



# Charles of the Desert: A Life in Verse (Paraclete Poetry)

*William Woolfitt*

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*Charles of the Desert* is a novel-in-verse accompanying Charles de Foucauld, hermit and writer of “The Prayer of Abandonment,” as he explores and adapts desert spirituality, monasticism, and contemplative prayer. Charles is an unusual and compelling figure and *Charles of the Desert* is unusual and compelling as well -- different from nonfiction books which focus on instructing in or explaining these subjects. It also explores Charles’ profound respect for Muslims, his pioneering efforts at interfaith dialogue, and his commitment to live among Muslims as a “universal brother” known for his compassion and solidarity.

Born in 1858 to a family of French aristocrats, Charles was torn between his ambition to do great things and his desire for the hidden life, between public service and private prayer. *Charles of the Desert* uses elements of fiction and poetry to follow him to Morocco, Syria, Israel, and Algeria, as he becomes a cavalry officer, explorer, geographer, pilgrim, Trappist monk, priest, abolitionist, translator, folklorist, hermit, fort-builder, and martyr. Throughout these travels and transformations, Charles searched for a vocation that would reflect his convictions and his experience of God. In his last fifteen years, he settled in a remote part of the Sahara, and focused on self-denial, contemplation, and charity. He claimed the nomadic Tuareg as his brothers, the desert as his earthly home.

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