Pérignon was said to have invented sparkling wine a thousand years later. All of them planted vineyards (producing grapes for still, not sparkling, wines at the time), and within two centuries the vines of Champagne were extensive enough for distinctions to be made among districts. What undoubtedly gave Champagne's wines a boost was the coronation of Charlemagne's son Louis in the town of Reims in 816, when the highborn guests would have had ample opportunity to sample the local wines. As Reims became the traditional place for the coronation of French kings, the wines of Champagne gained an aura of royalty, an image intensified much later when *champagne* came to refer to the distinctive sparkling wine made in the region.

Intentionally or otherwise, the Carolingians adopted policies that promoted viticulture and wine production, but Charlemagne is reported to have been a moderate drinker; he rarely drank more than three cups of wine with dinner, and he prescribed harsh penalties for drunkenness. In the end, however, the recovery of wine production and trade was the result less of Charlemagne's specific policies concerning wine than of the political stability that settled on Europe after centuries of territorial conflict.

Perhaps the best argument for the persistence of viticulture and wine making in France and elsewhere in western Europe after the collapse of the Roman Empire is the evidence of continued and widespread wine consumption. Drinking alcohol (beer as well as wine) was integral to the middle and upper levels of European society—those who could afford to drink anything but water on a regular basis. The most important social affairs—electing

leaders, determining matters of war and peace, and celebrating marriage—were handled during banquets and other occasions of communal drinking. Drinking was also a ritual that bonded men in particular together, and the consumption of large quantities of alcohol was seen as an act of manliness. In southern France, the bishop of Arles, who had strong views on heavy drinking, noted with dismay that drunks not only ridiculed those who did not drink to excess but also expressed doubts about their masculinity.

Bouts of heavy drinking were far from uncommon, and the historical record suggests that drunkenness was a cultural trait among better-off men. If the weight of documentary evidence is any guide, the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of England were the worst offenders of all: there are more references to intoxication there than to drunkenness in the rest of Europe combined.⁵³ Yet there is no reason to think that people in France drank notably less. In the Merovingian period, which preceded the Carolingian, there are many records of public drunkenness that depict drinkers stumbling through the streets vomiting and, when they retained enough physical control and coordination, engaging in acts of violence.

As for the Carolingian period, one historian has described it as “an age obsessed with wine.”⁵⁴ Bilingual Latin-Germanic conversation manuals generally began with the apparently vital phrase “Give me a drink,” and public drinking houses were intrinsic to patterns of rural and urban sociability. For religious or more secular reasons, clerics appear to have been particularly devoted to wine. Whenever invasions of Normans threatened the Carolingian Empire, fleeing monks were said to have often tried to take their wine supplies with them. When in 845 the monks of the abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés returned after Normans attacked their community, they thanked God not only for their deliverance but also for the survival of their wine cellar, which meant that they would have enough wine to last until the following harvest.⁵⁵

As the Christian church extended its sway over the populations of Europe, it not only promoted viticulture but also had to confront the reality that many of the faithful—lay and clergy alike—drank too deeply and too often. As a rich theme in the Bible and an element integral to church ritual, wine had to be approached positively, and questions of abuse and drunkenness were difficult to resolve. Although many church authorities condemned the excessive use of wine, there was a sense that alcoholic intoxication was a physical and emotional state related to spiritual ecstasy. A number of church fathers developed the notion of “sober intoxication” to describe a state of spiritual bliss achieved without the help of wine or beer, and this might have prompted the less godly to use wine as a shortcut.

For the most part, however, the church opposed heavy drinking and drunkenness, an issue discussed repeatedly not only by individual church leaders but also by church councils. It was seen as problematic from social, moral, and spiritual angles. The sixth-century Bishop Caesarius of Arles condemned drunkenness on three grounds: it led to violent and immoral behavior, it wasted money that could have gone to charity, and it was sacrilegious. The records of Caesarius's time vividly illustrate his complaints, for descriptions of violent, immoral, and impious behavior related to wine are legion. Eberulf, the treasurer of King Childebert II (570–95), "flung a priest on a bench, beat him with his fists and belaboured him with blows, to the point that he nearly breathed his last, simply because he had refused to give Eberulf wine when he was obviously drunk." There were complaints that people refused alms to the poor, telling them, "Go, go on, God will give to you," while they themselves consumed large quantities of expensive wine. As for sacrilege, drinkers toasted the angels and the saints with the same wine that rendered them drunk and immoral.

The clergy were no better in this respect than laypersons. Bishop Cautinus of Tours was reported to be "often so completely fuddled with wine that it would take four men to carry him from the table." The bishop of Soissons, for his part, was said to have been "out of his mind . . . for nearly four years, through drinking to excess," such that he had to be locked behind bars whenever there was a royal visit to the city.⁵⁶ Gregory of Tours complained that monks spent more of their time in taverns drinking than in their cells praying. In 847, the Council of Prelates decreed that any person in religious orders who habitually drank to the point of drunkenness should do forty days' penance—which in this case meant abstaining from fat, beer, and wine.

Drinking and drunkenness were also treated in penitentials, manuals for priests that listed the penances Christians should perform when they had committed sins. In general, the penalties imposed on clerics, who were expected to be able to exercise greater self-discipline, were more severe than those applied to laypeople, and high-ranking clergy were expected to perform greater penances than mere monks and parish priests. An early-eighth-century penitential attributed to the Venerable Bede sets out the penance for drinking to the point that it "changes the state of the mind and the tongue babbles and the eyes are wild and there is dizziness and distension of the stomach and pain follows." These symptoms sound like punishment enough, but further penance was demanded: the offender was to consume no meat or wine (surely easily given up for the first few days after such a bout of drinking) for three days if the offender was a layman, seven

days if a priest, two weeks if a monk, three weeks if a deacon, four weeks if a presbyter, and five weeks if a bishop.⁵⁷

The Burgundian penitential of 700–725 prescribes a penance of three forty-day periods of just bread and water for anyone who has vomited because of drunkenness or gluttony. Other penitentials set out more severe penances for when a communicant has vomited the Communion bread because of either eating or drinking too much. (Presumably this refers to wine consumed before, rather than during, Communion.) Another penitential, from Cambrai in northern France and dating from about 830, specifies, “One who is drunk then with wine or beer violates the contrary command of the Savior and his Apostles; but if he has a vow of holiness, he shall expiate his guilt for forty days on bread and water; a layman, indeed, shall do penance for seven days.”⁵⁸ It is noteworthy that being restricted to water was considered a punishment. This strongly suggests that beer and wine had become part of the daily diet for many in France in this period.

The simple presence of drunkenness in these penitentials should not necessarily be understood as indicating that drunkenness was widespread in early medieval France. What is clear is that in many regions, particularly where it was produced or easily accessible, wine was an integral part of the diet and, even more so, of occasions of sociability and celebration, and drunkenness was viewed as a deplorable result in some cases. The church’s attempts to deter excessive drinking represented an early phase of the long-term theme of trying to keep wine consumption in France at levels considered moderate.

The first fifteen hundred years of French wine, from the first plantings by Greeks in about 500 BCE to the spread of viticulture throughout France by 1000 CE, established some patterns and themes for the following centuries, which the next chapters will trace. The association of wine with Christianity and the role of the church in promoting viticulture remained important through to the French Revolution and beyond. The French medical profession fully embraced the association of wine with medicine and health until the twentieth century. The intervention of the central government in wine production, in the form of Domitian’s decree, was only the first of many such examples in the history of French wine. These and other themes came into clearer focus in the Middle Ages, between the years 1000 and 1500.