
PREFACE

This book is an outgrowth of my teaching of biochemistry to undergraduates, graduate students, and medical students at Yale and Stanford. My aim is to provide an introduction to the principles of biochemistry that gives the reader a command of its concepts and language. I also seek to give an appreciation of the process of discovery in biochemistry. My exposition of the principles of biochemistry is organized around several major themes:

1. Conformation—exemplified by the relationship between the three-dimensional structure of proteins and their biological activity
2. Generation and storage of metabolic energy
3. Biosynthesis of macromolecular precursors
4. Information—storage, transmission, and expression of genetic information
5. Molecular physiology—interaction of information, conformation, and metabolism in physiological processes

The elucidation of the three-dimensional structure of proteins, nucleic acids, and other biomolecules has contributed much in recent years to our understanding of the molecular basis of life. I have emphasized this aspect of biochemistry by making extensive use of molecular models to give a vivid picture of architecture and

dynamics at the molecular level. Another stimulating and heartening aspect of contemporary biochemistry is its increasing interaction with medicine. I have presented many examples of this interplay. Discussions of molecular diseases such as sickle-cell anemia and of the mechanism of action of drugs such as penicillin enrich the teaching of biochemistry. Finally, I have tried to define several challenging areas of inquiry in biochemistry today, such as the molecular basis of excitability.

In writing this book, I have benefitted greatly from the advice, criticism, and encouragement of many colleagues and students. Leroy Hood, Arthur Kornberg, Jeffrey Sklar, and William Wood gave me invaluable counsel on its overall structure. Richard Caprioli, David Cole, Alexander Glazer, Robert Lehman, and Peter Lengyel read much of the manuscript and made many very helpful suggestions. I am indebted to Frederic Richards for sharing his thoughts on macromolecular conformation and for extensive advice on how to depict three-dimensional structures. Deric Bownds, Thomas Broker, Jack Griffith, Hugh Huxley, and George Palade made available to me many striking electron micrographs. I am also very thankful for the advice and criticism that were given at various times in the preparation of this book by Richard Dickerson, David Eisenberg, Moises Eisenberg, Henry Epstein, Joseph Fruton, Michel Goldberg, James Grisolia, Richard Henderson, Harvey Himel, David Hogness, Dale Kaiser, Samuel Latt, Susan Lowey, Vincent Marchesi, Peter Moore, Allan Oscroff, Jordan Pober, Russell Ross, Edward Reich, Mark Smith, James Spudich, Joan Steitz, Thomas Steitz, and Alan Waggoner.

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I am deeply grateful to my wife, Andrea, and to my children, Michael and Daniel, for their encouragement, patience, and good spirit during the writing of this book. They have truly shared in its gestation, which was much longer than expected. Andrea offered advice on style and design and also called my attention to the remark of the thirteenth-century Chinese scholar Tai T'ung (*The Six Scripts: Principles of Chinese Writing*): "Were I to await perfection, my book would never be finished."

I welcome comments and criticisms from readers.

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Lubert Stryer