

## **Benediction, Truett Seminary Graduation, Summer 2017**

**George W. Truett**

**It is a pleasure to be with you today in this beautiful seminary, given in honor of George Truett by John F. Baugh, founder of Sysco Foods and longtime benefactor and friend of Baylor University.**

**George Truett was one of the very few great men I have encountered in my life. I won't pretend that I knew him well—he died when I was fifteen years old. Nevertheless, I was able, even at that callow age, to see and assess what sort of man he was. Incidentally, he performed the marriage ceremony for my mother and father.**

**A devastating tragedy occurred early in his ministry at the First Baptist Church of Dallas. He was a member of a group from his church that had formed a hunting party and they were climbing through a barbed-wire fence when, as Dr. Truett made his passage, his weapon discharged. The fatal shot struck his friend, Bob Welsh, who was then Chief of Police in Dallas. As a result, Welsh died. Truett was shattered. He descended into the Valley of the Shadow of Death.**

**The Germans have a word for what Truett now suffered: [Anfechtung](#). It is a powerful designation—indeed it is often used to describe Martin Luther's horror during his quest for but inability to find assurances of salvation while a monk in Wittenberg. He, too, like Truett, was utterly wretched, lost, filled with despair, anguish, and desolation. I'm not sure the English language has an equivalent term to describe his stark condition.**

Truett slowly and desperately emerged from this miasma. He resumed his duties, but his life would never be the same. Henceforth, he established almost clinical self-control—rather like his namesake, George Washington, who was sober, steady and calm, regardless of all obstacles. Truett was careful never to say or do anything that could possibly lead to a repetition of such heart-rending sadness and loss.

Love became his trademark. If one met him, one could almost feel his capacity for love. However, along with such love, his heart contained a core of steel. There was no gushing or back-slapping, no flippant conversation, no excess verbiage. One would never hear the rampant, flame-thrower discourse that has become commonplace from pulpits and podiums today. Indeed, I cannot recall Dr. Truett ever laughing or even smiling. Life had become a very serious issue for him.

To sum him up: love of his God and his fellow-struggling mankind was his vision and commitment in this dark and challenging world. He did his duty through unstinting care and concern every day he lived. His benediction, invoked at the conclusion of every Sunday evening service, is thus:

*And now as the people go their many scattered ways,  
May the blessings of God,  
Bright like the light when the morning dawneth  
And gracious as the dew when the evening-tide cometh,  
Be granted you, all and each,  
Now and forevermore.*

*--Delivered by Dr. James W. Vardaman, Aug. 11, 2017*