



Wonders of the Living World

Curiosity, Awe and the Meaning of Life

Dr Ruth M. Bancewicz

'This book explores scientific discovery and its interaction with beliefs in a fresh and much needed way: not simply through reasoned argument, but also by awakening the imagination and instilling a sense of awe.'

Dr Sharon Dirckx, Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics

'Full of fascinating insights... A highly recommended journey.'

Dr Denis R. Alexander, Emeritus Director, The Faraday Institute

'Every area of science is accessible for an audience of non-scientists, so long as it is explained at the right pace, in a relevant way. As we start to understand how things work, our initial curiosity may lead to surprise, fascination and a more lasting sense of wonder.'

Dr Ruth M. Bancewicz

Wonders of the Living World: Curiosity, Awe and the Meaning of Life brings together leading scientists from around the world - across a wide range of disciplines - to talk about different aspects of the living world, from microscopic organisms to entire ecosystems. The book is a celebration of the great beauty and wonder of our planet and the organisms which make their home on it, and each topic touches at the heart of who we are as human beings, raising questions about meaning and purpose, such as, What's so special about life? Why are we here? Where is it all leading? All of the contributing scientists are Christians with a strong passion and enthusiasm for science and creation, as well as a sense of awe, thankfulness and privilege at having a job which allows them to explore the wonders of the world around them on a daily basis.

Step by step, Ruth and her team of scientists walk us through the following areas:

- Inner worlds: a tour of the inner workings of a cell
- One in a million: the chemistry of life in the universe – with astrobiologist Professor Stephen Freeland
- Artistic molecules: how messy processes form ordered life – with physicist Dr Rhoda Hawkins
- Dance of the cells: embryonic development – with biologist Professor Jeff Hardin
- The map of life: is evolution compatible with purpose? – with paleobiologist Professor Simon Conway Morris
- The snuggle for existence: the power of co-operation – with biologist and philosopher Professor Jeff Schloss
- Living cities: coral reef ecosystems – with marine biologist Dr Margaret V Miller
- Surprised by meaning: can the world say anything about God? – with scientist-turned-theologian Professor Alister McGrath

In a final section – Biology and Belief – each of the contributors discuss how their work interacts with their faith on a more personal level. As well as the stunning colour illustrations throughout, the book uses a wide range of metaphors and imagery to help readers without a scientific background understand the complexities of the natural world. The inner workings of a cell are compared to a castle with many people working in different jobs; impressionist paintings are used to illustrate how randomness at one level can result in order at a higher level for living organisms; embryonic development is likened to a dance; and an ecosystem is described as being like a city.

'The more we find out about how living things work, the less 'mystery' there is – less of the ignorant or superstitious type of wonder,' Ruth writes. 'On the other hand, there is a greater sense of mystery, wonder and excitement at the complexity of things: the beautifully co-ordinated mechanisms and clever solutions. There is also excitement at the questions that remain unanswered, and that is what drives science forward.'

Wonders of the Living World will bring a new level of appreciation and understanding to everyone who is fascinated by the world around us.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Dr Ruth Bancewicz is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, where her role is to encourage the UK church community to engage with science in a positive way. After studying Genetics at Aberdeen University, she completed a PhD at Edinburgh University, based at the MRC Human Genetics Unit. During this time, she also worked at the Edinburgh Science Festival, developing and delivering hands-on science activities. She spent two years as a part-time postdoctoral researcher at the Wellcome Trust Centre for Cell Biology, Edinburgh University, while also working as the Development Officer for Christians in Science – a post she held for three years, before moving full-time to the Faraday Institute to develop the Test of FAITH resources, the first of which were launched in 2009.

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Sample pages from **Wonders of the Living World:**

