



MST:

STILL IN DEBT

... TO STOTT

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Despite significant structural and location changes, with a new campus, new brand name and growing student numbers, Melbourne School of Theology has been blessed enough to come through the past year in the black ... financially debt free.

However, while most students and alumni might not have been aware of it, MST still owes a significant debt to the evangelist and Biblical scholar Rev Dr John Stott, who left this earth to be with his Lord on 27 July 2011.

To my knowledge, John Stott never taught or even visited MST, BCV or MBI. However few men or women in the last 50 years have profoundly shaped the worldview and priorities of our students as the godly, faithful and unassuming Rector of All Souls, Langham Place.

Of course he did come to Melbourne at one time to conduct a mission to Melbourne University. At the time he stayed with Stuart Barton Babbage, Bible scholar and former Dean of St Paul's Cathedral. Amusingly, Barton Babbage recalls that Stott was a memorable guest who delighted his children by teaching them the longest word in the English language, floccinaucinihilipilification!

Three areas stand out in which MST owes a debt to John Stott.

First, Stott exemplified and promoted expository preaching. Indeed, for many people, hearing John Stott preach was their first exposure to expository preaching. Stott described preaching as “opening up the inspired text with such faithfulness and sensitivity that God’s voice is heard and God’s people obey him”. Stott’s reverence for Scripture and his desire to allow the text to set the agenda for the sermon have profoundly impacted preaching. Through his careful exposition of the Scriptures, week by week at All Soul’s, Langham Place, at the various conferences he addressed throughout the world, and through his commentaries, Stott commended to Christians a way of preaching which is most faithful to Scripture itself and enables the pastor, or College Principal, to effectively shepherd the flock entrusted to them. MST, both as a Bible college, and through its long and close association with Belgrave Heights Convention, has had as one of its guiding principles the importance and centrality of expository preaching. Twice a week the MST community gathers for Chapel, and whenever we meet we prayerfully gather around God’s word to hear the scriptures expounded.

Secondly, like MST, Stott remained passionate about world mission. He will always be remembered for the decisive role he played at the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, a gathering of 2,700 Christian leaders from over 150 countries. The conference produced one of the most significant Christian documents of all time, the *Lausanne Covenant*, a Christian manifesto that affirmed both the centrality of evangelism to world mission, and the urgency to complete the task. The 2,300 signatories, affirmed:



Stott at the 1974 Lausanne Congress

We believe the Gospel is God's good news for the whole world, and we are determined by his grace to obey Christ's commission to proclaim it to all mankind and to make disciples of every nation.

The drafting committee for this important document was chaired by John Stott. While Stott himself would later modify his position, giving more weight to the role of socio-political involvement in the mission of the church, he continued to affirm that evangelism is the greatest service that the church can offer to the world.

MST has stood firmly in the tradition of the Lausanne Covenant, and continues to teach and train the next generation of Christians who will be sent out into the world, first and foremost, to proclaim the eternal gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. While most of our graduates may not be aware of the content of the *Lausanne Covenant*, they have been shaped and moulded by its priorities and commitments.

Thirdly, one of Stott's lasting legacies has been the establishment of the Langham Partnership. Now an international organisation, Langham Partnership has three main ministries. Langham Books provides theological books for seminary libraries, pastors and theological students in the majority world. Langham Scholars provides scholarships to enable younger evangelical teachers from the majority world to study for doctorates in biblical and theological fields. They then return to teaching positions of strategic influence in their own countries. Next year MST will welcome its first Langham Scholar to the College. Qaiser Julius is the director of the Open Theological Seminary in Pakistan and will be coming to MST to study under Prof Peter Riddell at our Centre for the Study of Islam and Other Faiths. Thirdly, Langham Preaching conducts seminars to equip young men and women in expository preaching. MST has been privileged to partner with Langham in this important ministry.

It is my prayer for MST that we will continue to honour the legacy of John Stott by remaining a college centred around expository preaching, which sends out men and women with a clear commitment to gospel proclamation, and which continues to partner with groups like Langham, who are committed to the maturing and strengthening of the worldwide church.

Thank you John. MST and its students will forever be in your debt!