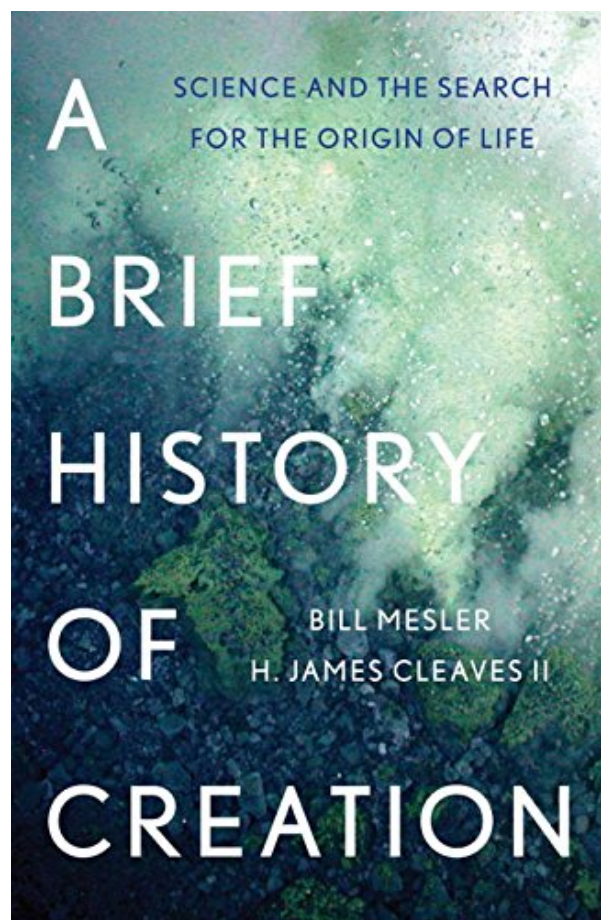
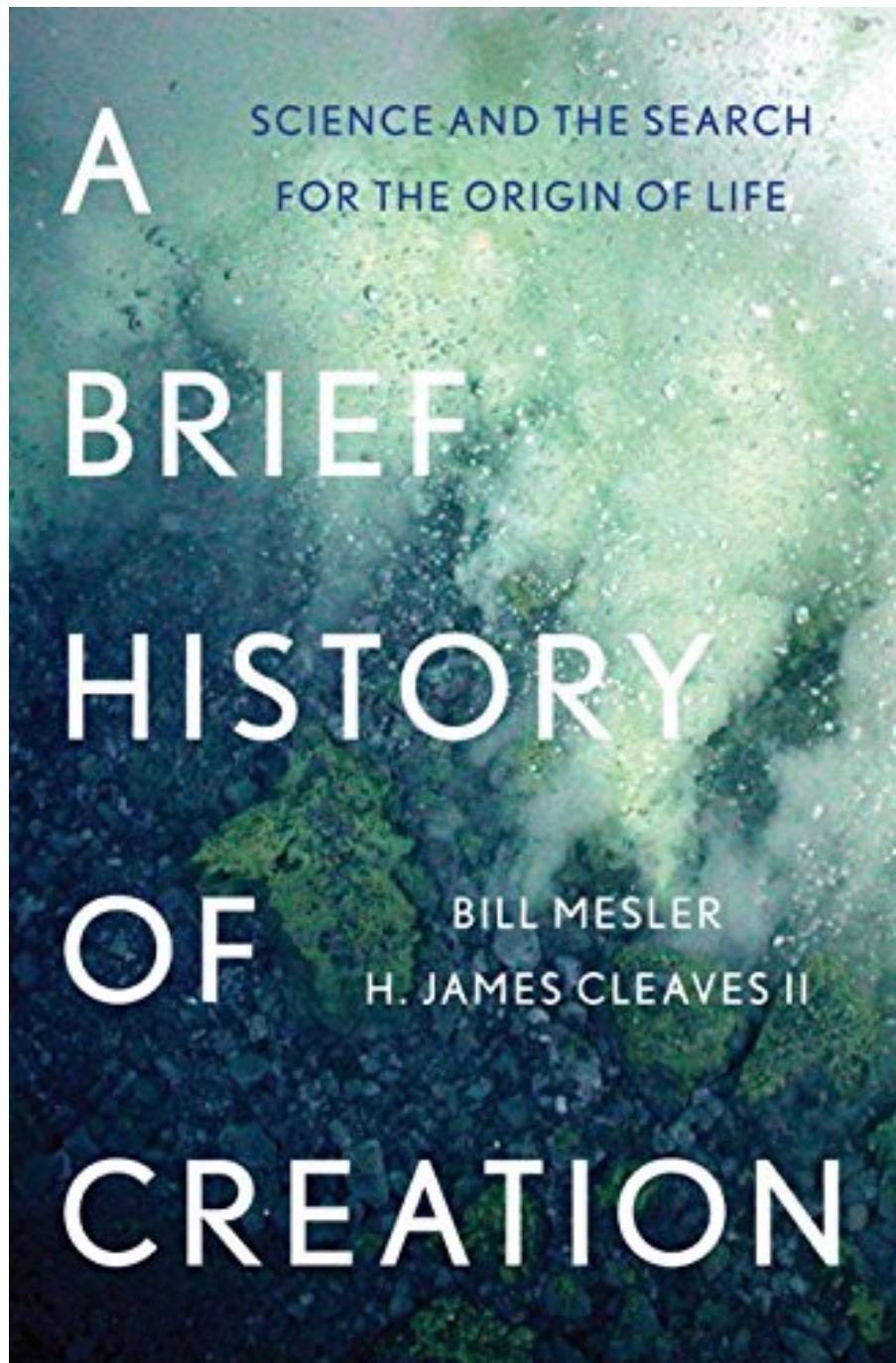


**A BRIEF HISTORY OF CREATION: SCIENCE
AND THE SEARCH FOR THE ORIGIN OF
LIFE BY BILL MESLER, H. JAMES CLEAVES
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About the Author

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The epic story of the scientists through the ages who have sought answers to life's biggest mystery: How did it begin?

How did life begin?

It is perhaps the most important question science has ever asked. Over the centuries, the search for an answer has been entwined with some of science's most revolutionary advances including van Leeuwenhoek's microscope, Darwin's theory of evolution, and Crick and Watson's unveiling of DNA. Now, in an age of genetic engineering and space exploration, some scientists believe they are on the verge of creating life from nonliving elements and that our knowledge of the potential for life on other planets is ever-expanding. In the midst of these exciting developments, *A Brief History of Creation* provides an essential and illuminating history of Western science, tracing the trials and triumphs of the iconoclastic scientists who have sought to uncover the mystery of how life first came to be.

Authors Bill Mesler and H. James Cleaves II examine historical discoveries in the context of philosophical debates, political change, and our evolving understanding of the complexity of biology. The story they tell is rooted in metaphysical arguments, in a changing understanding of the age of the Earth, and even in the politics of the Cold War. It has involved exploration into the inner recesses of our cells and scientific journeys to the farthest reaches of outer space. This elegantly written narrative culminates in an analysis of modern models for life's genesis, such as the possibility that some of the earliest life was composed of little more than RNA, and that life arose around deep-sea hydrothermal vents or even on other planets, only to be carried to the Earth on meteorites.

Can we ever conclusively prove how life began? *A Brief History of Creation* is a fascinating exploration not only of the origin-of-life question but of the very nature of scientific objectivity and the process of scientific discovery.

15 illustrations

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12 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

It's smart and engagingly written

By JG

I always look forward to reading books about the history of science, and this one is fabulous. It's smart and engagingly written, and I found the discussion of how the search for the origins of life have become

intertwined with the search for the meaning of life to be particularly thoughtful. Would definitely recommend.

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

A highly academic history of the science of the origins of life on earth.

By John Martin

In *A Brief History of Creation* journalist Bill Mesler and earth-life sciences professor H. James Cleaves II explore the science and history behind the search for the origin of life. The book is quite academic in style and may be most interesting to students and academics in the field of biology. At the same time laypersons like myself can also gain from the experience of reading it. Much of the book deals with the early years of the subject that were largely governed by religious beliefs that the earth was relatively new and that every creature had always existed as it was in the present—created by God. The authors provide information on the views of such persons as Voltaire, Andrew Crosse, Charles Darwin, Von Leeuwenhoek, Pasteur, Thomas Huxley and George Lemaitre who was the first person to propound the Big Bang theory of the creation of the universe. It was not until the greater development of science starting in the 1920's that ideas on creation began to flourish, beginning with the Oparin-Haldane Hypothesis. Alexander Oparin was a Russian and J.B.S. Haldane was an American, but they both were Communists and their theory suggested that the early earth was much different from the present. It was not protected from the ultraviolet radiation from the sun that was the driving force behind the natural synthesis of organic compounds that intermingled and led to life forms. Oparin stressed metabolism—chemical reactions that transformed external foodstuff into living material, while Haldane focused on genes.

Stanley Miller and Harold Urey created amino acids in the first experiment that created artificial life on earth in 1953. Sidney Fox worked with NASA to investigate the possibility of life in outer space. Francis Crick and James Watson discovered the structure of DNA. Then in 1984 a small rock was found in Antarctica that was filled with organic compounds. It was determined that this rock originally came to earth from Mars. Carl Woese engaged in gene sequencing and Carl Linnaeus was the first scientist to develop a classification system for all living things. In 2002 Jack Szostak ushered in the era of synthetic life forms. Richard Dawkins believes that life is the product of natural laws, not something created by a God. The book concludes with the idea that science, not religion is the best method for understanding the world and the search for the origin of life is equivalent to a search for the meaning of life.

I recommend this book as a serious and thoughtful presentation on how life began and how it may change in the future. I rate it at four stars rather than five because its highly academic and technical nature will make it difficult for the average person to read and understand.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

history of how we can know about our origins

By Cellrelics

An amazing book for those interested in the studies related to origins of life. It helps explain the historical perspective on how we shape our current scientific endeavours in the field.

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