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A handwritten Bible from an unlikely scribe

Maureen Fiedler | Jun. 17, 2013 NCR Today

On Thursday?s edition of *Interfaith Voices* [1], I interviewed a delightful older gentleman who had just spent more than half a decade writing out the entire Bible (King James version) in longhand.

The project took Phillip Patterson of Philmont, N.Y., a total of seven years, penning the last passage in May. He used a cursive Palmer script, writing on archival paper with a felt-tip pen.

Patterson had attended Catholic school as a boy growing up in East Flatbush in Brooklyn, but he had never read the Bible in its entirety ? a fact that bothered him.

That changed as he copied the Bible by hand. The process was a deeply moving experience that brought him from a kind of loose agnosticism into contact with a ?deity ? sort of.? (His phrase).

He said he was most impressed by the love expressed everywhere in its verses. Asked for his favorite passage, his answer was quick: ?Love your neighbor as yourself.?

But what was most amazing to me is how this project was inspired. As I discovered in the interview, Patterson is both gay and African-American. He has suffered from AIDS for a couple decades, and that occasionally slowed this work.

But there?s more: The idea for this project was inspired by Patterson?s deceased partner, Mohammad, who was Muslim. Mohammad wondered why Jews and Muslims commonly wrote their scriptures by hand and Christians did not.

Patterson took that as a calling, and began his work in August 2007, worked for seven years and finally penned the last two verses of the Book of Revelation on May 11. The finished volume is being donated to St. Peter?s Presbyterian Church in Spencertown, N.Y.

You can view photos of the project, as well as read reflections from Patterson at his website [2].

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[1] http://interfaithradio.org/Archive/2013-June/Morals_and_the_Self_Righteous_Mind__The_Handwritten_Bible__and_More
[2] http://serenityofknowing.com/