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Photosynthesis: Physical Mechanisms and Chemical Patterns (IUPAB Biophysics Series)

Roderick K. Clayton

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Life on earth depends on the photosynthetic use of solar energy by plants, and efforts to develop alternative sources of energy include a major thrust toward the use of photosynthesis to yield fuels. The study of photosynthesis is an especially convincing way of bringing together the disciplines of physics, chemistry, and biology and can be a valuable element in the teaching of biophysics and biochemistry. This book provides the only detailed modern treatment of the subject in a concise form. Part I outlines the historical development of the subject, emphasizing the chemical nature of photosynthesis and the roles of chlorophylls and other pigments. Part II reviews our present knowledge of the structure and components of photosynthetic tissues in relation to their function. Part III deals with the photo-chemistry of photosynthesis and with the patterns of chemical events, principally electron and proton transfer, that follow the photo-chemistry. Part IV treats the relationships of electron and proton transport to ATP formation, and the metabolic patterns of carbon assimilation. An epilogue exposes major areas of confusion and ignorance and indicates potentially fruitful directions of research, including the development of photosynthetic systems for solar energy conversion. Throughout the book, there are frequent digressions into those aspects of optics and molecular physics relevant to the subject matter. Suitable for upper undergraduate and graduate course use, this book is also sufficiently detailed to give professional scientists a perspective of the subject at the level of contemporary research.

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