The Emperor: Charlemagne
Charlemagne is something of an enigma. It is necessary to separate legend from fact. Russell Chamberlin deserves high praise for doing so in a manner both straightforward and stirring. Establishing the ascendancy of the Carolingian dynasty, Chamberlin moves forward to plot the manner by which Charlemagne expanded his inheritance to eventually become Imperator Romanus to the dismay of his rivals in Constantinople. It is a compelling story. From a provincial backwater, Charlemagne became sovereign of Western Europe to include the Holy See and the remnants of Roman greatness. Popes crossed the Alps to call and alliances were struck with rulers in places as
far to the east as Baghdad. Chamberlin ensures that the reader extracts full enjoyment from this extraordinary tale. His Charlemagne is a fast-paced interpretation of remarkable clarity and unconditionally deserves 5 stars. It is one of the better historical biographies I’ve had the pleasure to read.

This book is very interesting. The author writes clearly, and I learned a lot about Charlemagne and the empire he created. More than a military leader, Charlemagne created a governmental system, feudalism. Much of his success was due to the people he selected to administer the areas under his rule. Men like Alcuin, Einhardt, and Eric of Friuli are interesting in their own way. The church is also relevant in this study. Faith was not as refined as it is today. Church and state separation came later. Without the church, Charlemagne probably would not have become emperor. In the same way, the church of Rome would not have become independent of Constantinople.


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