

*Ervin Beck and Jeffrey S. Peachey give a short history of the Ausbund and detail the restoration of a unique first edition printing.*

## **Ausbund 1564: The History and Conservation of an Anabaptist Icon**

*By Ervin Beck and Jeffrey S. Peachey*

If the Anabaptist movement has any icons—physical objects that embody widely held, complex ideas and feelings—one primary one would be the 1564 printing of the fifty-three “Passau” hymns and psalms that in 1583 were included in the first edition of what is known today as the *Ausbund*. The *Ausbund*, of course, is the oldest Protestant hymnal in continuous use (a tradition continued now by the Old Order Amish). And the 1564 book of songs owned by the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, is the only surviving copy of that publication.<sup>1</sup>

Since 1928, however, that book has languished in a mutilated binding in the rare-book room of the historical library, risky to handle and sad to regard. Fortunately, in 2015 Jeffrey Peachey, a book conservator in New York City, completed a painstaking, extensive conservation of the bound volume, thanks to a generous gift from a patron of the library. It is a momentous accomplishment for historians and bibliophiles, justifying a detailed description of Peachey’s work as well as a review of how the earliest copies of these song texts travelled from central Europe to northern Indiana.

### **Philippites at Passau**

Philipp Plener<sup>2</sup> was probably a native of the Strasbourg area and became leader of an Anabaptist group by 1526 or 1527, one or two years after the first adult baptism in Zurich. He was active in and near Bruchsal in the Kraichgau, Germany, and by 1530 had attracted about five hundred followers, known as Philippites.<sup>3</sup> As persecution of Anabaptists developed, he moved with some of his congregation to Moravia, which welcomed Anabaptists. In 1529, like the Gabrielites and Hutterites, who also settled in Moravia, Plener’s Anabaptist group took on a community-of-goods social and economic structure. The three communal groups experienced many conflicts over leadership. From 1533-35 his community in Auspitz probably totaled about four hundred.

The rise and fall of the Anabaptist kingdom of Münster (1534-35), however, led the Philippites’ patron, the Abbess of Maria Saal, to expel them from her land, as was also the fate of other Anabaptist communal groups. While his group camped in the open, Plener went on horseback looking for new places for his group to settle but found none, whereupon he urged his followers to set out on their own and look out for themselves. Prior to this dispersal, he had ordained Michael Schneider as a *Vorsteher* (overseer).

Following the dispersal, Philipp Plener disappears from the historical record.

Beginning in the summer of 1535, therefore, about sixty Philippites, travelling in perhaps five small groups, headed west toward their earlier home in Bruchsal, Germany. Michael Schneider is known to have led fourteen people; Hans Beck, twenty; Dietrich von Heilbronn, fifteen; and Hans Petz, five others.<sup>4</sup> Travelling down the Danube River valley, when they came to Passau, at the junction of the Danube, Inn, and Ilz Rivers, fifty-two of them<sup>5</sup> were arrested by authorities and interrogated with fourteen questions. All, including a number of teenagers,<sup>6</sup> refused to recant and were thrown into the dungeon of the Oberhaus Castle, which still rises three hundred feet above the city.

Like others in Europe, the Passau authorities feared the disruption that Anabaptist communarians, like the Münsterites, might bring to their communities. Although the authorities wielded some torture, their main punishments were neglect and persuasion to recant. Prisoners recanted or died in prison.

A prime activity of these Anabaptist prisoners was singing and composing spiritual songs, which was true in general of early Protestants, including Anabaptists, outside of prison.<sup>7</sup> The song texts were infused with Anabaptist piety and beliefs. They were sung to pre-existent, often very popular, secular tunes. Fifty-three songs were preserved from this group’s prison experience. They form the entire text of the 1564 publication and song numbers 81-129 in the *Ausbund* as of 2016.

Most of the composers are known by name: Michael Schneider, the *Vorsteher*, composed thirteen hymns; Hans Betz, twenty-three; Bernard Schneider, two; Hans Garber, two. Two songs were jointly composed; four are

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1. Harold S. Bender, “The First Edition of the *Ausbund*,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 3 (1929): 147-50.

2. Robert Friedmann, “Plener, Philipp (16th Century),” in *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, 1959, [http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Plener,\\_Philipp\\_\(16th\\_century\)](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Plener,_Philipp_(16th_century)). Here and elsewhere below, “common knowledge” on subjects comes from *Mennonite Encyclopedia* articles. Material from other sources is individually documented.

3. Friedmann, “Philippites.”

4. Robert Riall, *The Earliest Hymns of the Ausbund: Some Beautiful Christian Songs Composed and Sung in the Prison at Passau, Published*

unattributed; and seven are anonymous paraphrases of Psalms.<sup>8</sup>

In 1537, Hans Betz and Bernard Schneider died in prison of neglect and disease. In 1538, Michael Schneider was released when, under persuasion by the dean of the Passau cathedral, he recanted and left for Nuremberg. In 1544, fourteen prisoners were released on bail<sup>9</sup> and headed to their original homes in Germany, to the Hutterites in Moravia, or to the Swiss Brethren.<sup>10</sup> In the same year Agnes and Hans Haffner von Riblingen were released upon recanting. Hans Wiedeman credits Hans Haffner with having composed in 1534 a "beautiful" tract on *Gelassenheit*, or yieldedness, one of the main themes of the Passau hymns.<sup>11</sup>

### The 1564 and 1583 Editions<sup>12</sup>

One or more of the Passau prisoners took with them from prison the texts of fifty-three spiritual songs composed by the inmates. Some individual songs eventually spread into the repertoire of various Anabaptist congregations. However, the songs were taken as a collection by an erstwhile Philippite to a Swiss Brethren community in Switzerland or South Germany and appropriated by the Swiss Brethren as their own, as is indicated by the title of the collection published in 1564:

*Etliche schöne christliche Gesang, wie sie in der Gefengkniss zu Passaw im Schloss von den Schweitzer Brüdern durch Gottes Gnad geticht und gesungen worden.*

In English: Some beautiful Christian songs as they were composed and sung in the castle prison at Passau by the Swiss Brethren, through the Grace of God.

The original book containing the hymns actually resembles what we regard today as a booklet, meaning a small-sized volume with paper, not hard, covers. These limp covers were considered temporary and were often rebound in a leather-covered, rigid board binding at a later date.

The title page includes the year the book was printed, "1564," but not the name and location of the printer. As with other early Anabaptist books and pamphlets, that information was not given lest the printer be arrested for promoting banned materials. The book was probably printed in Switzerland or South Germany.

In 1571 enemies of Anabaptists made reference to a work titled "Ausbund," a name not documented for this collection until 1583.

In 1583 the Passau hymns appeared in the first book to be called the *Ausbund*, meaning "select" or "paragon" selection. The Passau hymns formed the last forty percent of the book, beginning with a section title page that varies only slightly from the title used in the 1564 edition. Omitting two hymns,<sup>13</sup> the 1583 edition contains the remaining fifty-one hymns in the same order as the 1564 edition. The Passau hymns were preceded in the first part of the book with eighty new hymns, making a total of 131. The rest, as they say, is history since the publication through 2016 of the *Ausbund* consists basically of this 1583 set of hymns, now totaling 140, including forty-eight of the Passau hymns, minus and plus a few others through the years.

### The *Sammelband* (ca. 1700)<sup>14</sup>

A *Sammelband* is a "book comprising a number of separately printed works that are subsequently bound together."<sup>15</sup> About 1700, the book containing the fifty-three Passau hymns was added to a small collection of loose pamphlets that apparently belonged to an Anabaptist in Switzerland or South Germany. The owner decided to have all of these publications bound into the same thick, hard-leather volume, with decorative brass corners and plates. Although most of the texts had been printed recently, the book of the Passau hymns was about 135 years old. Binding it would make it more useful and also be a means of preserving the treasured text.

Although one or two pamphlets have been lost from this bound book, most of the contents of the original binding are known and in hand and found in this order, beginning to end:

- A 1696 song pamphlet with two hymns.
- A 1696 song book with twenty-four hymns (twelve pages missing).
- A song pamphlet with three hymns (first eight pages missing).
- A 1699 song pamphlet with three hymns.
- Missing, unknown pamphlet/s.
- The intact 1564 collection of Passau songs.
- An undated prayer pamphlet.

It was a somewhat awkward set to bind because the Passau songs had been printed on pages shorter than the pages of the other pamphlets. To even out the dimensions, the bookbinder pasted a bottom extension onto each page of the Passau songs.

The next presumed step in the history of this rare volume was being brought to Colonial Pennsylvania by an unknown Anabaptist immigrant owner.

in 1564, ed. Galen A. Peters, *Anabaptist Texts in Translation*, vol. 4 (Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 2003), 19.

5. Hans Wiedeman, "The Story of the Anabaptists at Passau: 1527-35," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 39 (April 1965): 101.

6. [Benueel Blank], *The Amazing Story of the Aausbund* (Narvon, Pa.: author, 2001): 24-26.

7. Riall, *The Earliest Hymns*, 21-22.

8. *Ibid.*, 22.

9. *Ibid.*, 26.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Wiedeman, "The Story," 103.

12. Robert Friedmann, "Ausbund," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, 1959, in *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, 1959, www.gameo.org. See also Paul M. Yoder, et al., *Four Hundred Years with the Ausbund* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1964).

13. No. 3, "Lobt den Herrn ir Heyden all" (Psalm 117) and no. 17 "Wir schreyen zu dir Herre Gott."

14. Most of the information in this and the following sections come from informal conversations with Joe Springer, curator of the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College, January 2016.

15. *Wikipedia*, "Sammelband," accessed February 5, 2016, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sammelband>.

## The Discovery by H. S. Bender (1928)

As is well known, the Mennonite Historical Society and the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College were created largely through the efforts of Harold S. Bender, a Goshen student and eventual dean and prominent Anabaptist historian. Early on, he formed a collection of Anabaptist rare books, often by visiting families who owned old books and wanted a safe, valued site for their preservation and use.

On a trip to Pennsylvania in 1928, he stopped at the "Early American Books" store in Harrisburg, owned by James Lewis Hook. There he discovered the *Sammelband* containing the Passau hymns and recognized it for the rarity that it was. Hook could not name the previous owner, presumably some Pennsylvania family.

The trouble was that the book cost more than Bender could afford. Hook offered a solution: he would sell to Bender only the more valuable half that contained the Passau hymns, for ten dollars. Bender agreed and Hook tore the volume in half. At least, this is the story that circulates orally although Bender never recorded it in writing or print. Perhaps the volume had been split in two parts before Bender found it in the bookstore. Even so, Bender could not pay on the spot; he had to be billed for it in October, when college funds were appropriated.<sup>16</sup> Bender was able to buy the other part of the volume some months later at an unrecorded price.

As the story continues, the two parts lay separately in the historical library until fifteen years later, when Robert Friedmann organized the rare books for Bender. In the process, he "discovered" that the two parts belonged together. One wonders why, if Bender was present at the dramatic sundering of the volume, he did not remember that he later bought the first part, too. Or perhaps he was gone from campus long-term during the time when Friedmann realized the match. Or perhaps in Bender's hyper-busy life, and with the low value he placed on the first part of the book, compared to his high value on the *Ausbund* section, he really did forget about the two parts. The oral tradition often teases us with such questions.

That is how the rarest important Anabaptist book came to languish in the rare-book room of the Mennonite

Historical Library, safe, but its cover torn, tattered, forlorn, and slowly disintegrating.

In 2015, the book was given to Peachey, a native of Goshen and a 1988 English-major graduate of Goshen College, an expert bookbinder in New York City. He gives a detailed report of his conservation of the book in the following sections.<sup>17</sup>

## Anabaptist Liturgical Bindings

I first saw this *Ausbund* during a visit to examine several *Martyrs' Mirrors* at the Mennonite Historical Library (fig. 1.) I was immediately attracted to it— not because it was a very important Anabaptist book, but because it was a very well used old book in terrible condition, a personal favorite type of book to treat. I also immediately recognized it as an Anabaptist liturgical binding. Similar to some Anabaptists' distinctive clothing, these books look different from other books from the same time. Their general features are a thick textblock, very round spine, stuck-on endbands, textile spine linings, wooden boards, full leather (often calf) covering material, clasps and spine straps.<sup>18</sup> Spine straps are possibly a uniquely Anabaptist feature, and they can be made in a variety of ways: a single thick piece of leather, leather wrapped around a paper core, a metal-studded thick piece of leather, or sometimes linked metal. The metal-studded ones bear a superficial resemblance to punk and biker clothing accessories.

Anabaptist liturgical bindings are found in America and Europe ca. 1700-1880.<sup>19</sup> Very similar looking bindings have been found elsewhere in Europe.<sup>20</sup> At this point, however, it is unknown if this binding style is used only on Anabaptist texts and if the books were bound by Anabaptist bookbinders.<sup>21</sup> The answer to this question also depends on how, exactly, one defines an Anabaptist liturgical binding, which has not been adequately investigated to date. Such books were generally made with very good quality materials, and even well-used books are often in functional condition though commonly the clasp and spine straps are broken or are missing. Anabaptist liturgical bindings have a unique, distinctly gothic look and structure.<sup>22</sup>

16. Correspondence between Bender and Hook, October 13 and 19, 1928, Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen College.

17. For more about his vocation, see <http://www.mennonitewriting.org/journal/2/2/outside-text-my-work-book-conservation/>. Among other distinctions, in October 2015 the University of Toronto awarded Peachey the Patricia Fleming Visiting Fellowship in Bibliography and Book History.

18. Endbands are "Components which are found at the head and tail of the spine of a bookblock, which are either sewn with thread or thongs to the head and/or tail edges of the spine of a bookblock or attached by adhesive only." *Language of Bindings*, "Endbands," accessed January 10, 2016, <http://www.ligatus.org.uk/lob/concept/2370>. Spine linings are adhered to the spine, under the covering material, to strengthen, create more rigidity, yet still allow flexibility. See *Bookbinding and the Conservation of Books: A Dictionary of Descriptive Terminology*, "Spine Lining," accessed January 11, 2016, <http://cool.conservation-us.org/don/dt/dt3250.html>.

19. Erin Hammeke and Chela Metzger, "Pennsylvania German Bindings: A Preliminary Exploration," Paper and Book Intensive, 2014. Unpublished workshop handouts. The authors have recorded bindings on European printings from Strasbourg, Basel, Frankfurt, Zurich, Pirmasens; in North America, from Germantown, Lancaster, Ephrata, and Philadelphia.

20. Robert J. Mileveski and Valdis Billeruss, "Reading the Bible, Preserving the Precious Text: Latvian Peasant Metal-Clad Bindings," *Library History* 24, no. 2 (June 2008): 128-42.

21. Tony Haverstick, "Pennsylvania German Bookbinding and Anabaptist Bookbinders," *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage* 23, no. 3 (July 2000): 8-14; David Luthy, "Metal Initial and Date Plates on Amish and Mennonite Books," *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage* 7, no. 1 (January 1984): 2-8. These are the only comprehensive investigations of these bindings to date.

22. Miller, Julia, *Books Will Speak Plain: A Handbook for Identifying and Describing Historical Bindings* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Legacy Press, 2010). Miller colloquially names this binding style "American Gothic."



Fig. 1. Condition of the Mennonite Historical Library's 1564 *Ausbund* before treatment

### Binding Description

The *Ausbund* was sewn with two-ply, "S" twist vegetable-fiber thread onto three double vegetable-fiber cords. The cords were laced into the boards, a technique more commonly found on earlier European-made bindings rather than later American ones. The beech wooden boards, also common in continental Europe, were around three-sixteenths of an inch thick in the center, and chamfered forty-five degrees on the three inner squares. The outer face of the boards was shaped to match the curve of the spine. As a result, it was only one-sixteenth of an inch thick at the spine edge. Unusually, the grain direction was perpendicular to the spine rather than parallel. This is somewhat uncommon for books with thicker wooden boards like this one and is usually found on American "scaleboard" bindings. The leather itself was very thick, a characteristic often found on American bindings.

The physical evidence from the binding was inconclusive as to its origin (Europe vs. America) since it had aspects common to both continents. The metalwork included four corner-pieces, center-pieces, two clasp catch-plates (each with different decoration), two end-of-spine-straps and two mid-spine straps. The metalwork had a charmingly crude

folk-art appearance, which is common. Given that the spine originally had three full-thickness pieces of leather on it—the leather endbands, the spine itself, and the spine straps—I wondered if this book could have ever opened easily. Part of its poor condition may have been due to readers struggling to keep it open. Mostly, though, I imagined it was the result of an extreme amount of use—probably thousands of hours—over the centuries.

### Condition of the Text

The overall condition was very poor. Almost every leaf had numerous small tears around the edges, areas of severe staining, dog-eared corners, surface dirt, and soiling. Some of the sections were stained from pressure-sensitive tape or other previous repairs, and approximately a third of the book had very odd page distortions, almost like the texture of indentations caused by coarse sandpaper, extending about a quarter of an inch onto both sides of the gutter. This might have been the remains of a previous repair. One of the most damaged leaves was leaf eighty-one from section two. The entire bottom right-hand section was missing. Because of the weak and damaged leaves, and the binding problems, the book was very vulnerable to more damage if handled.

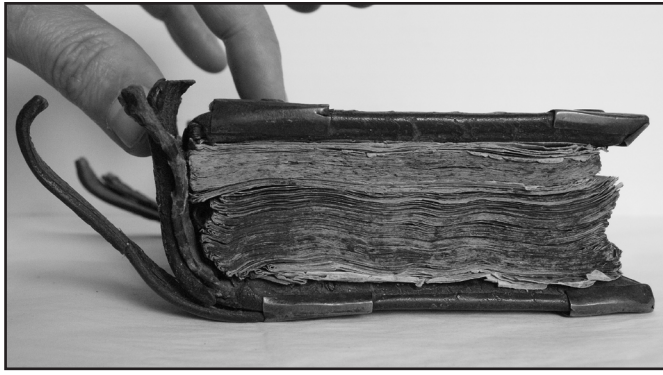


Fig. 2. Tail view of the textblock, indicating original spine thickness and current textblock thickness

Possibly the most interesting and unusual aspect of this treatment was the loss of text in the middle of the book. Generally, books are damaged at the beginning or at the end. As described elsewhere in this paper, this loss probably happened when the book was split into two (or more) pieces and sold separately.

Even though the leather spine was detached and broken at the front joint, none of the spine leather had been removed so that it was possible to determine the thickness of the missing textblock (fig. 2). How to deal with this loss resulted in a long conversation with the historical library curator since we both wanted to acknowledge the loss and have it somehow represented in the finished book. Filling it would also mean that all the original leather could be retained. There was also the remote possibility that the lost pamphlet/s might be located in the future.

A significant portion of the textblock had page extensions at the foot of the pages to make all of the leaves the same height. This was done when these individual publications were bound together. The surface pH of the leaves ranged from 4.5-5.5, including the page extensions. Although this was somewhat acidic, in areas without tears the paper had decent tensile strength. Much of the soiling would not have been significantly reduced by more extensive aqueous treatments. This book was a worn, well-used testament to its complex history of usage, and both the curator and I agreed concerning the importance of preserving its aura.

Liturgical books are often some of the most used books I encounter. The page extensions were not distorting or stressing the leaves they were attached to (fig. 3.) However, the adhesive on many of the joints had begun to fail, and roughly a third were beginning to delaminate. There were tears on many of the spinefolds and, especially at the beginning and end of the book, numerous leaves were completely detached from other leaves—i.e., “conjugates”—along the spine, to which they were attached while being printed.<sup>23</sup> Both flyleaves were missing, and the exterior leaves of the text were stained from contact with the wood boards and covering leather.

### Condition of the Binding

The sewing thread was broken at many places and large portions of the sewing supports were missing. Since the book had been in two pieces for a long time,

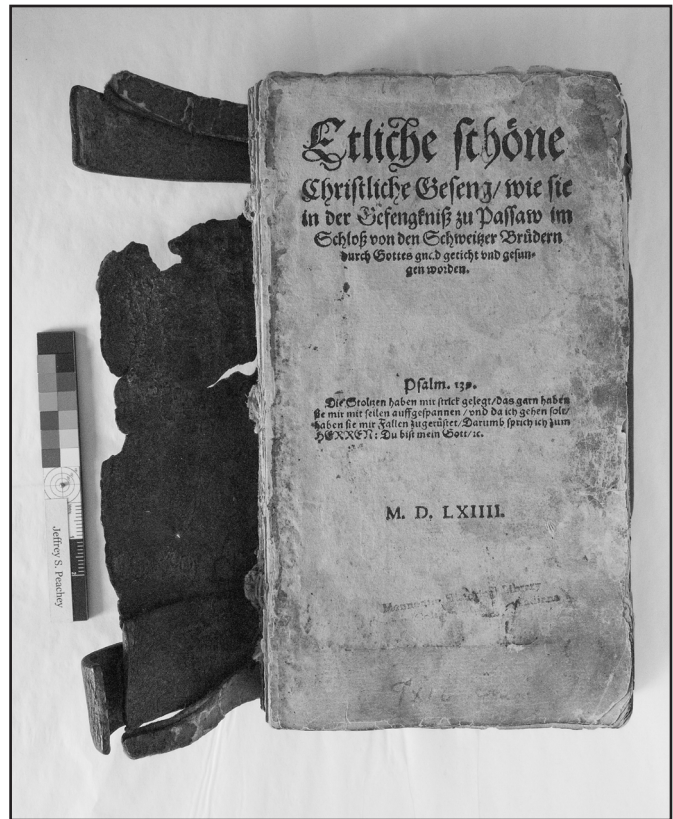


Fig. 3. Title page before treatment. The page extension is evident on the bottom.

the spine of the textblock was quite distorted (fig. 2). The leather spine was detached and distorted. Some fragments of leather were still adhered to the outside of the spinefolds. This binding style commonly has pre-woven textile endbands although this book had a leather stuck-on version. The front board was detached, and the hinges were split on the rear board.<sup>24</sup> Almost all the bosses had worn through the thickness of the metal, both on the front board and the back board, indicating abrasion. The leather felt oily, was very cracked, and some of the grain layer was missing. There were large losses on the front board, mainly at the head and fore-edge and at the top of the spine. Despite the extensive cracking, the leather felt fairly strong. Good quality leather is common to most liturgical bindings I have examined.

### Goals of the Treatment

Despite the poor condition, I liked the way this book looked. I wanted to preserve most of the aesthetics but repair the binding so that it performed its function of protecting the text. I set four overall goals for the treatment: reduce disfiguring surface dirt and stains

23. In most publications, multiple pages are printed on a single sheet of paper. When folded, the leaves that are physically joined along the spine are “conjugate.” In a sheet folded to form eight leaves (sixteen pages), the first and eighth leaves are conjugate, second and seventh, and so on.

24. The “joint” is usually considered the area where the spine and board meet; the “hinge,” the material that covers it.



Fig. 4. Here Peachey works on the disbound leaves.

to improve legibility and handling; repair torn and damaged leaves for scanning and future storage and use; repair the binding so the book can be consulted without causing damage; and create a protective enclosure for long term storage and transport.

### The Treatment

After the treatment plan was approved, the treatment itself began. In general, an extensive treatment like this reconstructs the steps in which the book was originally made. First the pages were cleaned and repaired, then the book resewn, boards attached, and finally, the covering leather repaired. There were twelve major steps.

1. The binding and representative pages were documented photographically, especially those with significant damage.

2. The animal glue on the spine was removed using a poultice. Then the remains of the sewing thread and sewing supports were removed and later housed in the protective enclosure with the finished book. The textblock was mechanically detached from the rear board with a sharp lifting knife that I made, being sure to keep the hinge intact.<sup>25</sup> At this point the book was completely disbound, a state which was called "pulled to pieces" in the nineteenth century.

3. Each leaf was surface-cleaned with grated vinyl eraser, vinyl eraser nubs, and cotton make-up removal pads. The overall appearance and textual legibility was improved but, more important, dirt would not continue to be spread throughout the book. The goal was not to clean the pages so they became bright white like a photocopy— which would have been impossible anyway— but to regard the stains and previous repairs as evidence of the book's history and use. Although surface-cleaning paper may seem to be a simple process, when working on fragile paper, it requires constant attention, and in fact is one of the few irreversible procedures I performed on the book. Reversibility is a fundamental concept in conservation: anything a conservator does can be undone at some point in the future and the object returned to its pre-treatment state. However, dirt cannot, realistically, be put back on a page.

4. The numerous tears were mended and damaged spinefolds guarded with wheat starch paste and a variety of pre-toned Japanese tissues (Usu Mino, Sekishu

25. Since 1995, I have been making specialized knives and tools for conservators and bookbinders since I was unable to find ones of suitable quality. See <http://jeffpeachey.com/knife-catalog> accessed January 11, 2016.



Fig. 5. The textblock during treatment after the new blank pages were added and it was sewn. The boards shown are for temporary protection; the original ones were reused.

Torinoko Gampi and Tengucho) to integrate visually and structurally with the leaves. Almost every leaf needed repair. I also re-pasted extensions where the adhesive had failed. Repairing the leaves was one of the most time-consuming aspects of this entire treatment (fig. 4).

5. The unbound leaves were packed in a custom-designed box, then shipped offsite for scanning. When they were returned, attention was paid to the binding.

6. A disfiguring modern machine-made paper pastedown on the front board, apparently applied in the 1950s, was removed. A previously repaired crack was found but was not disturbed since it was intact. Edge-glued repairs in wood boards often fail so it was a little unusual to find this one intact, suggesting it might have been done recently, probably when the modern pastedown was applied.<sup>26</sup> I was not able to identify the specific adhesive used. After discussion with the curator, we decided to leave the front inner board face exposed and not re-cover it with a pastedown. The removed pastedown was also housed with other removed fragments in the same box in which the book was ultimately stored.

7. Then the book was re-sewn with Londonderry linen thread, using the original sewing stations, onto twin four-ply Clarkson linen cords. Ruscombe Mills 65-gram per square meter laid handmade paper sections were added to the middle of the book in order to bring thickness to the original as indicated by the spine. Protective endsheets of this same paper were added to mitigate the acidic transfer from the boards to the initial and final leaves. No endbands were sewn, in keeping with the original structure. The original leather endband was not adhered to the spine in an attempt to keep the spine as flexible as possible and not stress the thick leather. The thicker a material is, the more tension-compression stresses develop within its thickness. Therefore, adhering a thick leather to the spine of a book can make it effectively inflexible.

8. The spine was consolidated with wheat starch paste and shaped as best possible into a historically

appropriate round. An initial spine lining of Japanese tissue was applied with wheat starch paste and Norlund fish gelatin. An additional spine lining of airplane linen was slotted around the sewing cords, adhered with Ethyl Vinyl Acetate ((EVA), with flanges left long enough to be adhered to the inner face of the boards.

9. The edges of the new section in the middle of the book were toned with Rowney Watercolors to be more sympathetic with the original edges (fig. 5). These edges were hand-trimmed so that they blended more sympathetically with the existing leaves. This was the first time I infilled a portion of a bookblock in its middle.

10. The boards were reattached by lacing in the new cords through the old lacing channels and holes, then by adhering the linen spine lining onto the inner faces of the boards of the book with wheat starch paste. Then the book was rebacked with toned airplane cotton and Japanese tissue adhered with EVA. Several large losses on the spine were infilled with Cowley's vegetable tanned calfskin to bring the thickness up to the original. The rebacked spine was not adhered to the bookblock. This was a decision to alter the original structure in order to gain flexibility and durability.

11. To safely store and transport the book, a brown Cialux cloth-covered drop-spine box was constructed, containing a cloth-covered portfolio of removed binding fragments. The *Sammelband* was further protected with a removable four-flap box to allow protection of the bosses and fragile edges when lifting the book in and out of the box. The four-flap box was lined with polyethylene foam to cushion the fragile bosses. A laser printed paper label was adhered with EVA in the recessed spine area on the outside of the box to identify and provide opening orientation.

12. Finally, the conserved book was photographed and a written treatment report prepared (fig. 6).

### Personal Observations

Treatments this extensive are rare, largely because most old books are not considered valuable by our current culture. But this *Ausbund* is the earliest known copy of a foundational text for the Anabaptist heritage. This treatment fulfilled a dual mission by preserving the original and stabilizing it so it could safely be scanned. Conservation of the book and scanning preserves both the physical book and copies the textual information so that it can be easily disseminated.

As a bookbinder and book conservator, I feel an oddly strong kinship to the anonymous bookbinder who originally bound the book. When examining a binding, I can often infer from the structure, tools or techniques used how the original binder/s worked. Even after twenty-five years working in this field, it is still a thrill to parse these technical and structural changes. I cannot, however, say that I felt a religious

26. A colleague and I tested a number of methods to repair splits in wooden boards. See Alexis Hagadorn and Jeffrey S. Peachey, "The Use of Parchment to Reinforce Split Wooden Bookboards, with Preliminary Observations into the Effects of RH Cycling on These Repairs," *Journal of the Institute of Conservation*, 33, no. 1 (March 2010): 41-63.



Fig. 6. The spine and front board after conservation treatment

connection to this book even though it is a cornerstone of my own Anabaptist heritage and the treatment itself was uniquely challenging. All books are our shared cultural legacy and, at least for me, an endlessly fascinating technology. Images of pages cannot contextualize a text within a cultural and time-bound era the way the materiality and aura of the physical book does.

### A Final View from Ervin Beck

Now, several months later, the reconstructed book containing the 1564 *Ausbund* lies in front of me on a Mennonite Historical Library table beside the handsome box made for it and a packet that holds every scrap of material that Peachey removed and did not re-use.

Beside that cluster rests an expertly made facsimile copy (2013) of the 1564 *Ausbund*, one of a number handmade and handbound recently by Ross Dilts and Victor Schwartz at Heritage Bindery in Allen County, Indiana. But only the pages are facsimiles, made from an earlier microfilming. The smooth, rich red-brown leather cover catches my eye, especially hand-tooled as it is in a panelled design that could have been used in Europe in the 1560s. Containing only the facsimile of the 1564 book, this volume is much thinner than the *Sammelband* that includes the 1564 book. The page size is also somewhat larger, the makers of the facsimile having chosen to guess what size the untrimmed pages of the 1564 book might have been. The glowing leather is enriched by four raised cords on the spine and two

brass clasps. It looks new, fine and beautiful, almost too good to open or use. The facsimile is a trophy tribute to a history and a tradition that is precious to people who commission copies.

The restored *Ausbund* volume looks less like a svelte youth and more like a lovable old grandparent. It is whole and solid and invites confidence—and holding. But it looks old and worn, rather vulnerable. Pages are soiled. I see a bumpy surface, from leather scalings having been fastened down. In the upper right part of the front cover I see pinkish cloth and tape where leather once was. The center and corner brass bosses are there, but tarnished. The clasps lack their bottom halves. There is no sign of a split spine. In fact, with the spine restored and the spine straps re-attached, the book looks as solid as it must have three hundred years ago. The book could not have been made to look like new, and it should not have been, since it should contain and project the history of human use that it has seen.

People come to the Mennonite Historical Library from miles around just to look at the book. They could ask to see the *Schleitheim Confession* (1527) as printed about 1540, one of only two surviving copies in the world, an almost equal rarity. But they more often choose the first *Ausbund*. Do they prefer songs to doctrine?

The icon does its work, confirming and inspiring the Anabaptist faith under suffering that produced fifty-three songs in Passau, Germany, ca. 1535-37. □