

*MTP International Review of Science. Biochemistry Series One. Vol. 4.**Biochemistry of Lipids*

Edited by T. W. Goodwin

Butterworths; London: University Park Press; Baltimore, 1974

iii + 294 pages. £10.45

In the light of the objectives set out in the preface, this volume could almost contravene the Trade Descriptions Act since, by no stretch of the imagination, can it be said to provide anything approaching a complete account of our present knowledge of lipid biochemistry.

Not that its contents are without interest. The articles by Vogelos and by Gurr on the synthesis of the saturated and unsaturated fatty acids respectively and those by Bowen, Davidson and Ramsey on the lipids of the nervous system and by Horton on the prostaglandins are all good authoritative accounts by distinguished workers in these areas. They are somewhat out of date in places and not particularly novel in that similar reviews covering much the same ground are to be found elsewhere, but they would certainly serve the advanced student and the non-specialist biochemist well enough.

In this company, however, it is the article by Gaylor on the enzymes of sterol biosynthesis that catches the eye. Here is a subject central to lipid biochemistry treated in a fresh and thought-provoking

way with excellent perspective of past, present and future, problems defined, progress assessed and new directions indicated. Full of homespun practical advice and quotable quotes too, "don't waste clean thoughts on dirty enzymes", for example.

Finally, two specialized articles find a place in the volume. One by Hemming deals in detail with the intriguing role of the polyisoprenoids in the formation of the glycans and the other, by Haines, considers briefly the odd group of substances now known as the halogenated sulphatides. These are restricted at present to a particular group of algae and they may turn out either to be mere biochemical curiosities or compounds of much wider biological significance. Time will tell.

So, all in all, quite an interesting pot-pourri: but certainly not, in my opinion, for purchase by the general biochemist seeking a comprehensive survey of the present state of lipid biochemistry.

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*MTP International Review of Science. Biochemistry Series One. Vol. 5.**Biochemistry of Carbohydrates.*

Edited by W. J. Whelan

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441 pages. £10.45

The volume comprises eight review articles covering many aspects of the biochemistry of carbohydrates.