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Dunham Bible Museum

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Avery Family Bible

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The Avery Bible: The Hearts of Children to Their Fathers

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At a time when Marie Kondo and minimalism determine what is worthwhile to save and remember, family antiques are labeled as clutter to be tossed or nuisances to be ignored. Old books, especially, seem to grace the bookshelves of family rooms less and less. This is a sad fate, for old books tell stories that we should be reminded of regularly. A book tells a story within its pages, but it can also tell the stories of

in 1599, when his son Robert then took up the reins and continued the Barker publishing company for almost fifty years, ensuring the addition of his own name to the pages of history.

After the New Testament title page and right before the book of Matthew, the Avery Bible holds a page filled from top to bottom with names, all written by hand. At the top, the faded ink of a quill pen forms the letters, whereas the blue lines of a ballpoint reveal the names at the bottom. This time-worn list is an account of the former owners of the Avery Bible, beginning with the patriarch Captain Christopher Avery, born in 1590, and ending with William H. Avery Jr., born in 1903. William was the eleventh generation removed from Christopher and is only one generation before the present owners of the Bible, Nancy Pressler and her two brothers.

own genealogy

between the last verse of Malachi, which mentions fathers and children, and the first chapter of Mathew, which begins with the genealogy of Jesus. Seeing the generations before Jesus helps to illuminate Christ the man, and similarly looking back at the Bible as a whole gives a glimpse of the dedication that marked this family.

The legacy began with Christopher Avery who was born in Devon, England, and later traveled to America with his young son, James. The 1581 Geneva Bible was published before

most likely acquired the volume from a family

member in Devon (Taylor, 54). In 1616, he married

occupied by Averys for two hundred and thirty-eight years until it was burned down in 1894.

Yet astonishingly, the Avery Bible has remained intact and in the family for over three hundred and fifty years. The Avery descendants have preserved the Bible with great care, and the Bible has preserved a bridge for the new Averys to visit the old.

The Averys hold a refreshingly deep and clear connection to the past that fosters gratitude for ancestors who sacrificed for family and that nurtures true motives for life today.

Malachi says to remember so that you will trust Christ, who will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. Memories orient us to meditate on the restoration that Christ will bring of eternal family and belonging.