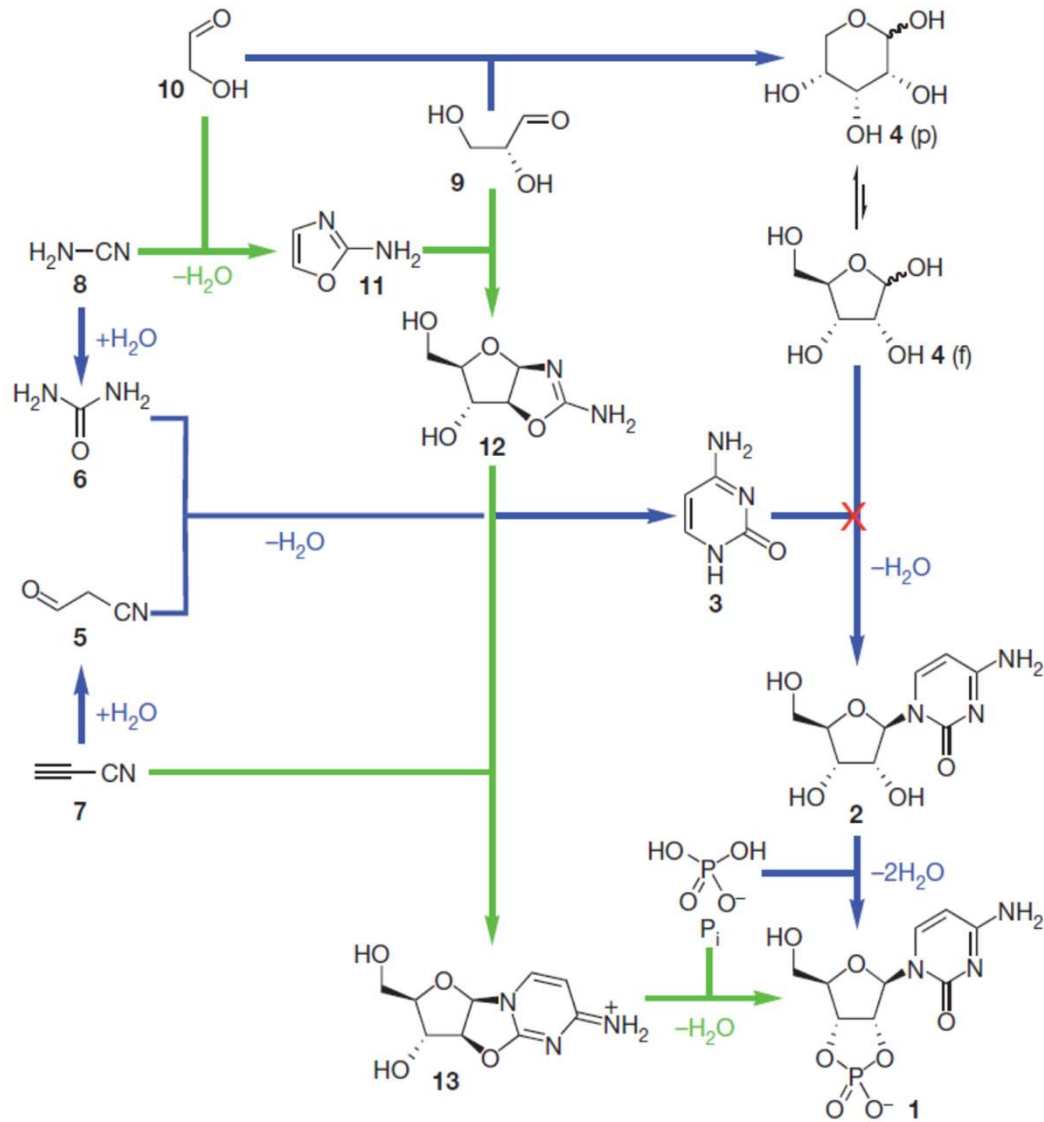


Prebiotic route to pyrimidine nucleotides



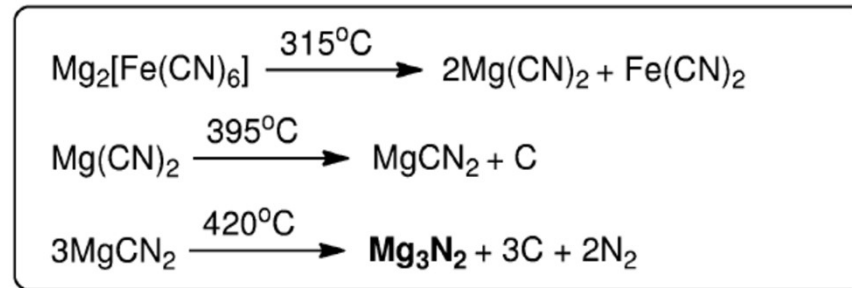
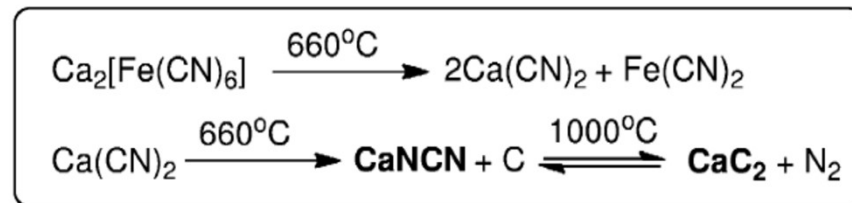
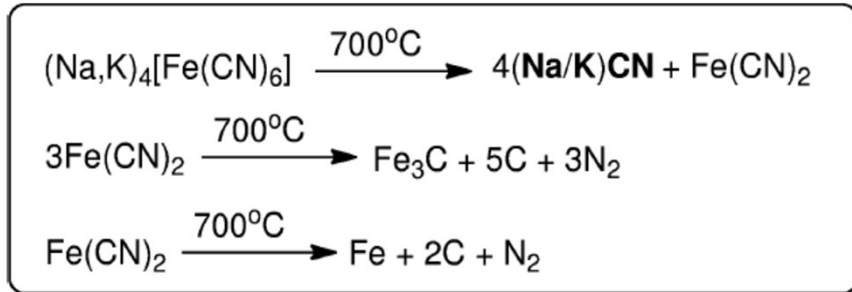
Prof. John Sutherland
Laboratory of Chemical Biology
Cambridge, UK



Dr. Matthew Powner
University College London, UK

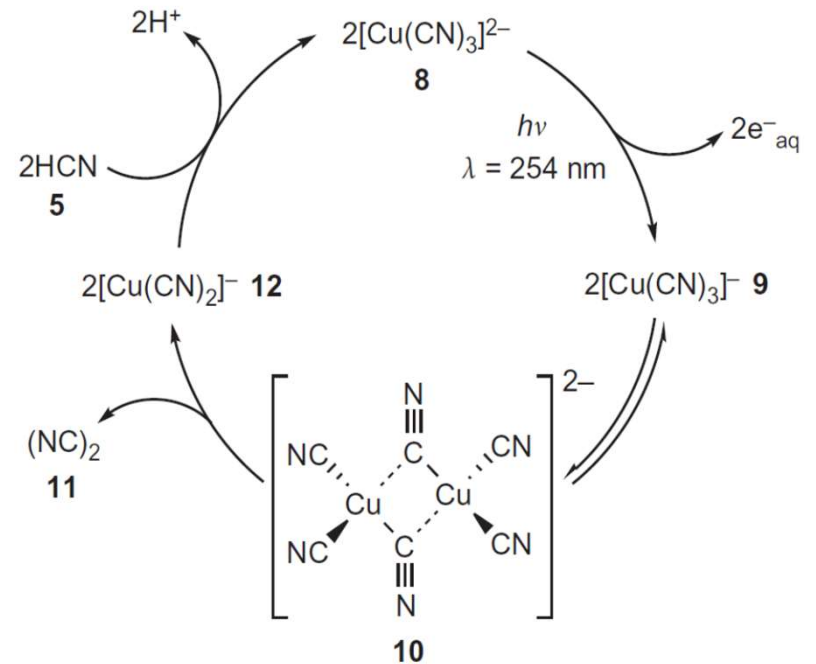
The origin of small reactive intermediates

Thermal decomposition of cyanoferrates (volcanic):

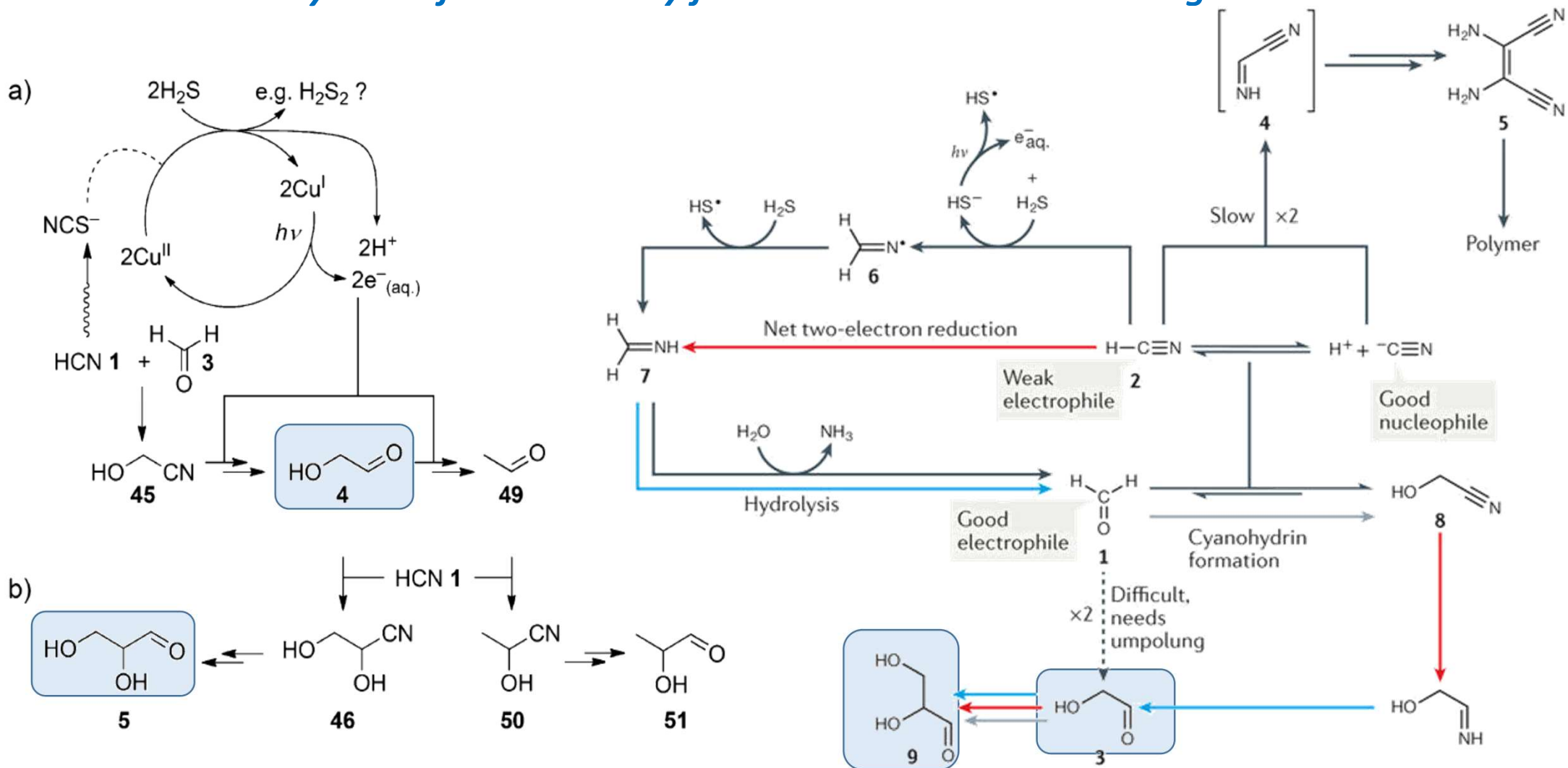


Action of water (buffered to neutral or slightly acidic) on that mixture produced concentrated HCN solution + cyanamide (from CaNCN) + acetylene (from CaC₂) + ammonia (from Mg₃N₂)

$\text{Cu}_2\text{S} + \text{H}_2\text{O} + 6\text{CN}^- \rightarrow 2[\text{Cu}(\text{CN})_3]^{2-} + \text{HS}^- + \text{OH}^-$
 cyanocuprates and HS⁻ are delivered by this process
 Photoredox cycle based on cyanocuprates may convert HCN into cyanogen



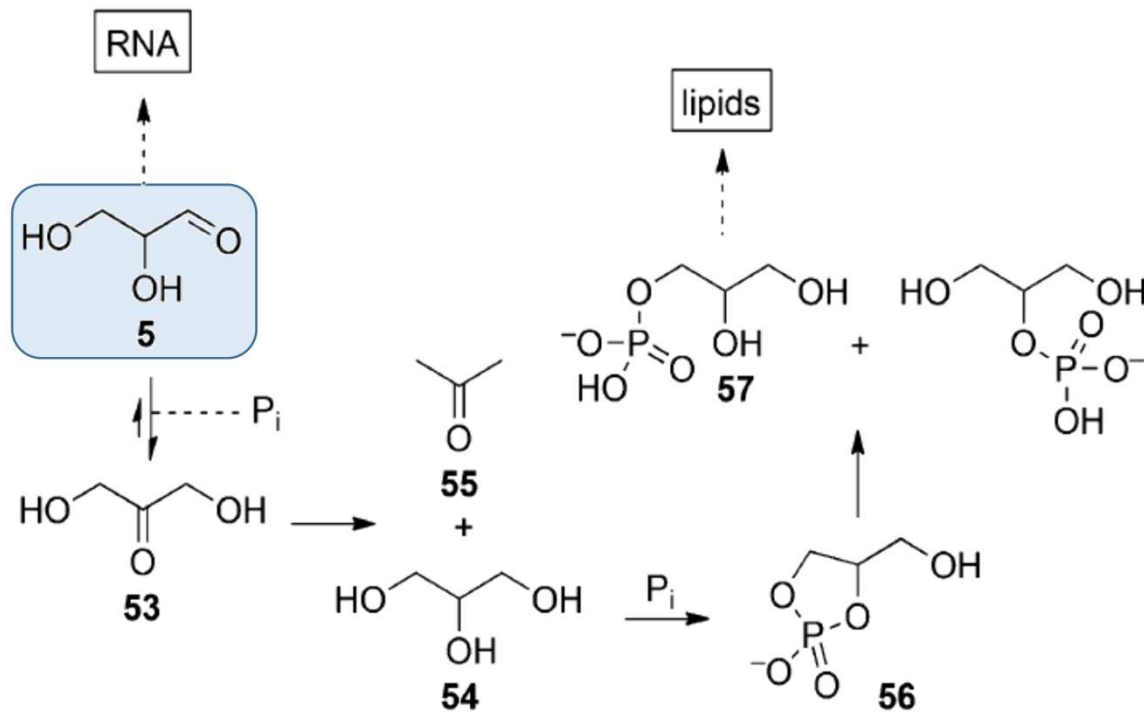
Cyanosulfidic chemistry for the Kiliani-Fischer homologation



Cyanosulfidic chemistry

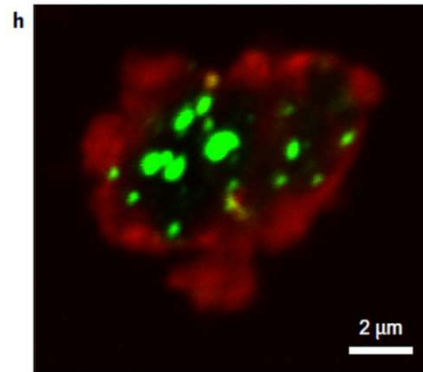
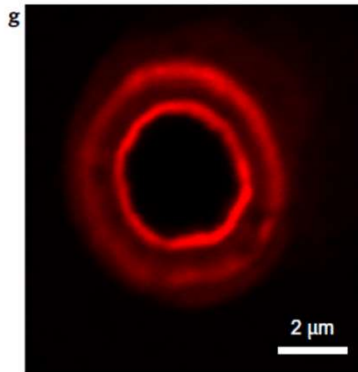
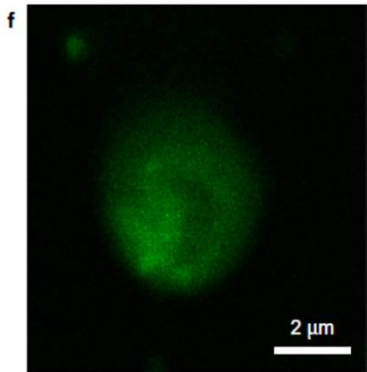
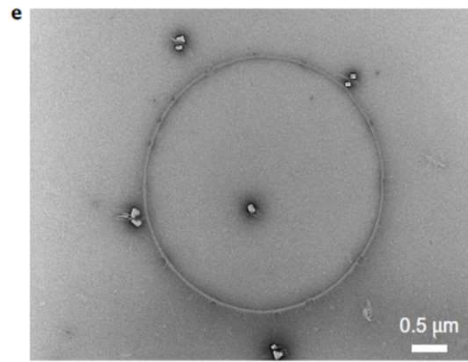
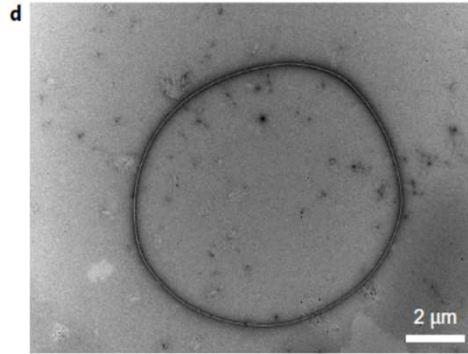
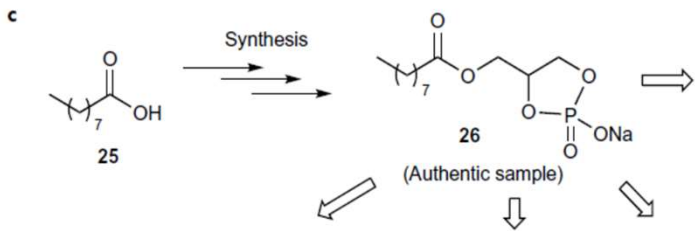
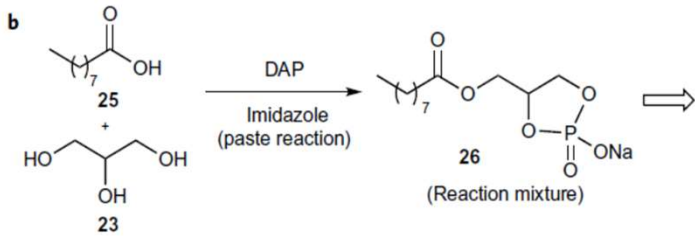
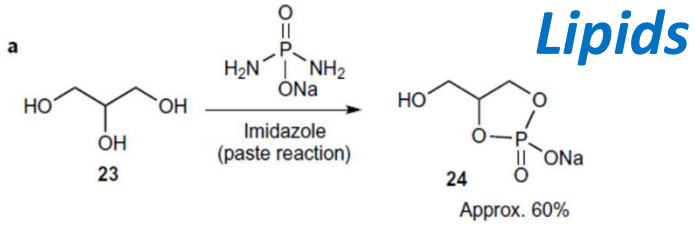
First signs of a linkage between all subsystems through cyanosulfidic chemistry.

glyceraldehyde **5** is a precursor of pyrimidine nucleotides (**RNA**), Upon isomerization to **53** and reduction to glycerol **54**, it can be phosphorylated to yield phospholipids (from **56** and **57**)...



J. D. Sutherland, *et al.* *Nature Chem.* **2015**, *7*, 301-307

Lipids



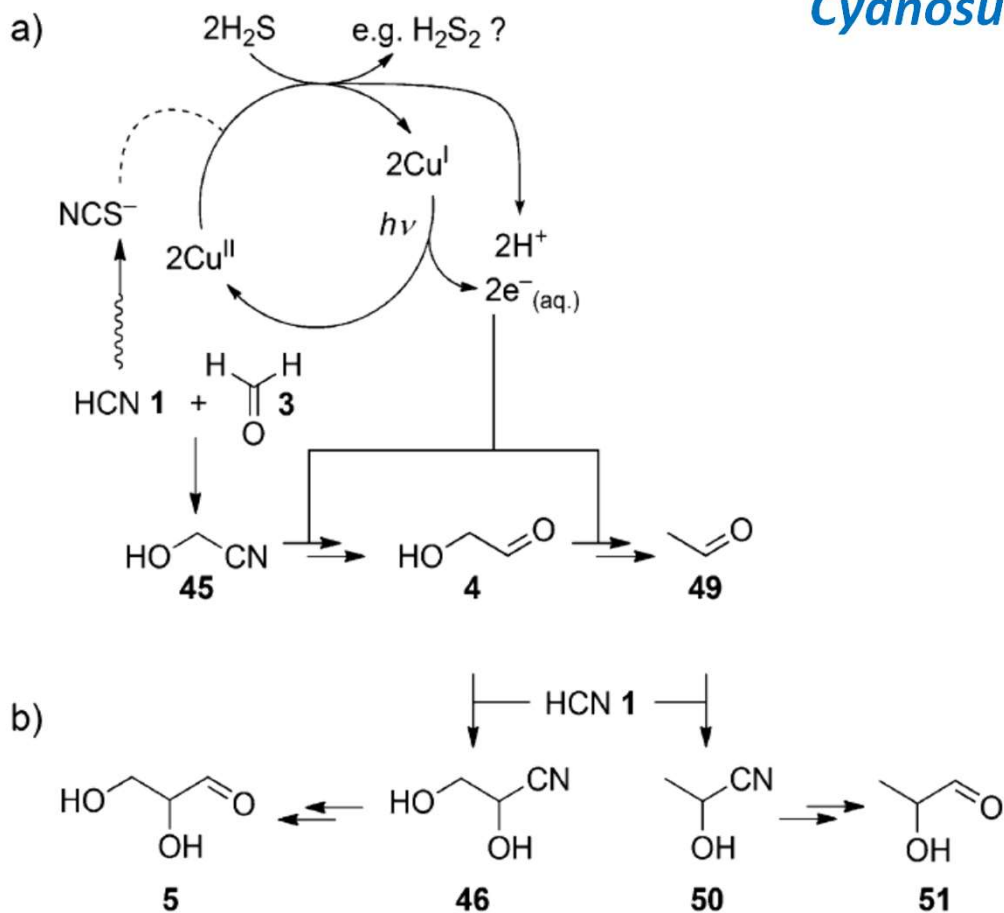
d, TEM image of a sample (15 mg in 1 ml water) from the crude reaction in **b**, showing the formation of vesicle-like structures with a diameter of $\sim 9.2 \mu\text{m}$.

e, TEM image of a sample (1 mg in 1 ml water) of authentic phospholipid **26** from Fig. 2c showing the formation of vesicle-like structures with a diameter of $\sim 3.5 \mu\text{m}$.

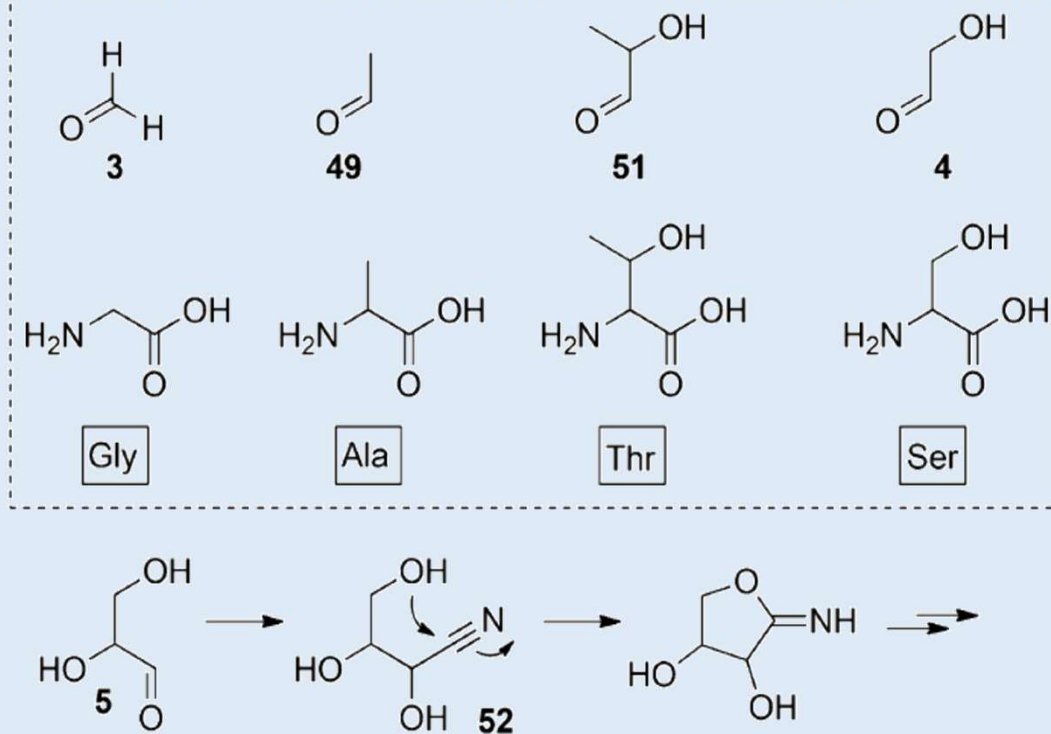
f–h, Confocal laser scanning microscopy fluorescence images of vesicles prepared with authentic phospholipid **26** (1 mg in 0.1 ml water) with dye encapsulation.

- In **f**, green fluorescence indicates hydrophilic pyranine dye encapsulated within the cavity of the liposome.
- In **g**, red fluorescence indicates rhodamine B dye labelling the bilayer phospholipid membrane of the liposome.
- In **h**, a fluorescence merged image is shown of a phospholipid vesicle prepared with both rhodamine B dye and pyranine dye.

Cyanosulfidic chemistry



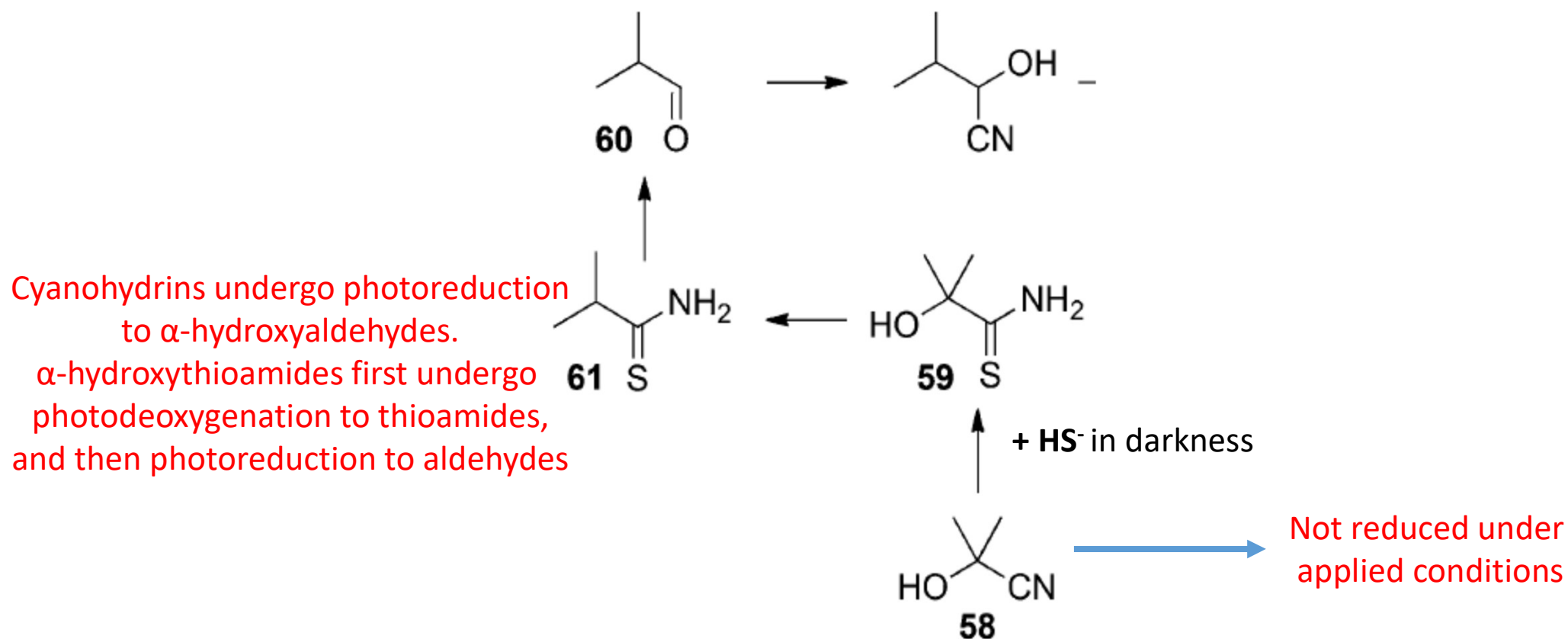
c) **First signs of a linkage between all subsystems through cyanosulfidic chemistry.**



Photoredox systems chemistry with hydrosulfide as the stoichiometric reductant. a) (Over-)reduction of glycolonitrile **45** to glycolaldehyde **4** (and acetaldehyde **49**), b) reductive homologation of **4** (and **49**) to **5** (and **51**), c) most of the aldehydes produced by this chemistry as Strecker amino acid precursors (boxed) and the self-destruction (as regards potential Strecker chemistry) of the cyanohydrin **52**.

J. D. Sutherland, *et al. Nature Chem.* **2015**, *7*, 301-307

Cyanosulfidic chemistry

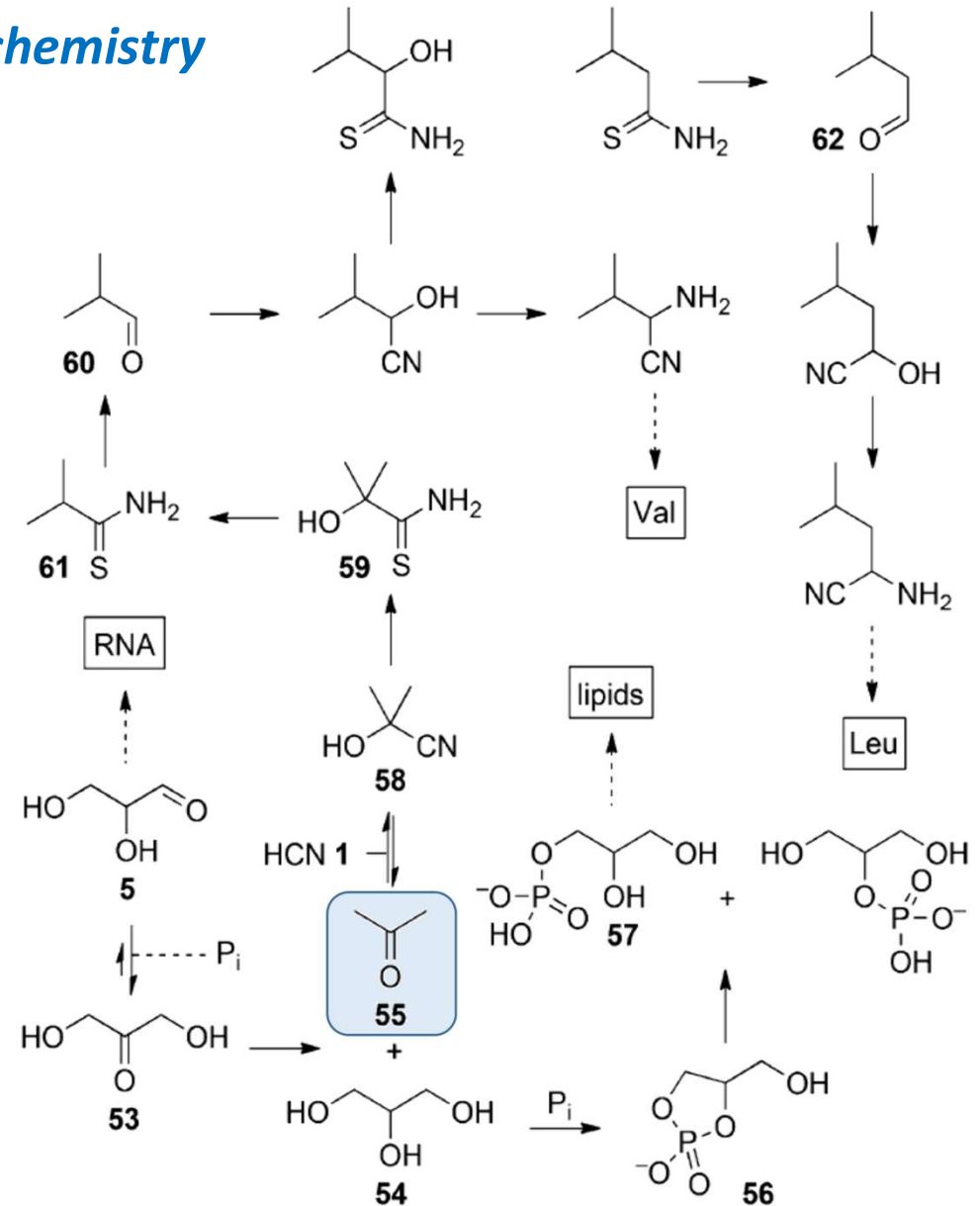


Cyanosulfidic chemistry

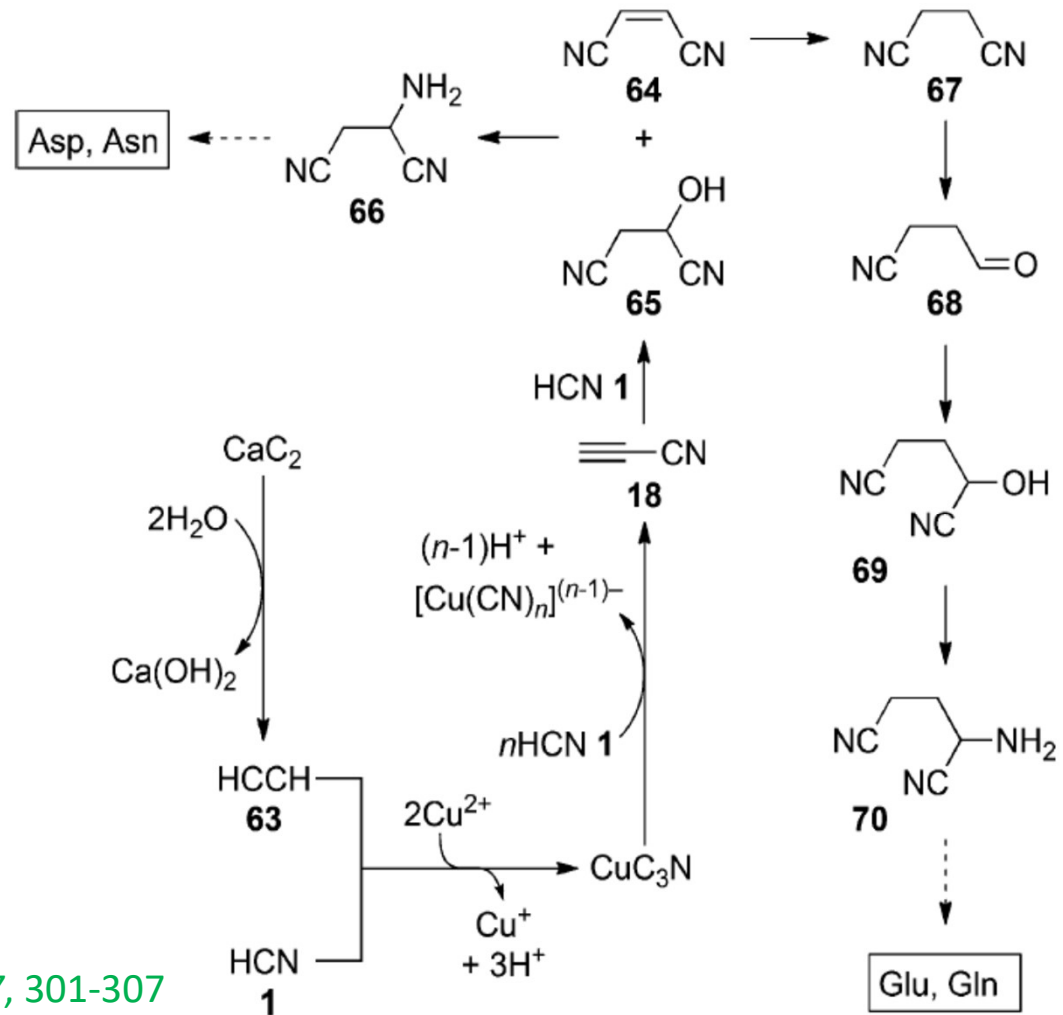
First signs of a linkage between all subsystems through cyanosulfidic chemistry.

glyceraldehyde **5** is a precursor of pyrimidine nucleotides (**RNA**),
Upon isomerization to **53** and reduction to glycerol **54**, it can be phosphorylated to yield phospholipids (from **56** and **57**)...

The side product – acetone **55** – seems to be meaningful
in the potentially prebiotic route for branched aminoacids
Val and Leu



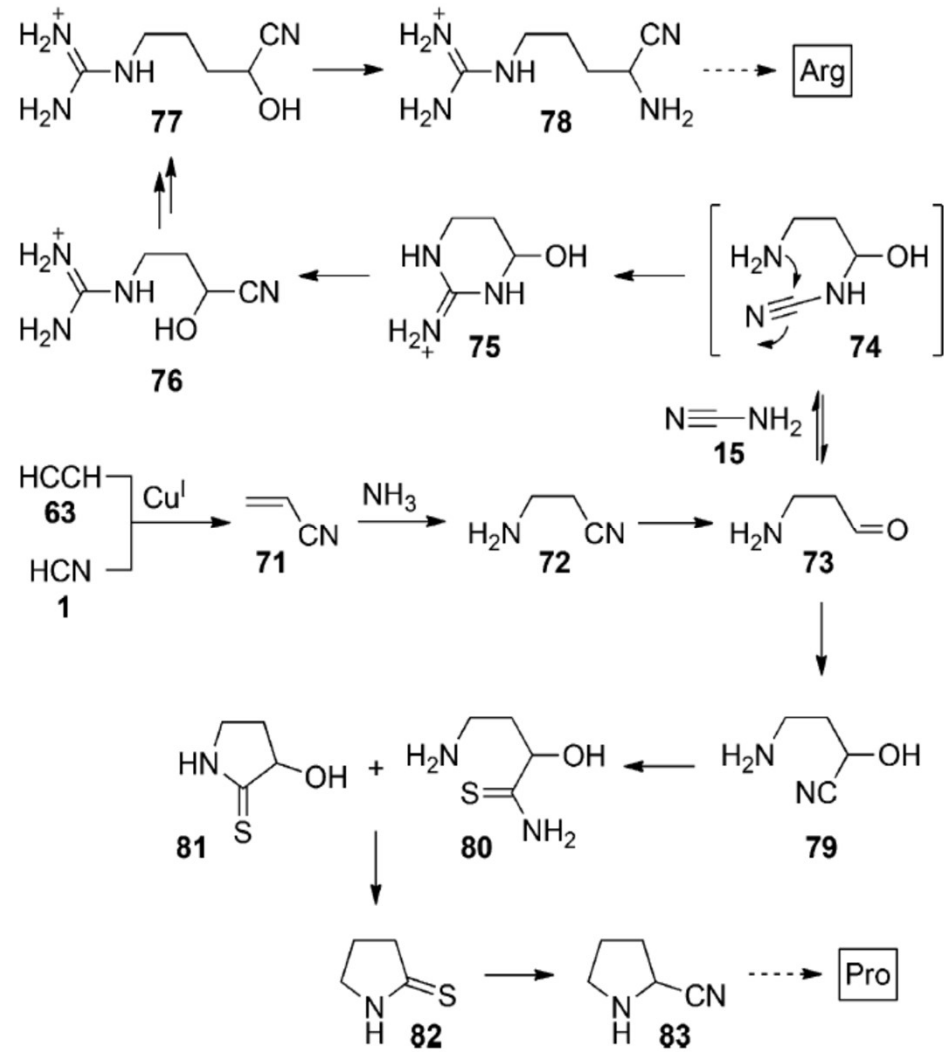
Cyanosulfidic chemistry



J. D. Sutherland, *et al.* *Nature Chem.* **2015**, *7*, 301-307

Synthesis of cyanoacetylene **18** and reactions leading to amino acid precursors of Asp/Asn and Glu/Gln.

Cyanosulfidic chemistry

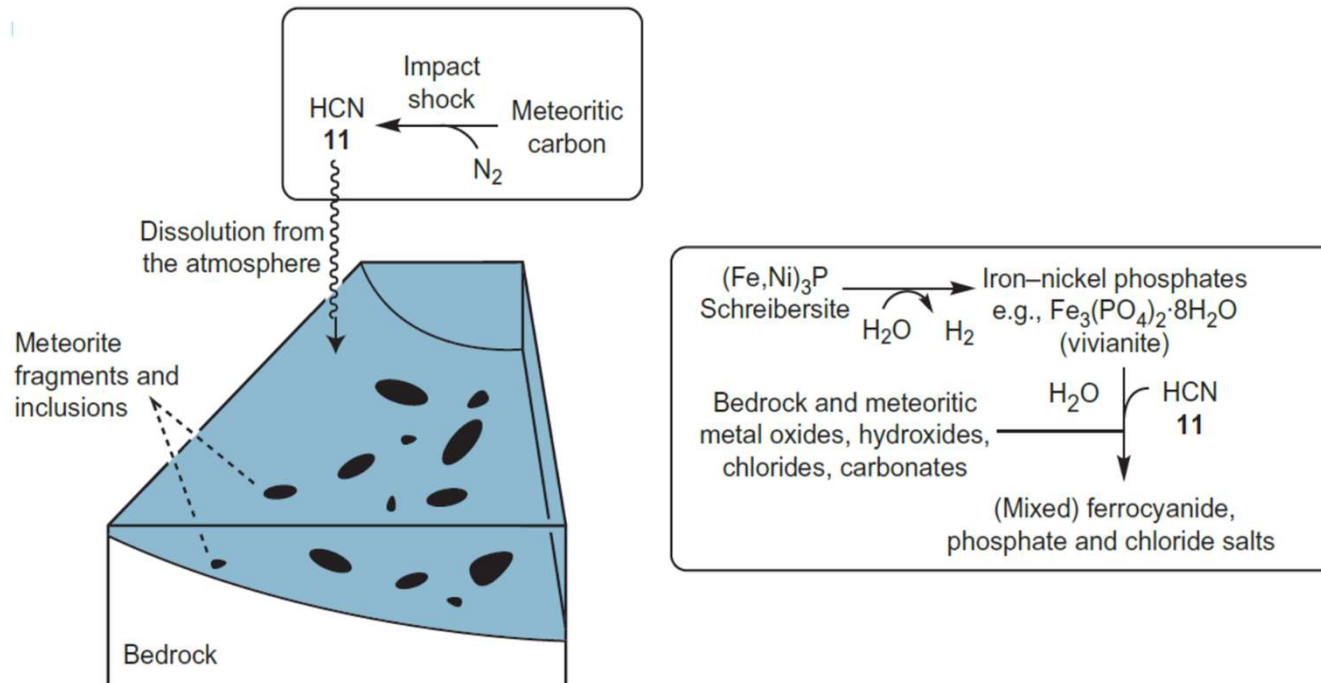


Synthesis of acrylonitrile **71** and reactions leading to amino acid precursors therefrom.

Cyanosulfidic chemistry

Chemistry in a post-meteoritic-impact scenario.

A series of post-impact environmental events are shown along with the chemistry (boxed) proposed to occur as a consequence of these events.

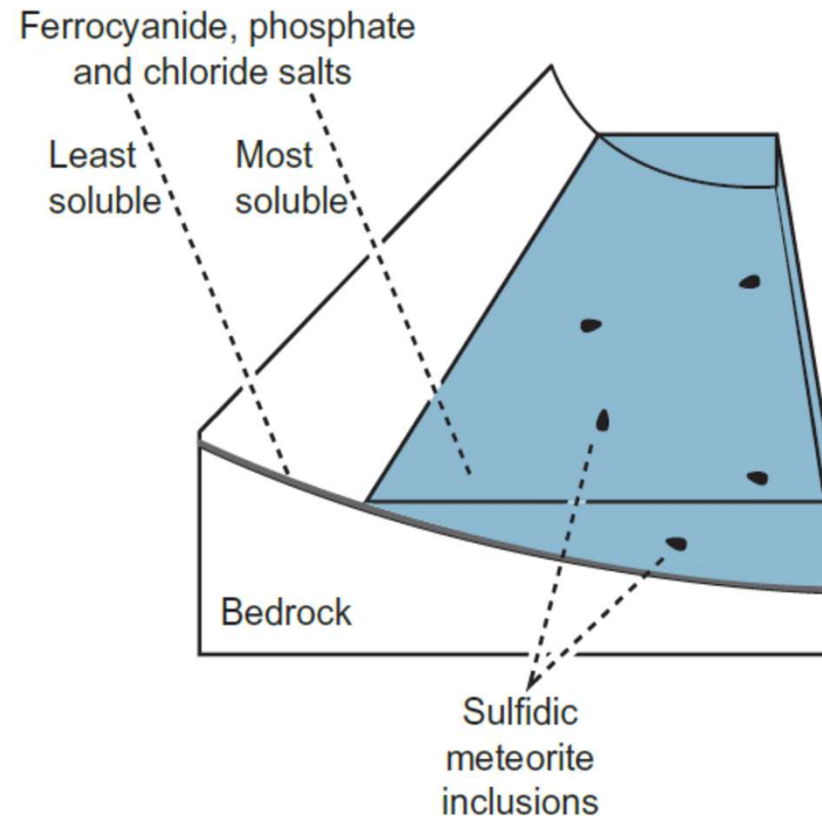


Dissolution of atmospherically produced hydrogen cyanide results in the conversion of vivianite (the anoxic corrosion product of the meteoritic inclusion schreibersite) into mixed ferrocyanide salts and phosphate salts, with counter cations being provided through neutralization and ion-exchange reactions with bedrock and other meteoritic oxides and salts.

Cyanosulfidic chemistry

Chemistry in a post-meteoritic-impact scenario.

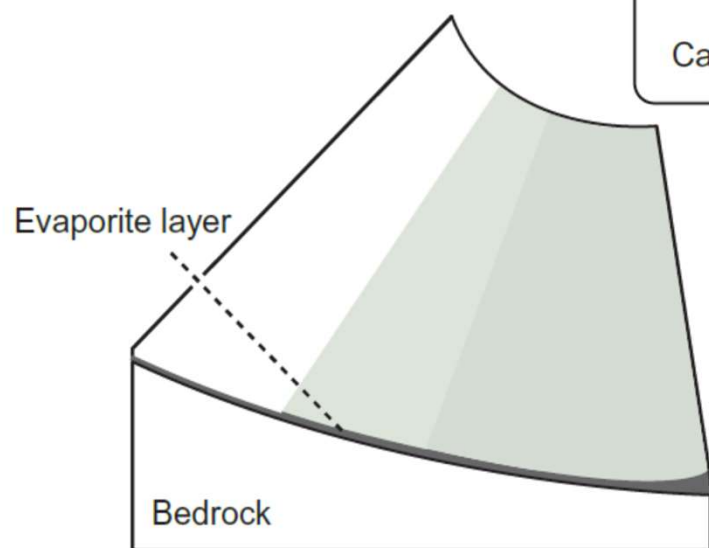
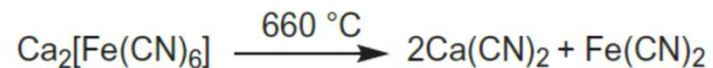
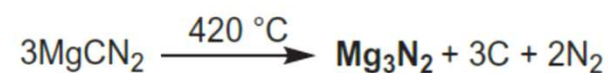
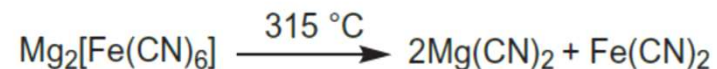
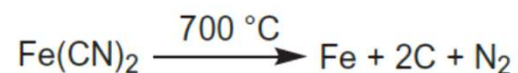
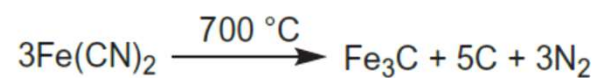
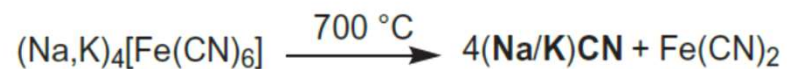
A series of post-impact environmental events are shown along with the chemistry (boxed) proposed to occur as a consequence of these events.



Partial evaporation results in the deposition of the least-soluble salts over a wide area, and further evaporation deposits the most-soluble salts in smaller, lower-lying areas.

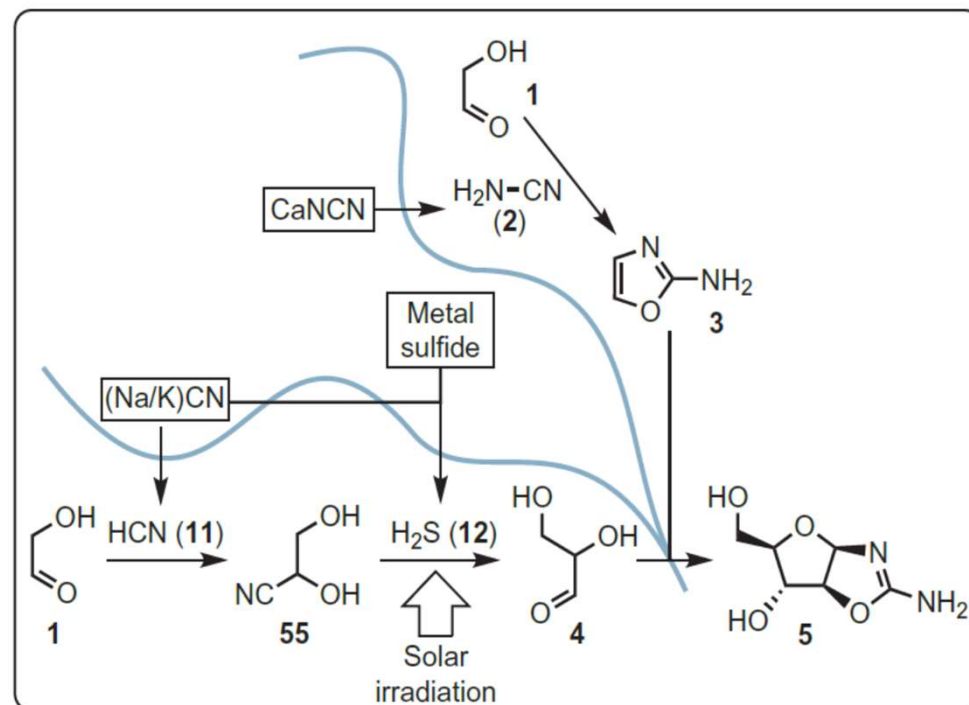
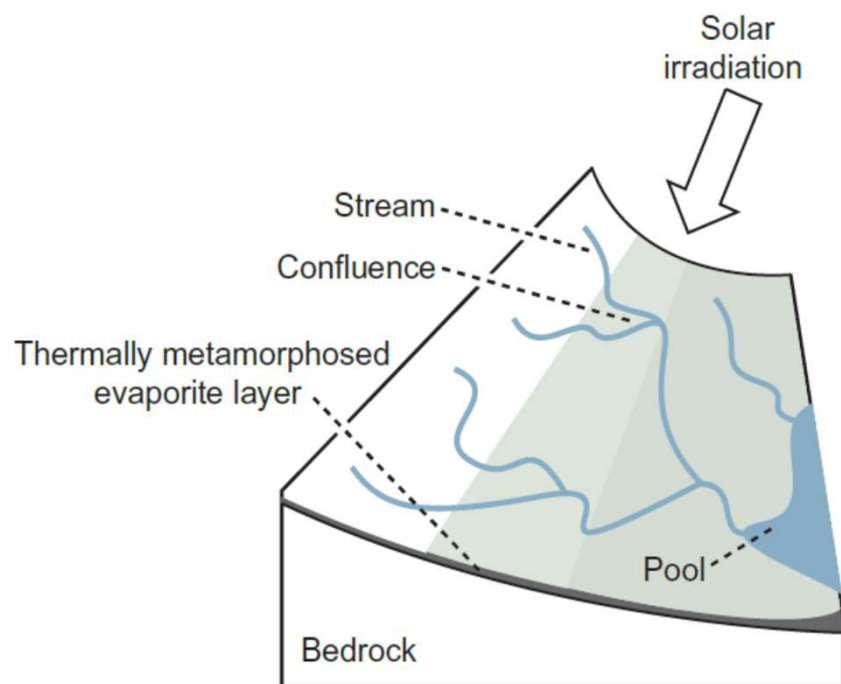
Cyanosulfidic chemistry

After complete evaporation, impact or geothermal heating results in thermal metamorphism of the evaporite layer, and the generation of feedstock precursor salts (in bold).



Cyanosulfidic chemistry

Rainfall on higher ground (left) leads to rivulets or streams that flow downhill, sequentially leaching feedstocks from the thermally metamorphosed evaporite layer. Solar irradiation drives photoredox chemistry in the streams. Convergent synthesis can result when streams with different reaction histories merge (right), as illustrated here for the potential synthesis of arabinose aminooxazoline (5) at the confluence of two streams that contained glycolaldehyde (1), and leached different feedstocks before merging.



Cyanosulfidic chemistry system

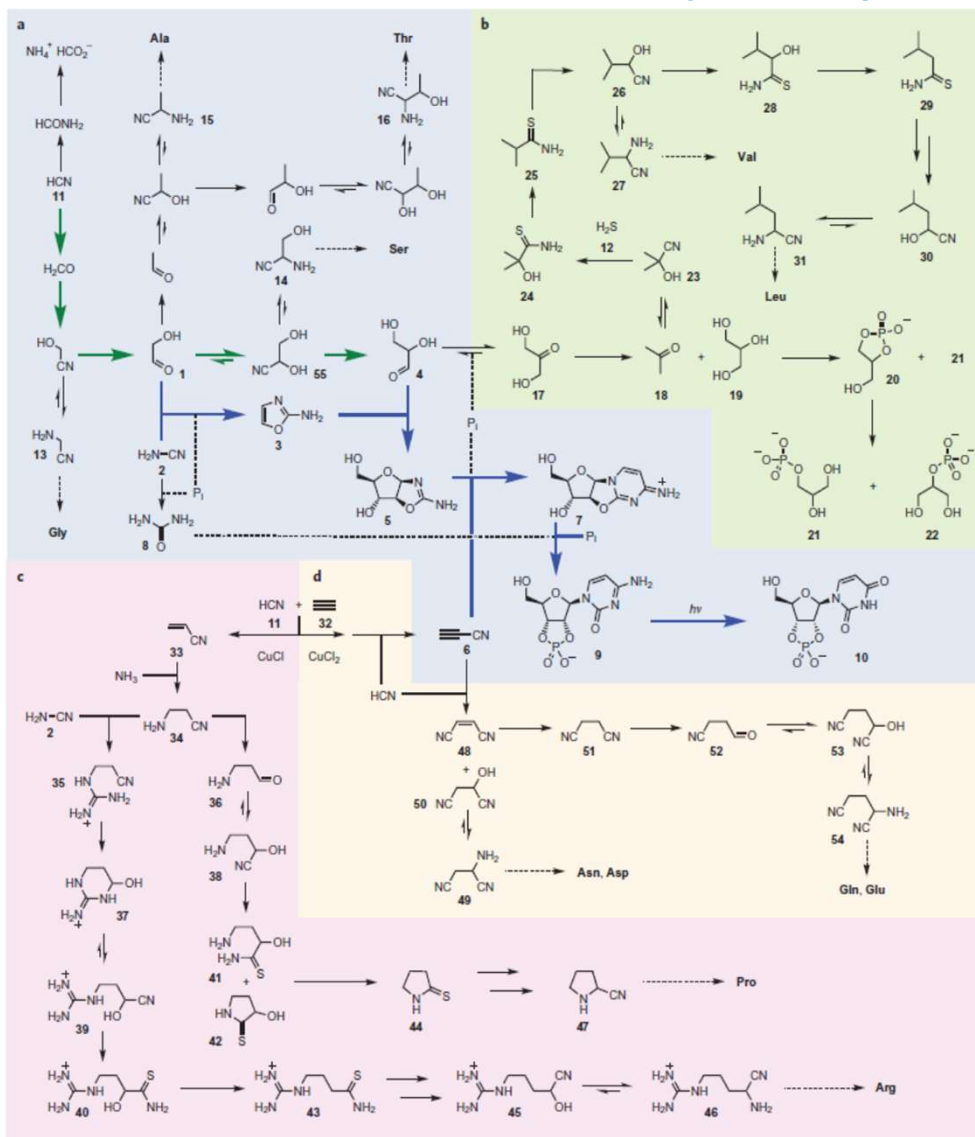


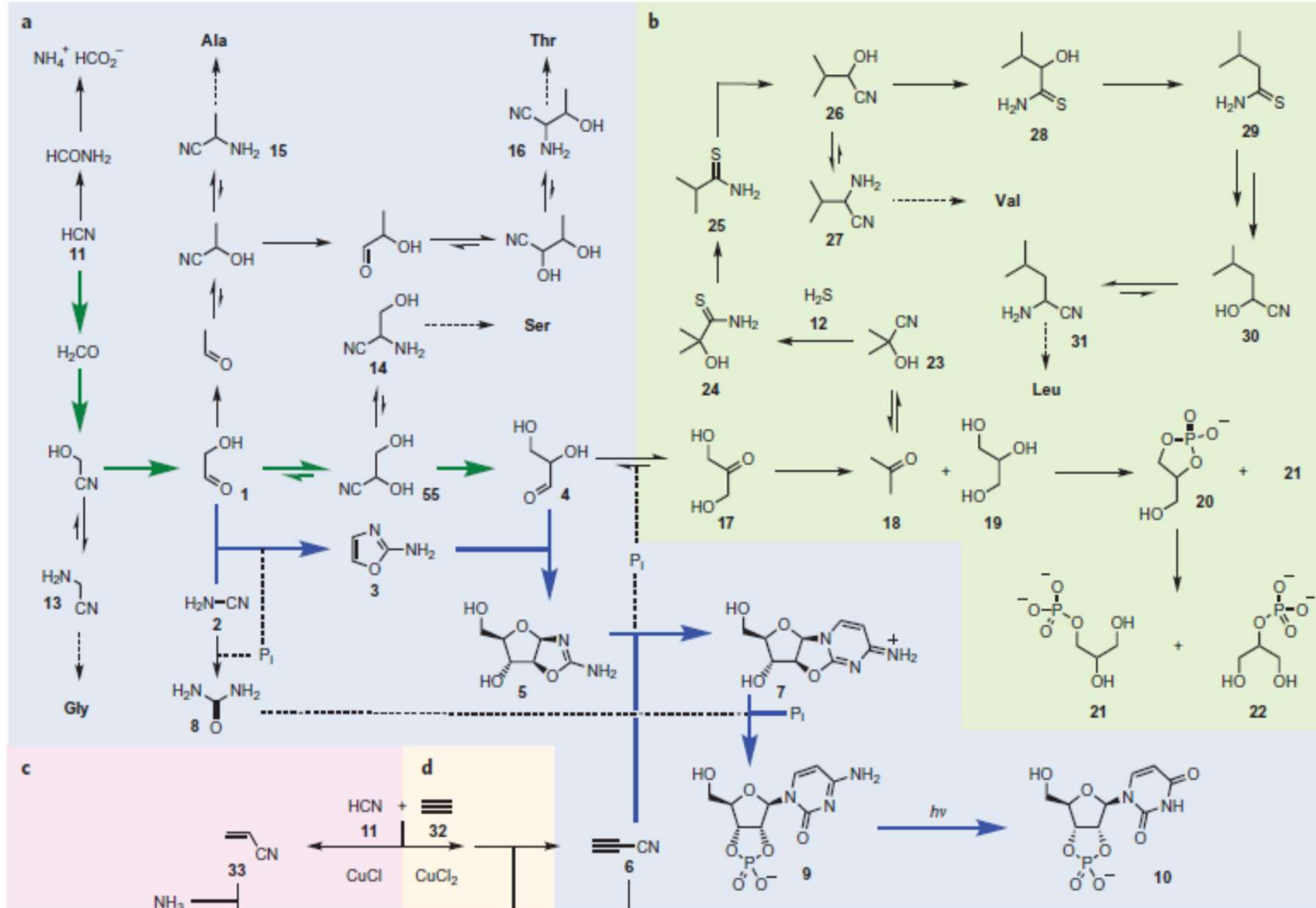
Table 1 | Yields for the part of the reaction network shown in Fig. 1b.

Conversion	Number of steps	Yield (%)	Conversion	Number of steps	Yield (%)
4 → 17	1	59	26 → 28	1	57
17 → 18 + 19	1	29	28 → 29	1	75
18 → 24	2	62	26 → 29	2	43
24 → 25	1	41	29 → 30	2	66
25 → 26	2	78	30 → 31	1	42
26 → 27	1	42	19 → 21 + 22	2	31
					40

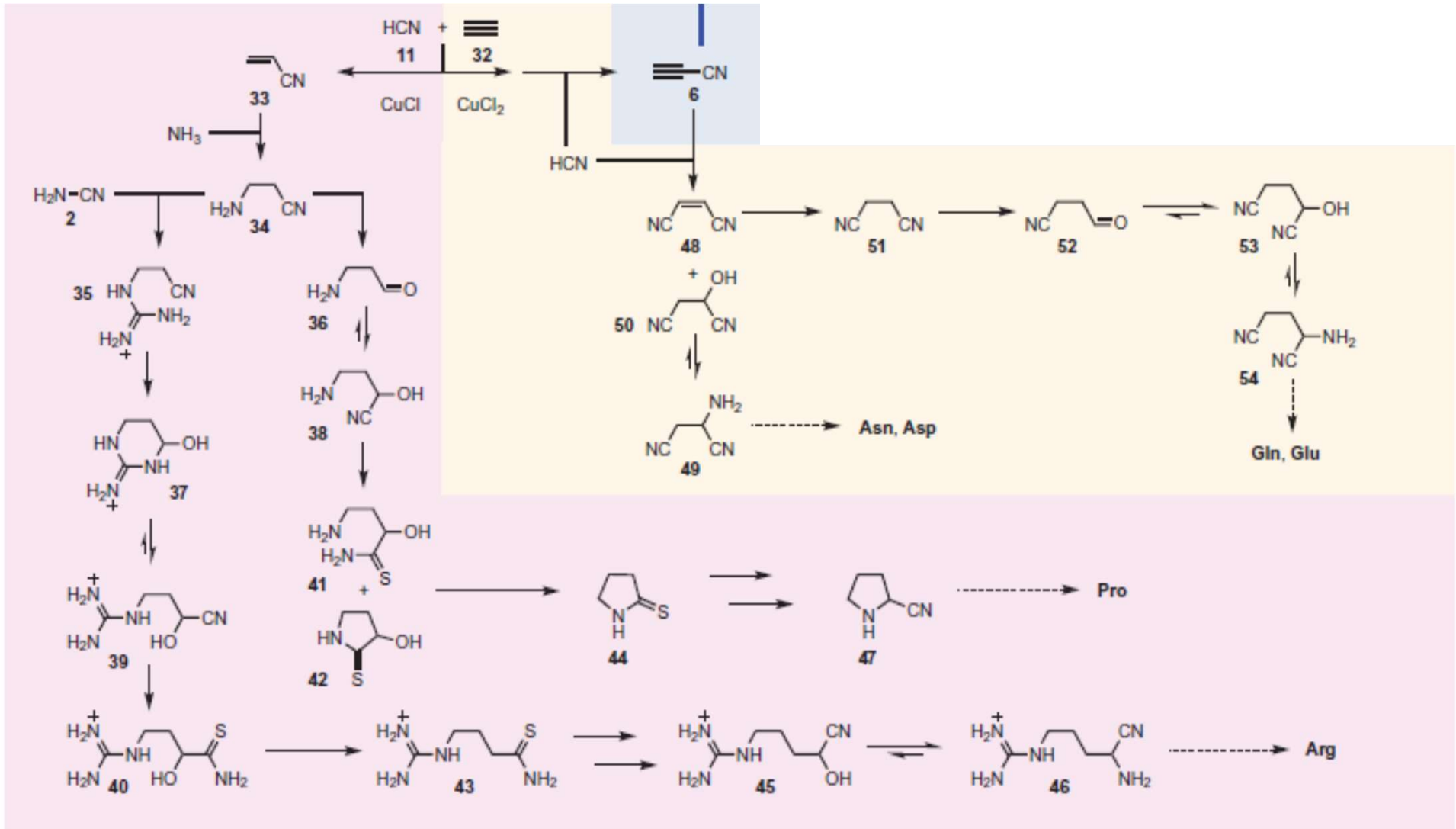
Table 2 | Yields for the parts of the reaction network shown in Fig. 1c,d.

Conversion	Number of steps	Yield (%)	Conversion	Number of steps	Yield (%)
33 → 34	1	83	38 → 41 + 42	1	30
34 → 35	1	55	38 → 44	2	70
34 → 37	2	77	44 → 47	2	32
34 → 36	1	45	45 → 46	1	90
37 → 39	1	77	6 → 48 + 49 + 50	1	50
					25
					16
37 → 40	2	~100	48 → 51	1	90
37 → 43	3	~70	51 → 52	1	89
37 → 45	5	~50	52 → 53	1	~100
36 → 38	1	~100	52 → 54	2	~70

Cyanosulfidic chemistry system



Cyanosulfidic chemistry system

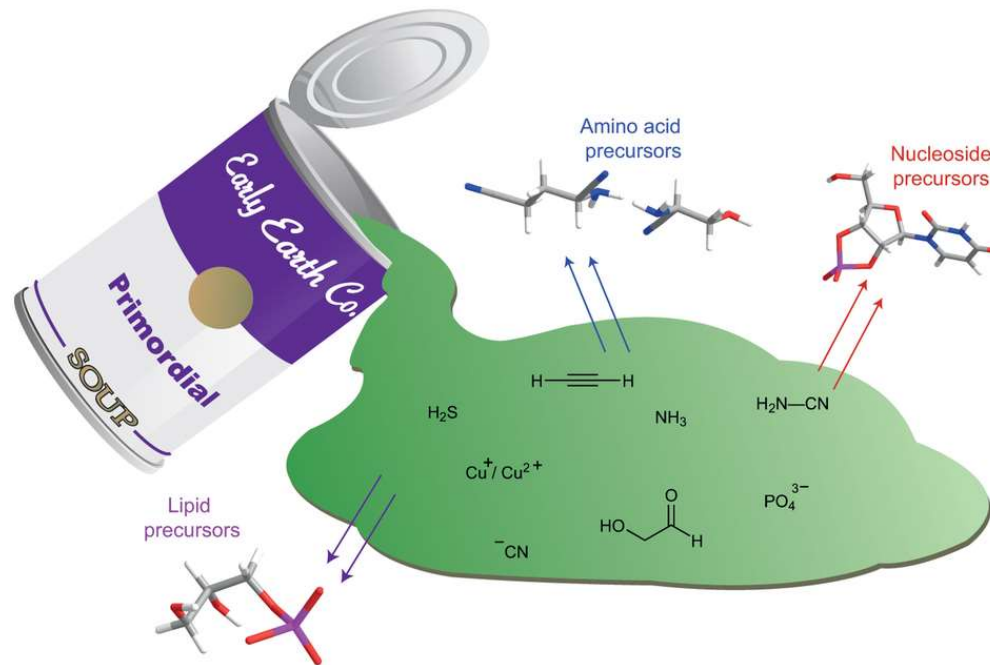


Remaining challenges of prebiotic nucleotide synthesis

Homochirality of currently known biomolecules

Prebiotic synthesis of purine nucleotides and deoxyribonucleotides

Prebiotic polymerization

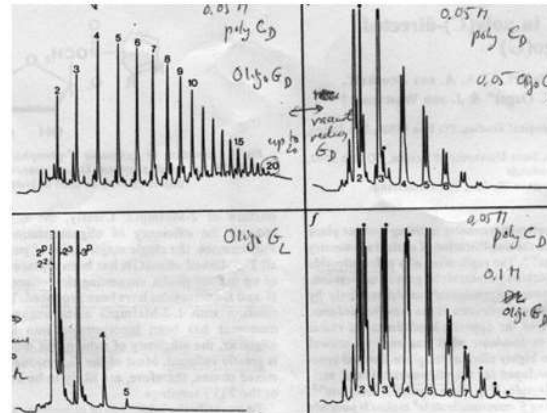


Enantiomeric excess in the cyanosulfidic chemistry

Polymerization of *D*-nucleotides is suppressed in presence of *L*-nucleotides – the problem of „enantiomeric cross-inhibition”

Incorporation of *L*-enantiomers into growing chains of *D*-oligonucleotides → families of diastereomers for each sequence → problematic development of phenotypic RNA properties

Without access to highly enantioenriched sugars, the nucleotides formed during the ‚cyanosulfidic chemistry’ synthesis would not lead to informational polymers capable of establishing a genetic code



template-directed oligomerization
poly (C_D) → oligo (G_D)
/ /
cytosine guanine

→ Mononucleotides with wrong chirality terminate chain growth

— ok

— poisoned

(using HPLC)

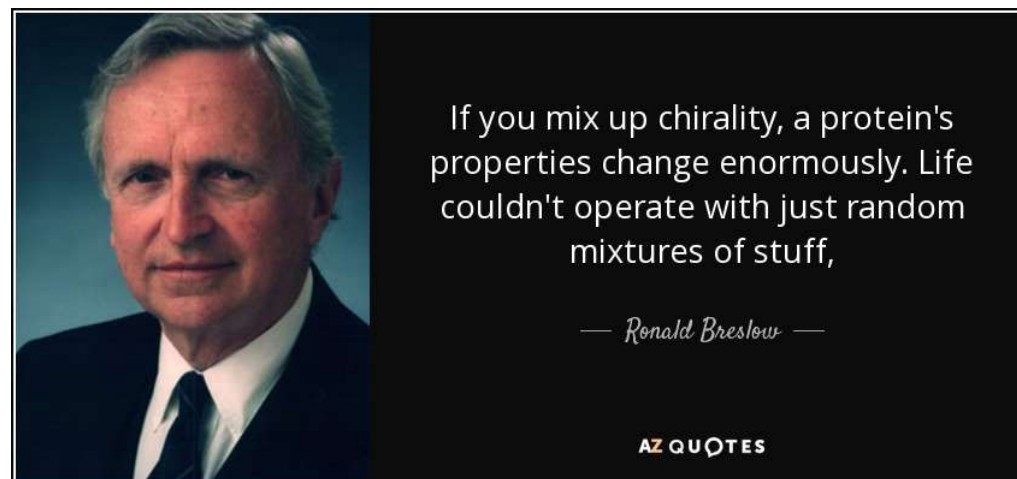
→ enantiomeric cross-inhibition

Chiral amplification and the origins of homochirality

Enantioenriched aminoacids present in meteorites (up to 18 % ee *L*-isomers). Further enantioenrichment is possible by manipulation of aminoacid phase behavior:

Table 1. Enantiomeric concentration amplification of phenylalanine after two crystallizations from water

Component	Initial ee, %	Final ee, %
D	10	90.0 ± 3.7
	5	91.7 ± 1.5
	1	87.2 ± 2.0
L	10	88.3 ± 1.1
	5	88.6 ± 0.9
	1	90.9 ± 0.3



Solutions with as little as 1% enantiomeric excess (ee) of D- or L-phenylalanine are amplified to 90% ee (a 95/5 ratio) by two successive evaporations to precipitate the racemate. Such a process on the prebiotic earth could lead to a mechanism by which meteoritic chiral α -alkyl amino acids could form solutions with high ee values that were needed for the beginning of biology.

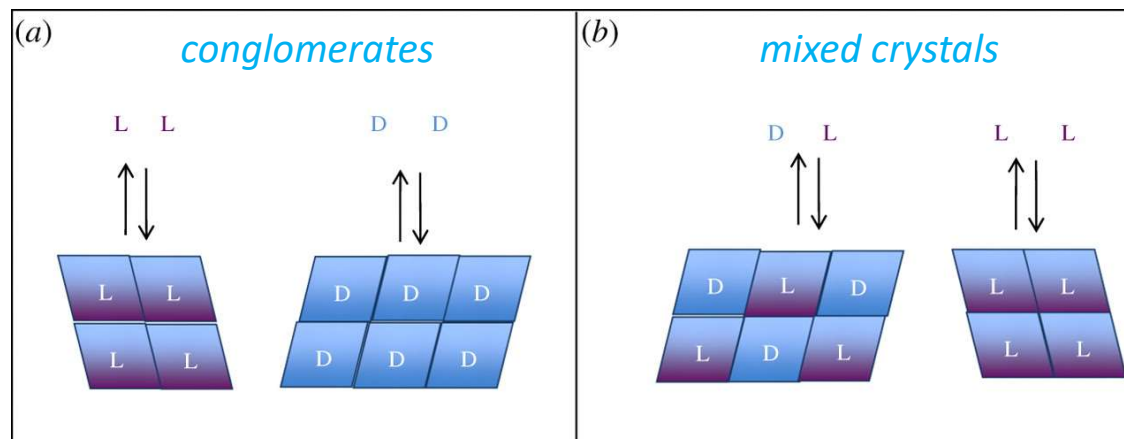
Prof. Ronald Breslow
Columbia University, USA

Breslow, R., Levine, M. Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 2006, 103(35), 12979-12980

Eutectic solutions over enantioenriched aminoacids

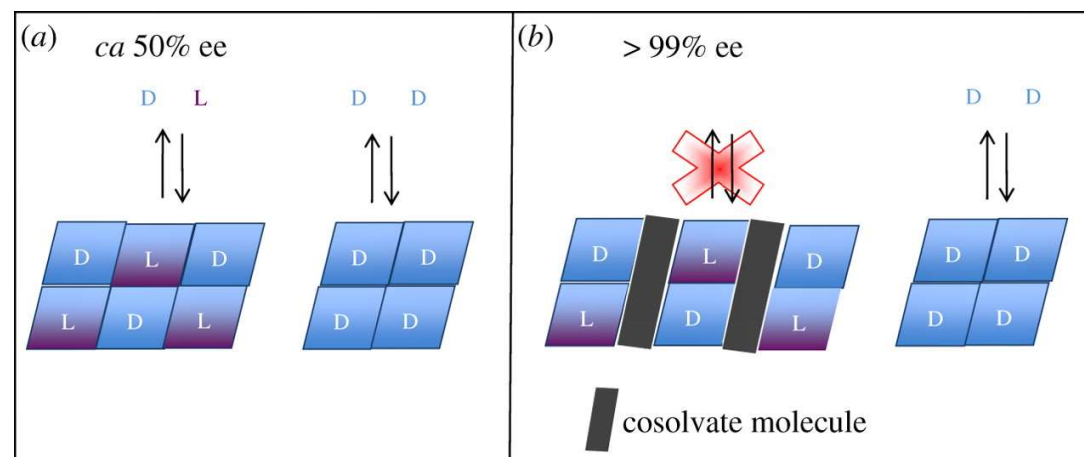
Mixtures of enantiomers can crystallize as conglomerates (a single crystal contains only molecules of one handedness) or racemates (a single crystal is racemic).

Enantioenriched mixtures give mixtures of crystals which would have the same ee value upon re-solubilization

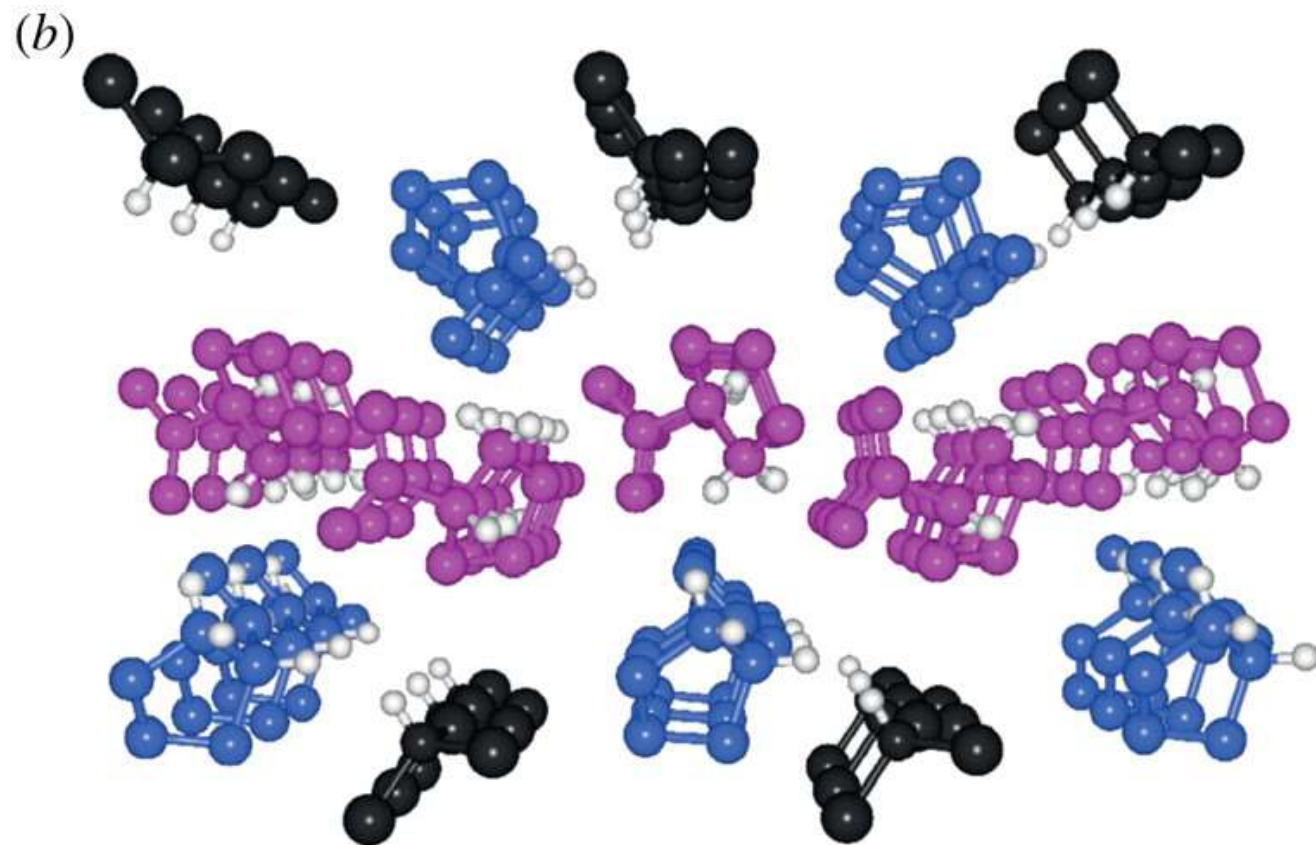
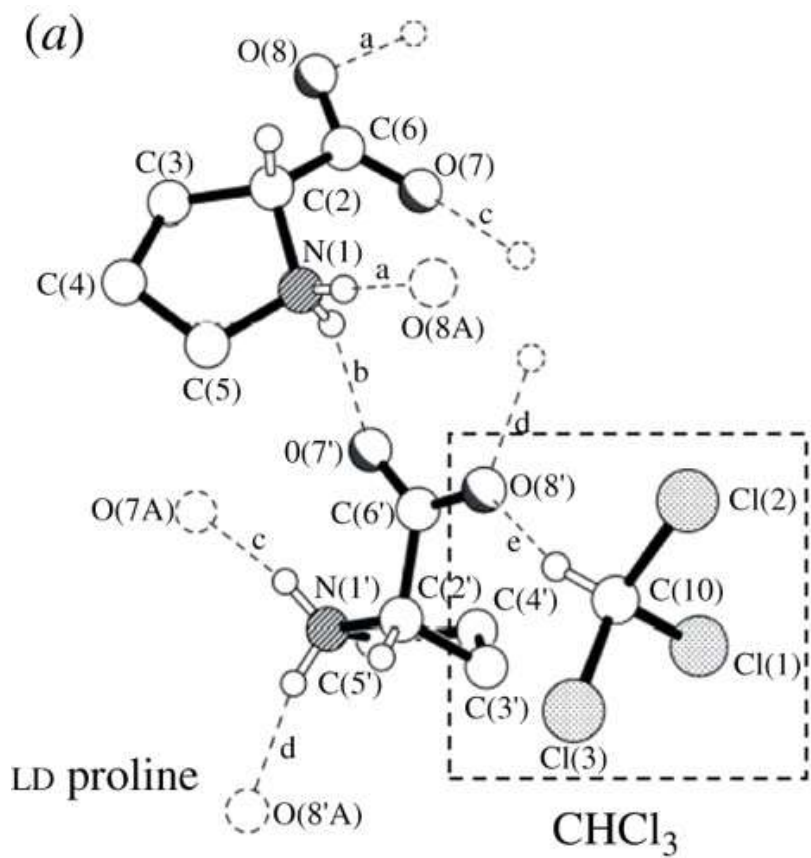


Highly enantioenriched solutions may be obtained from a small initial enantiomeric imbalance for many aminoacids, including proline, via physical amplification processes that sequester the minor enantiomer as racemic solid.

Manipulation of eutectic ee value by formation of a solvate that reduces the solubility of the racemic compound



Eutectic solutions over enantioenriched aminoacids



Eutectic solutions over enantioenriched aminoacids

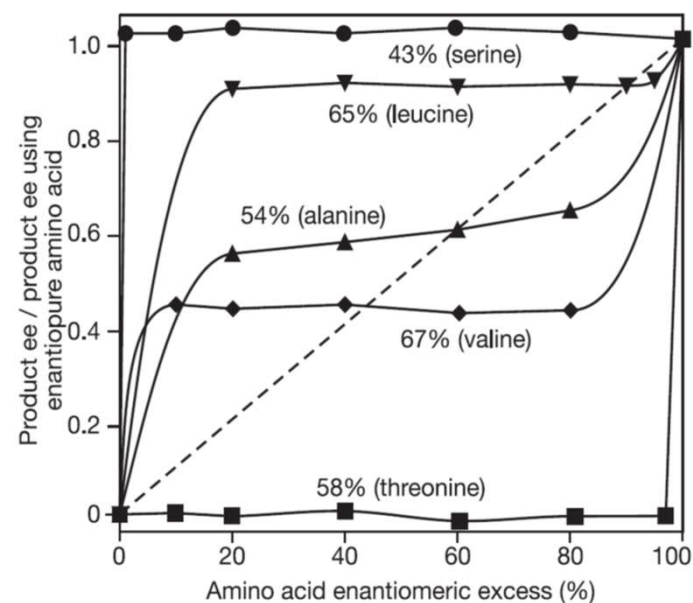
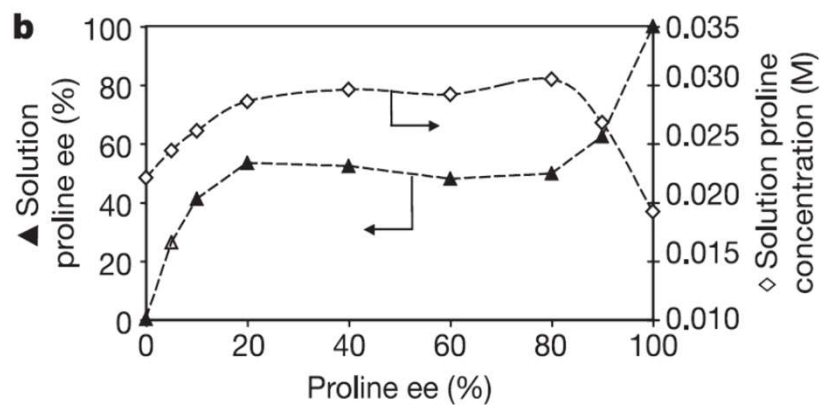
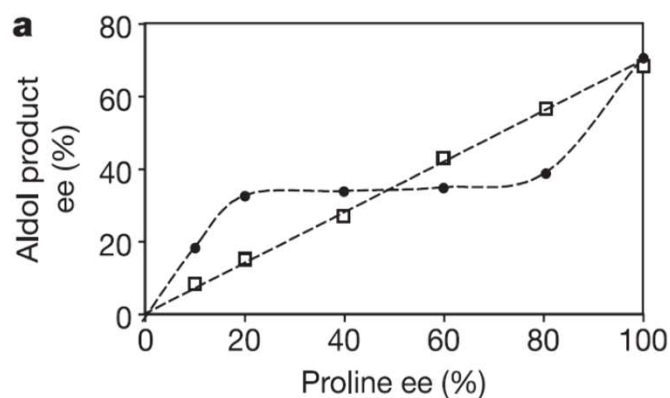
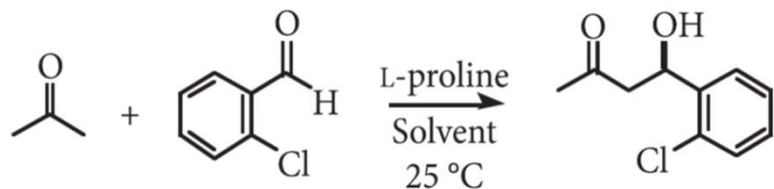
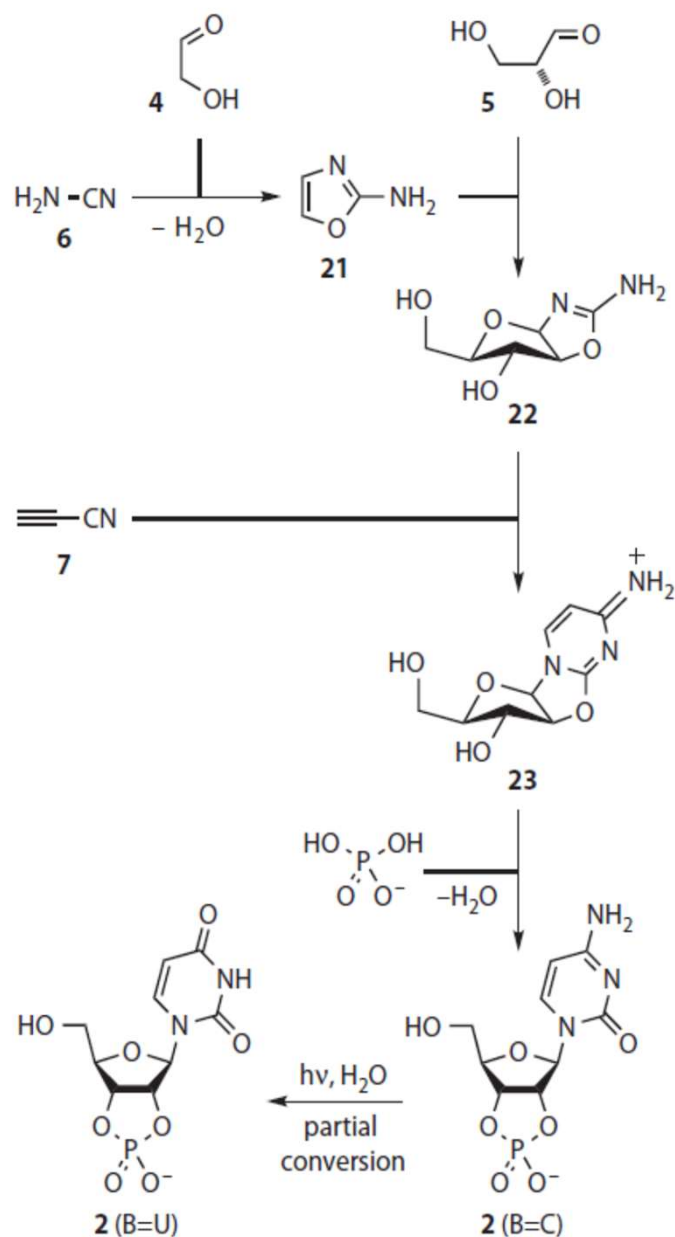


Table 1 | Solution enantiomeric excess at the eutectic point in water at 25 °C for selected amino acids

Amino acid	ee of solution at eutectic (%)	Amino acid	ee of solution at eutectic (%)
Threonine	0	Methionine	85
Valine	46	Leucine	87
Alanine	60	Histidine	93
Phenylalanine	83	Serine	>99

Klussmann, M., et al. *Nature* 2006, 441, 621-623

Cyanosulfidic chemistry



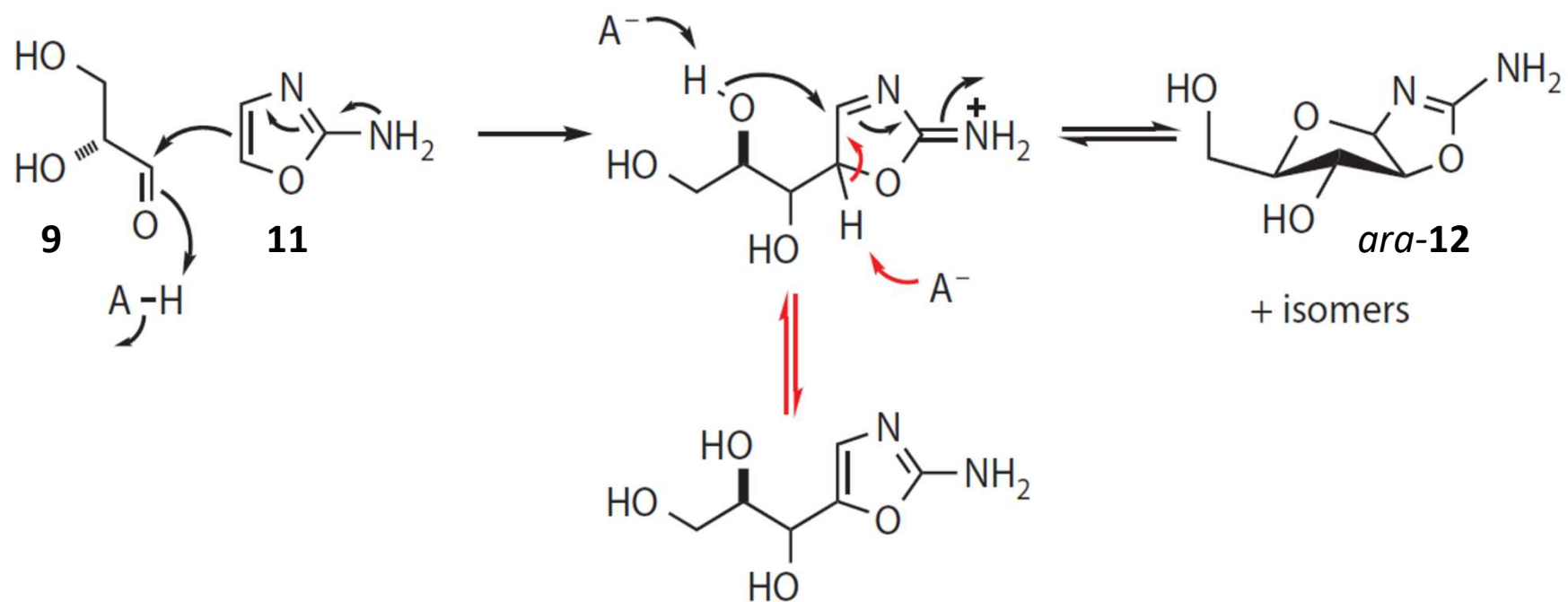
The recently uncovered route to activated pyrimidine nucleotides **2**.

The nucleobase ribosylation problem is circumvented by the assembly proceeding through 2-aminooxazole **21**, which can be thought of as the chimera of half a pentose sugar and half a nucleobase. The second half of the pentose - glyceraldehyde **5** -and the second half of the nucleobase—cyanoacetylene **7**—are then added sequentially to give the anhydronucleoside **23**.

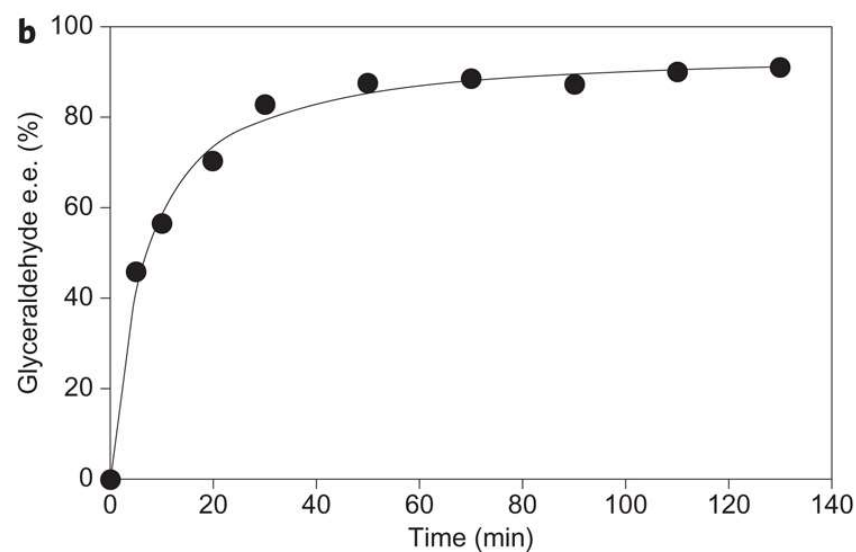
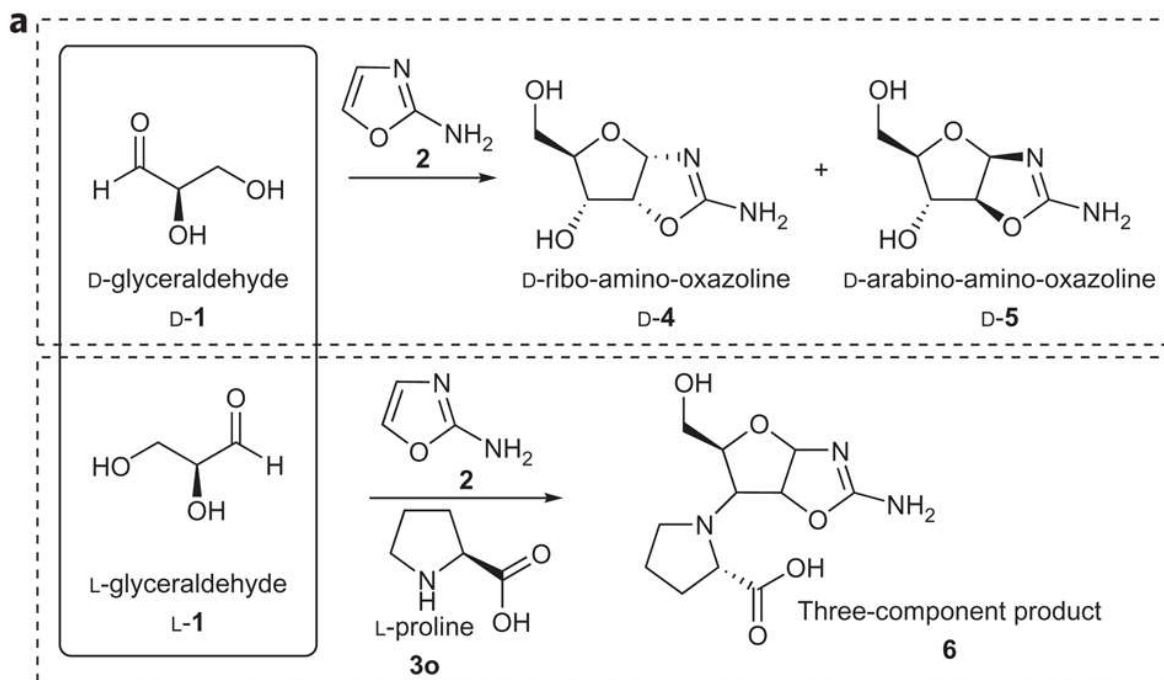
Phosphorylation and rearrangement of **23** then furnishes **2 (B=C)**, and UV irradiation effects the partial conversion of **2 (B=C)** to **2 (B=U)**.

M. W. Powner, B. Gerland, J. D. Sutherland, *Nature* **2009**, *459*, 239–242

Cytosine-2',3'cP – step 2: *pentose-amino-oxazolines*



Enantiomeric excess in the cyanosulfidic chemistry



a, In the presence of an enantioenriched L-proline ([3o](#)), the diastereoselective formation of a three-component side product ([6](#)) effectively sequesters the unnatural L-glyceraldehyde ([L-1](#)).

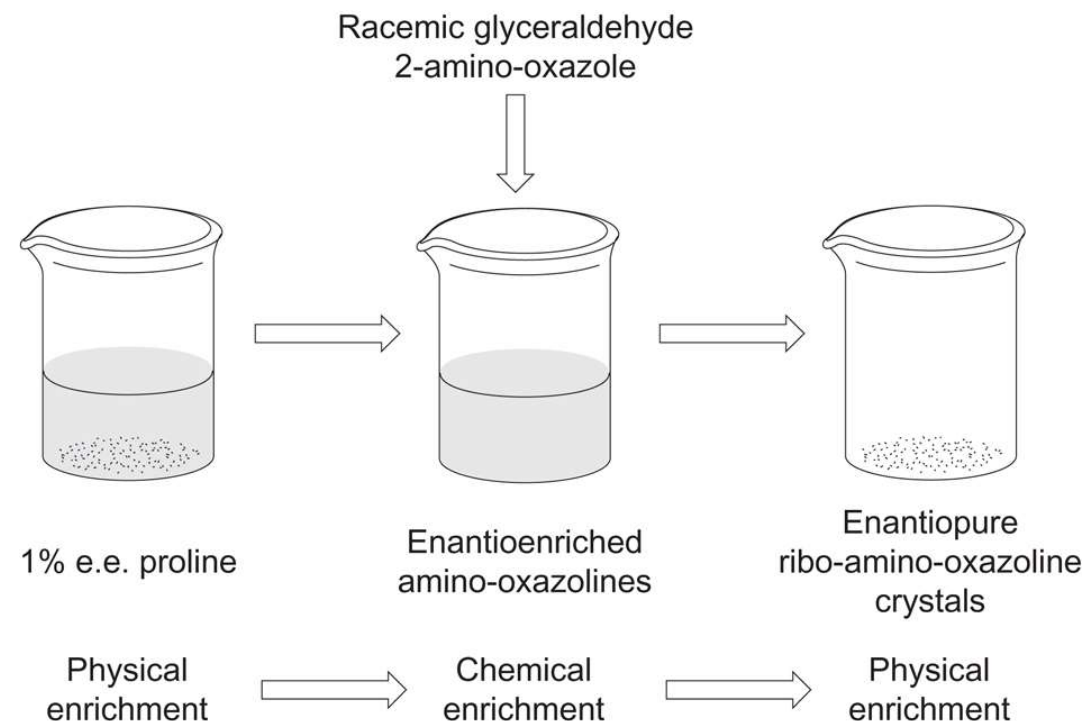
b, The side reaction acts as a kinetic resolution of glycerinaldehyde, giving enantiorichment of greater than 90% e.e. [D-1](#), which reacts with [2](#) to form the enantioenriched amino-oxazoline RNA precursors [D-4](#) and [D-5](#). e.e. values are $\pm 2\%$.

Enantiomeric excess in the cyanosulfidic chemistry

Table 1 | Formation of enantioenriched amino-oxazolines in the presence of L-amino acids.

Amino acid	Three-component product* 6	Ribose amino-oxazoline D-4 (% e.e.)	Arabinose amino-oxazoline D-5 (% e.e.)
Ala (3a)	++	8.9	8.1
Arg (3b)	++	4.1	7.3
Asn (3c)	+	1.1	0.5
Asp (3d)	+	2.1	1.4
Cys (3e)	++ +	n.a.	1.4
Gln (3f)	+	1.2	1.1
Glu (3g)	+	0.8	0.1
Gly (3h)	++	-	-
His (3i)	++	7.5 (L)	8.1 (L)
Ile (3j)	+	2.1	0.5 (L)
Leu (3k)	+	1.1	2.1
Lys (3l)	++ +	n.a.	n.a.
Met (3m)	++ +	n.a.	n.a.
Phe (3n)	++ +	2.5	5.4
Pro (3o)	++	55	58
Ser (3p)	++ +	3.0	1.9
Thr (3q)	++	1.1	2.6
Trp (3r)	++	10.2	9.8
Tyr (3s)	+	0.5	2.6
Val (3t)	++	2.0	1.0 (L)

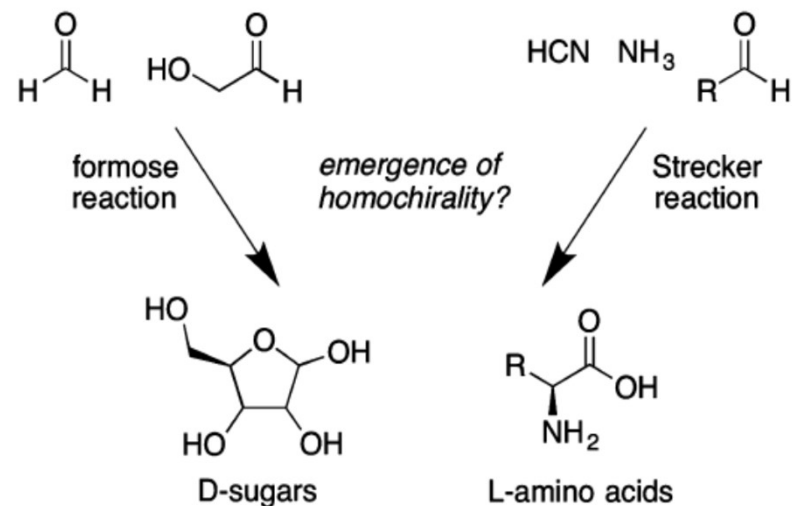
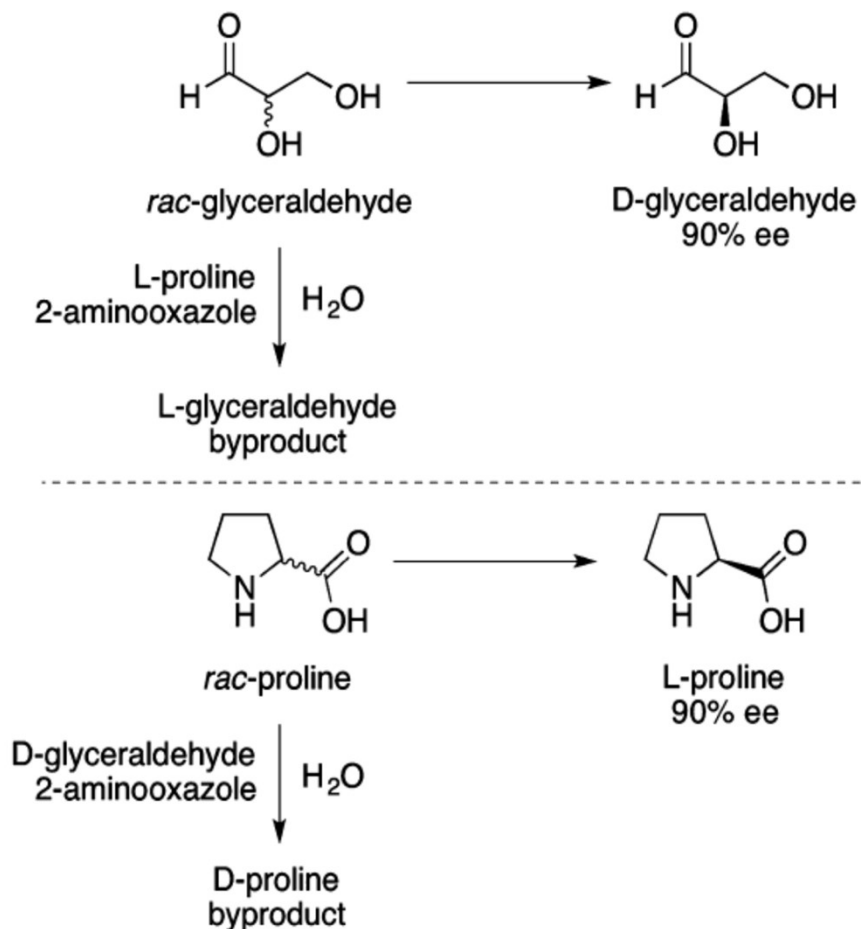
*Yield of side product 6: +, low; ++, medium; +++, high. n.a., no products isolated or observed by chiral LC



1% e.e. L-proline (**3o**) is suspended in solvent (either CHCl_3 or EtOH). After equilibration, the remaining solid is removed and the solvent is evaporated from the supernatant. Racemic glyceraldehyde DL-**1** and amino-oxazole **2b** are then added and the mixture is dissolved in water. The ensuing reaction produces amino-oxazolines **4** and **5** in 20–80% e.e. Cooling the mixture to 4 °C induces crystallization of enantiopure ribo-amino-oxazoline crystals.

J. E. Hein, E. Tse, D. G. Blackmond, *Nature Chem.*, **2011**, *3*, 704-706

Chiral sugars drive enantioenrichment in prebiotic amino acid synthesis



Chiral sugars drive enantioenrichment in prebiotic amino acid synthesis

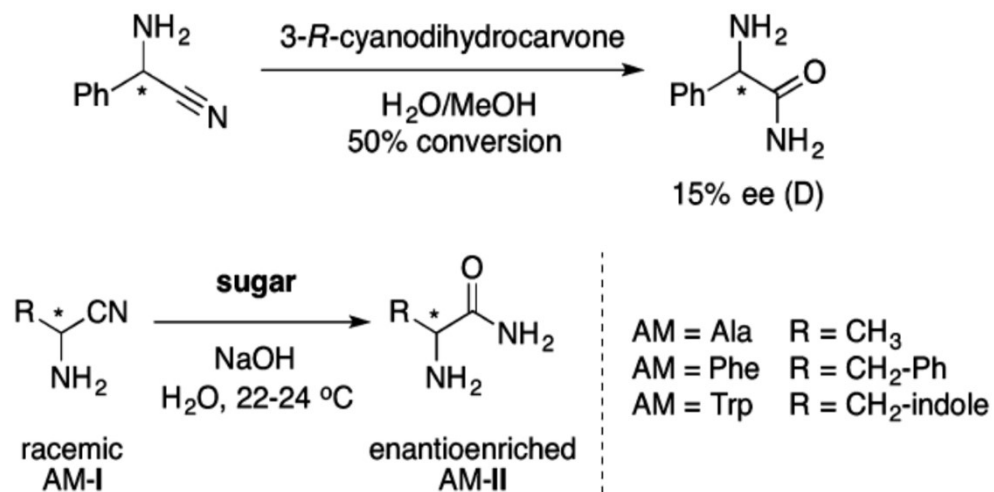


Table 2. Opposite Sense of Enantioenrichment of Phe-II for L-Sugars^a

Sugar	Phe-II e.e. (%)
L-ribose	69 (L)
L-lyxose	81 (D)
L-xylose	31 (L)
L-arabinose	43 (D)

Table 1. Enantioenrichment of Amino Acid Precursors Driven by D-Sugars (Scheme 3)^a

Sugar	Ala-II e.e.(%)	Phe-II e.e.(%)	Trp-II e.e.(%)
D-ribose	65 (D)	70 (D)	33 (D)
D-lyxose	83 (L)	83 (L)	59 (L)
D-xylose	45 (D)	35 (D)	11 (D)
D-arabinose	58 (L)	48 (L)	38 (L)
D-deoxyribose	29 (D)	32 (D)	33 (D)
D-ribose + D-lyxose	45 (L)	14 (L)	18 (L)
D-ribose + D-lyxose + D-xylose + D-arabinose	47 (L)	18 (L)	20 (L)

Chiral sugars drive enantioenrichment in prebiotic aminoacid synthesis

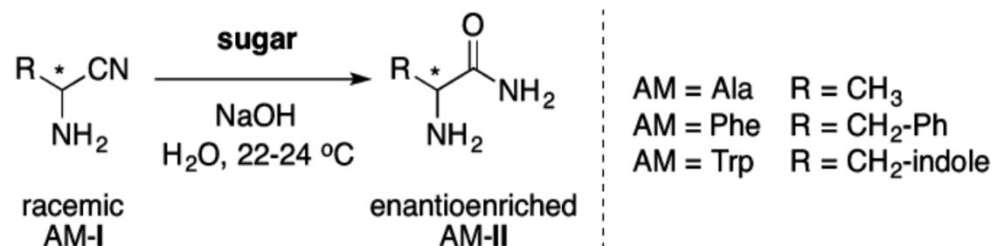


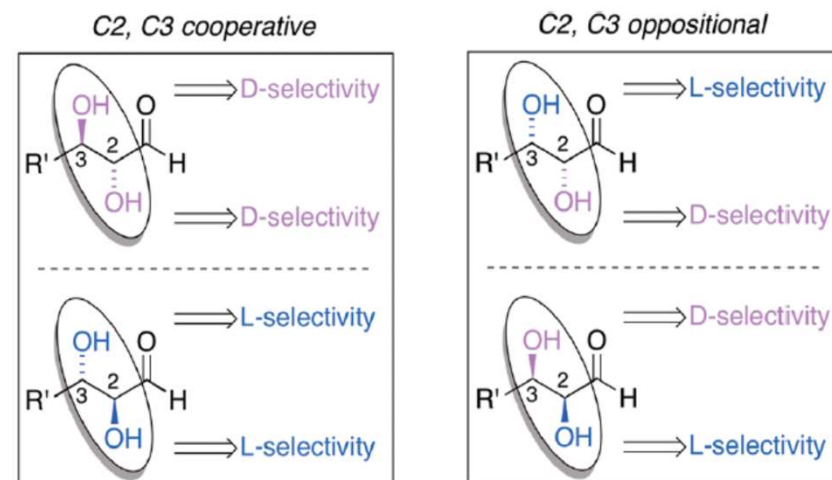
Table 3. Effect of Sugar Concentration on Phe-II ee (%) for Reaction Mediated by D-Ribose^a

[D-ribose] (M)	D-ribose (equiv)	Phe-II e.e. (%)
0.025	0.1	9 (D)
0.050	0.2	14 (D)
0.10	0.4	23 (D)
0.25	1	43 (D)
0.5	2	43 (D)
1.0	4	41 (D)
2.0	8	42 (D)

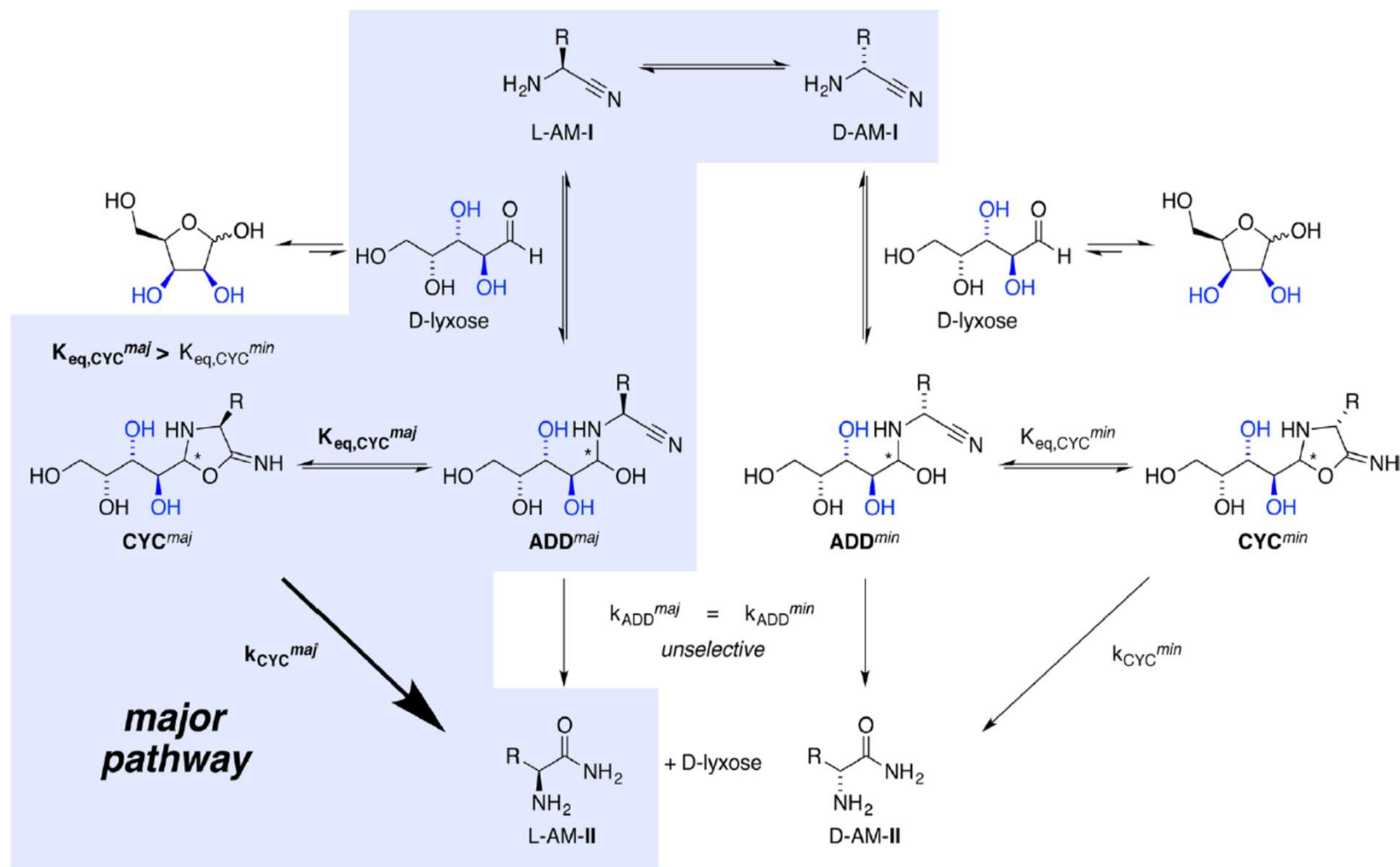
Table 4. Effect of Solution pH on Phe-II ee (%) for Reaction Mediated by D-Ribose^a

NaOH (M)	Effective pH	Temperature (°C)	Phe-II e.e. (%)
-b	7	22-24	35 (D)
-b	7	37	46 (D)
0.00010	10	22-24	36 (D)
0.00010	10	37	36 (D)

Scheme 4. Stereochemical Rationalization of Enantioenrichment by Chiral Sugars

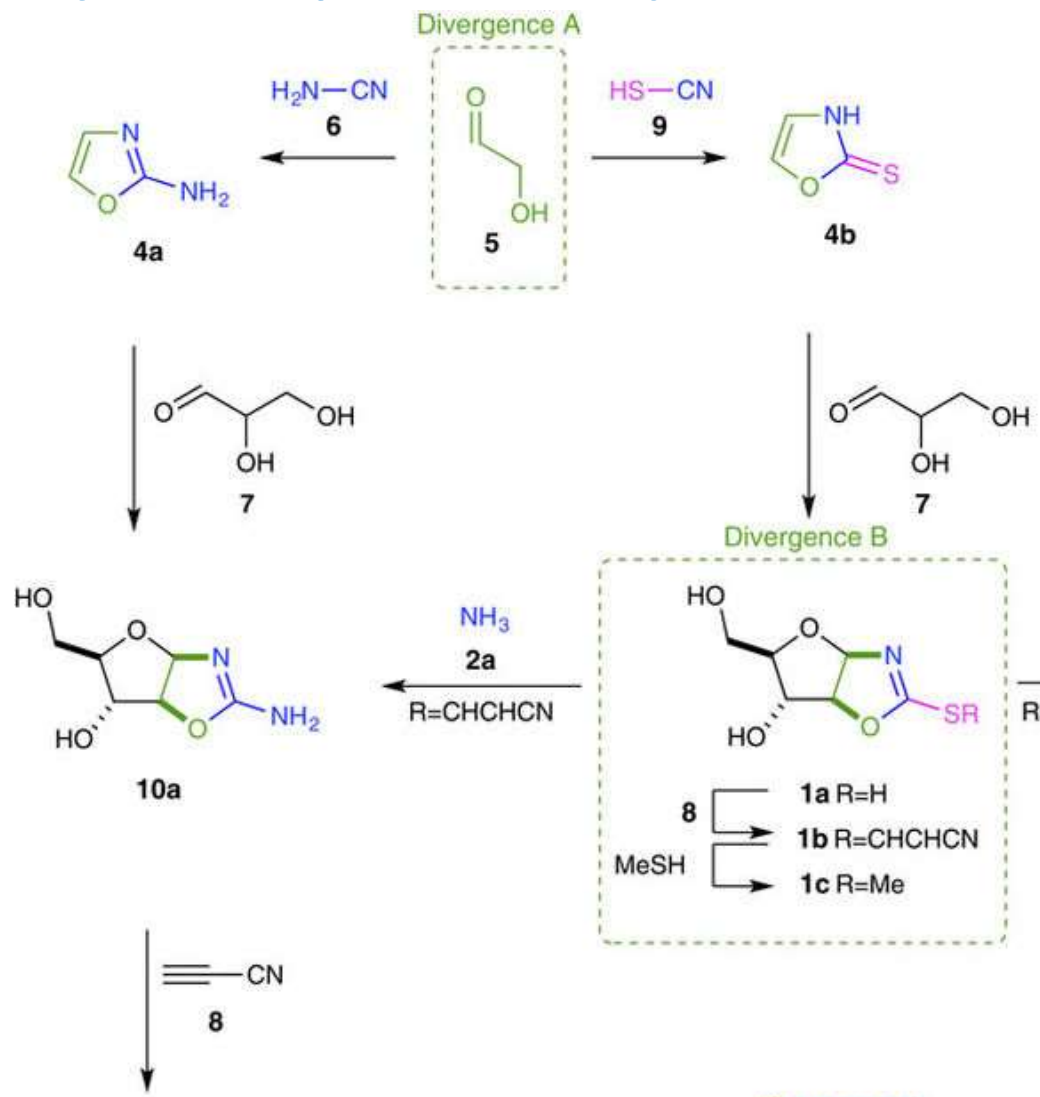
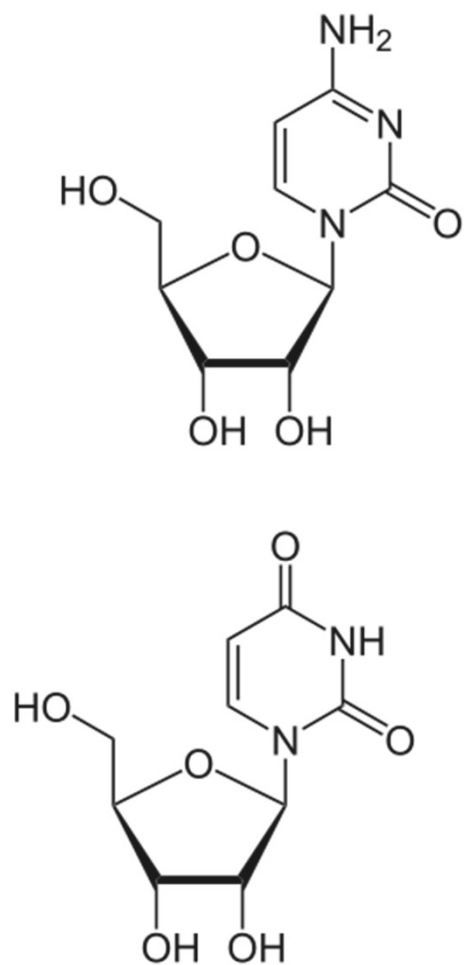


Chiral sugars drive enantioenrichment in prebiotic aminoacid synthesis

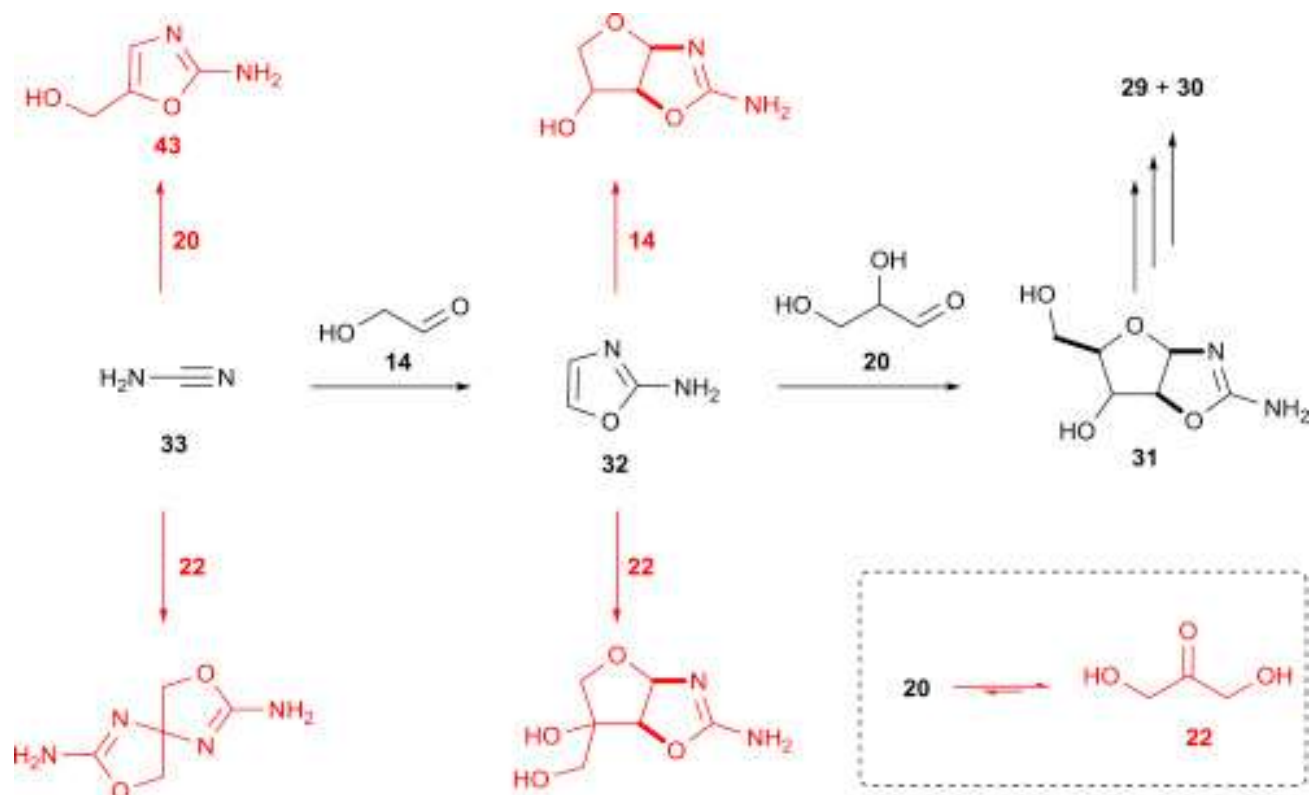


D. G. Blackmond *et al.*, *ACS Cent. Sci.*, 2017, 3, 322-328

Nucleoside synthesis – further development



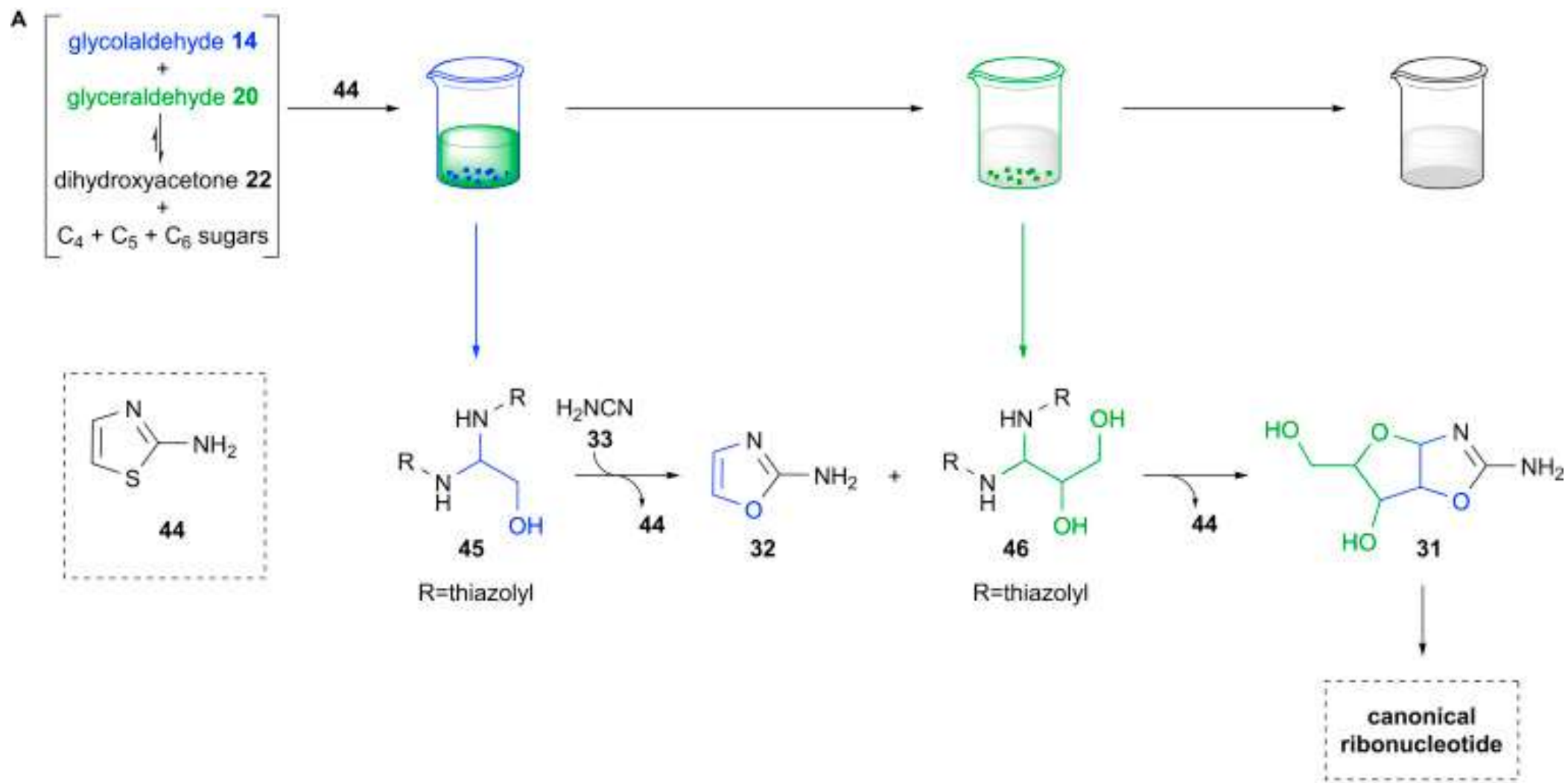
Overcome of the Formation of Prebiotic Clutter.



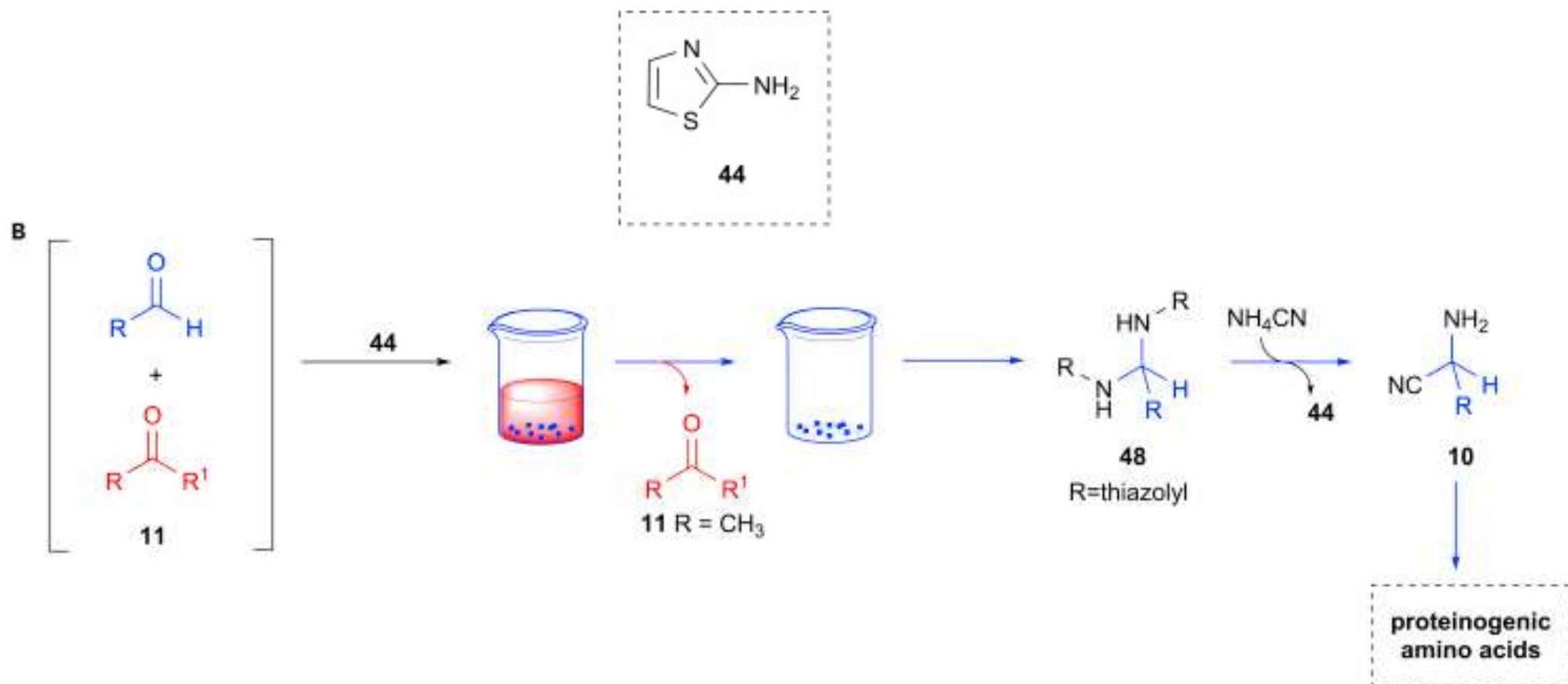
The synthesis of activated pyrimidine ribonucleotides **29** and **30** is dependent on the controlled formation of pentose aminooxazolines **31** (black), but the synthesis of **31** is wholly reliant on the ordered introduction of pure glycolaldehyde **14** (to cyanamide **33**) and glyceraldehyde **20** (to 2-aminooxazole **32**) to prevent the formation of numerous deleterious by-products (red). Ribonucleotide synthesis fails without the adherence to this order of synthetic steps. Glyceraldehyde **20** is highly susceptible to equilibration with dihydroxyacetone **22**, especially in phosphate buffer, which results in diminishing amounts of pentose aminooxazolines **31** being formed (inset).

S. Islam, M. W. Powner *Chem* **2017**, *2*, 470-501

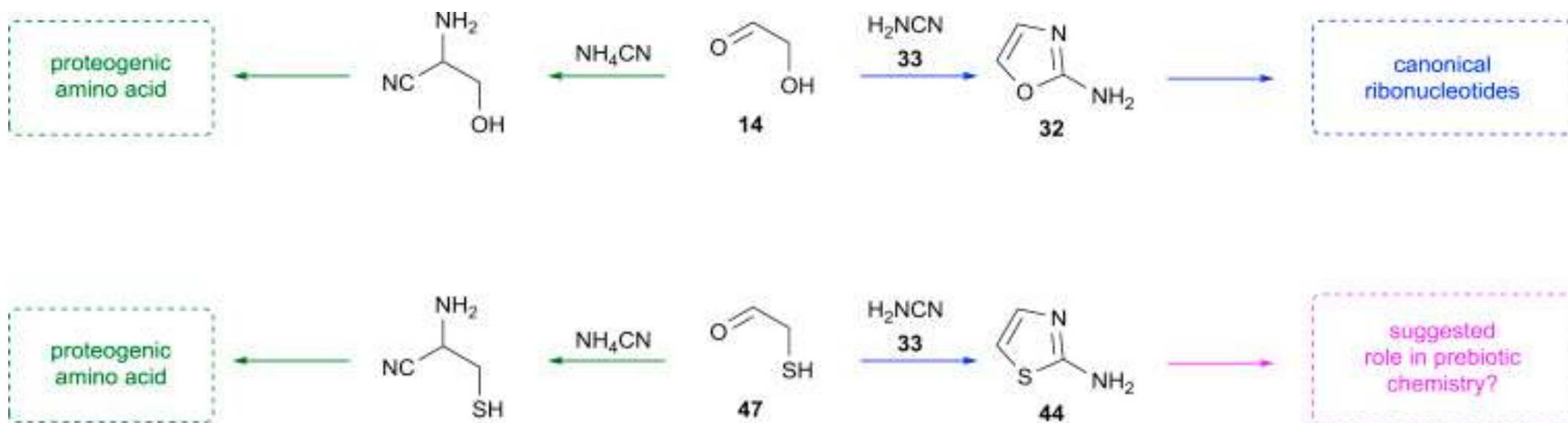
2-Aminothiazole-Controlled Aldehyde Sequestration



2-Aminothiazole-Controlled Aldehyde Sequestration

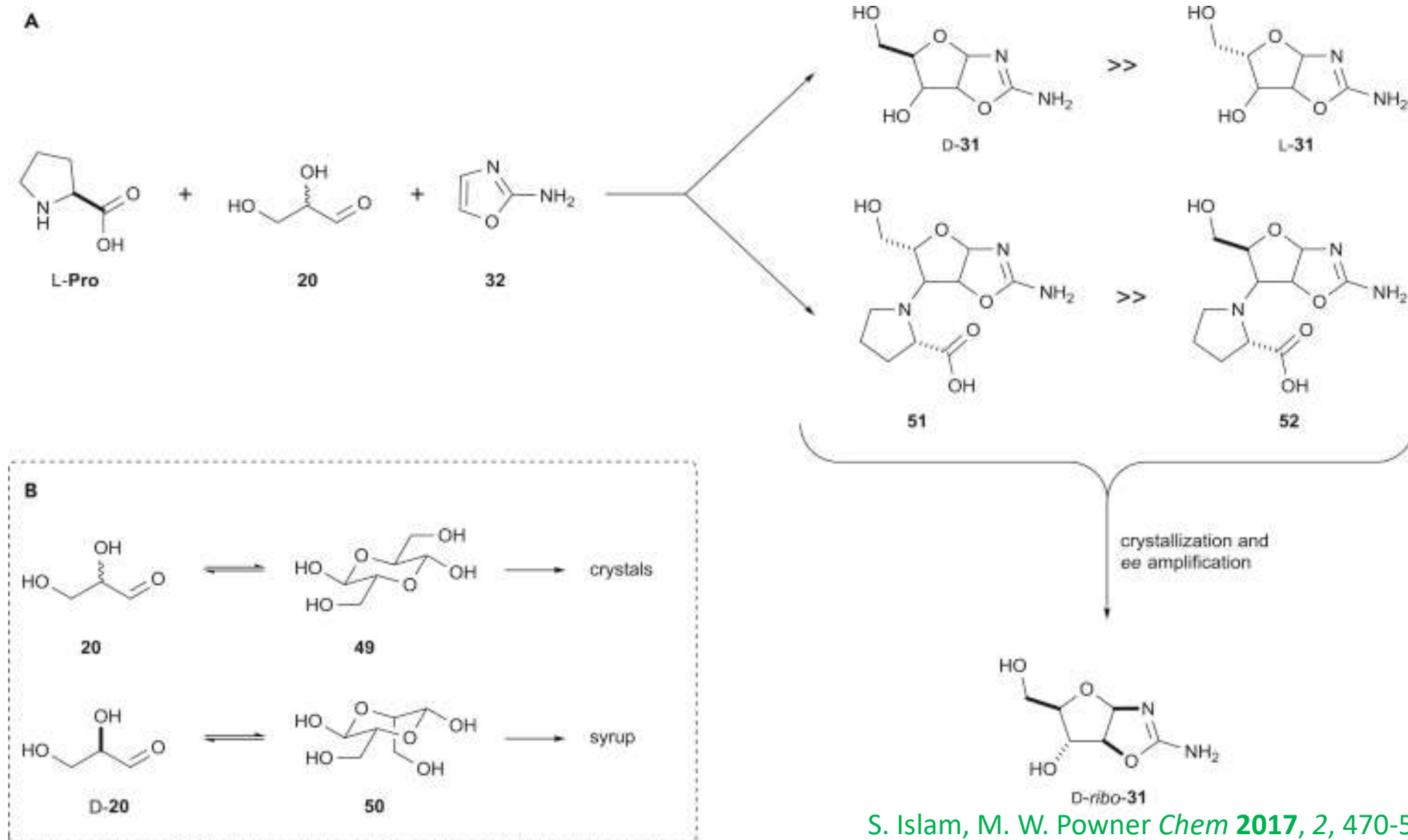


Systems Chemical Analysis of Amino Acid and Nucleotide Syntheses

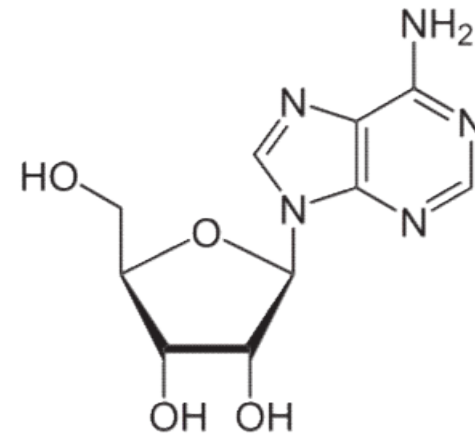
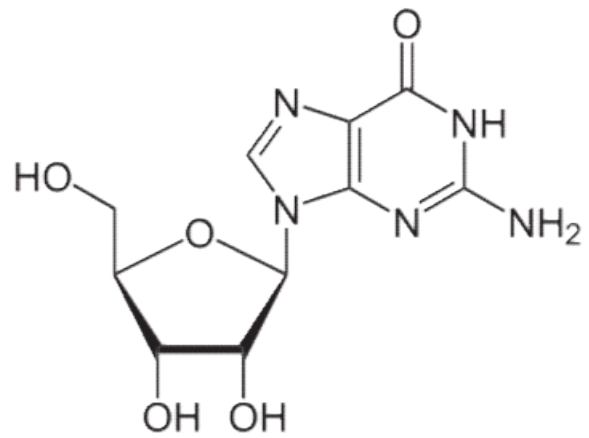
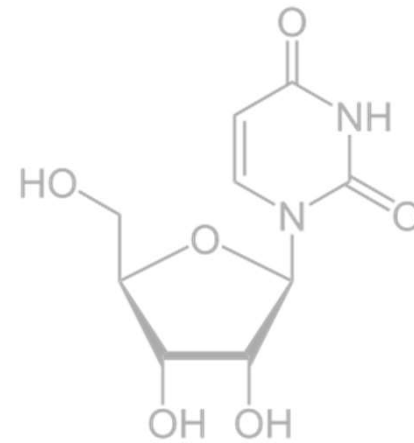
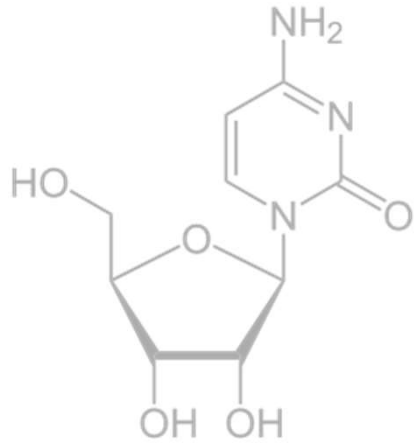


Analysis of the prebiotic amino acid and nucleotide syntheses reveal that glycolaldehyde **14**—a serine and ribonucleotide precursor—lies at a generational node between these two metabolite classes. The same analysis applied to cysteine suggested that b-mercaptoacetaldehyde **47** would be as important as glycolaldehyde **14** and that the reactivity of 2-aminothiazole **44** might have key implications for the concomitant prebiotic synthesis of amino acid and nucleotides

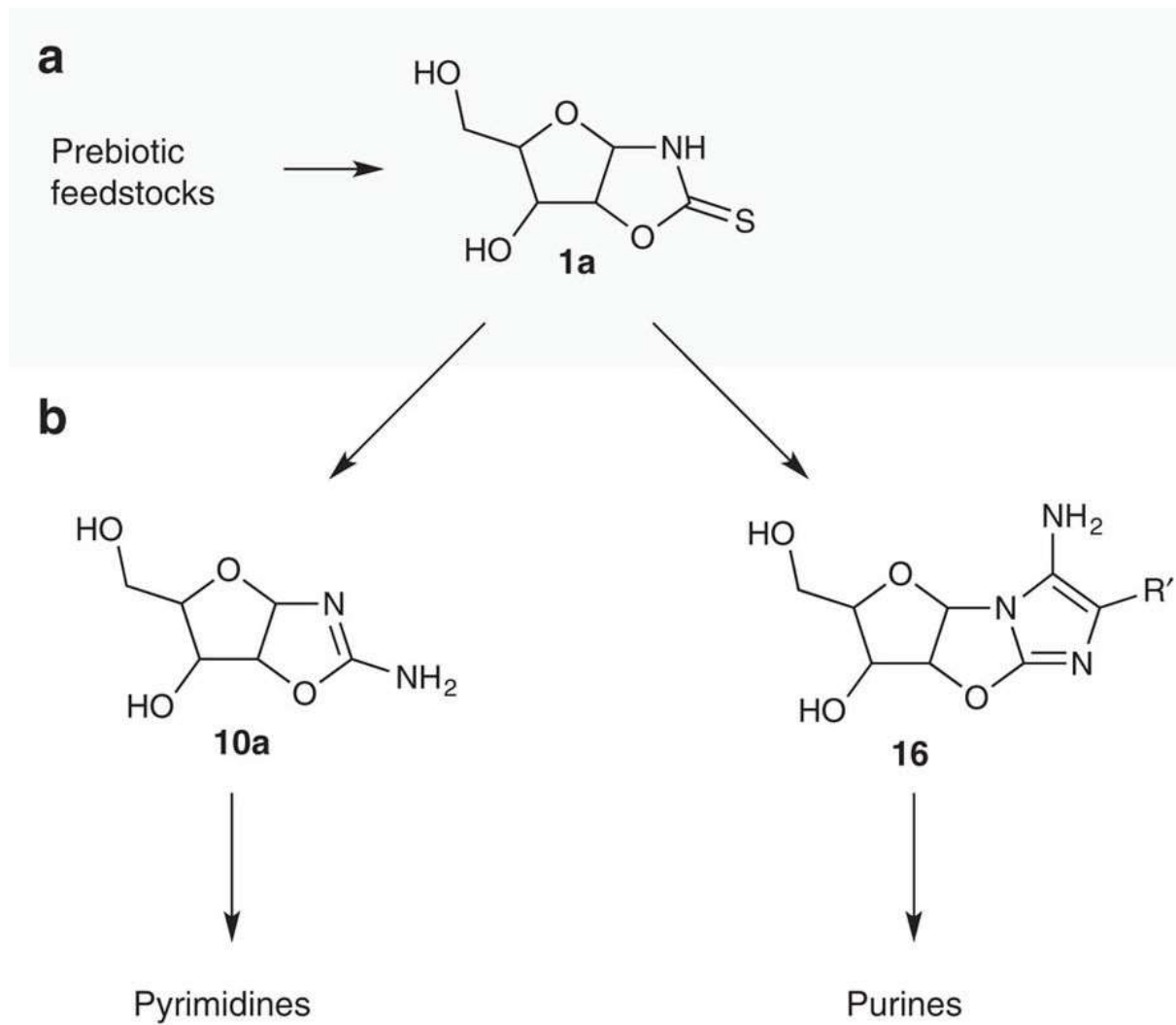
Strategies toward Enantio-enriched Glyceraldehyde and Ribonucleotide Precursors



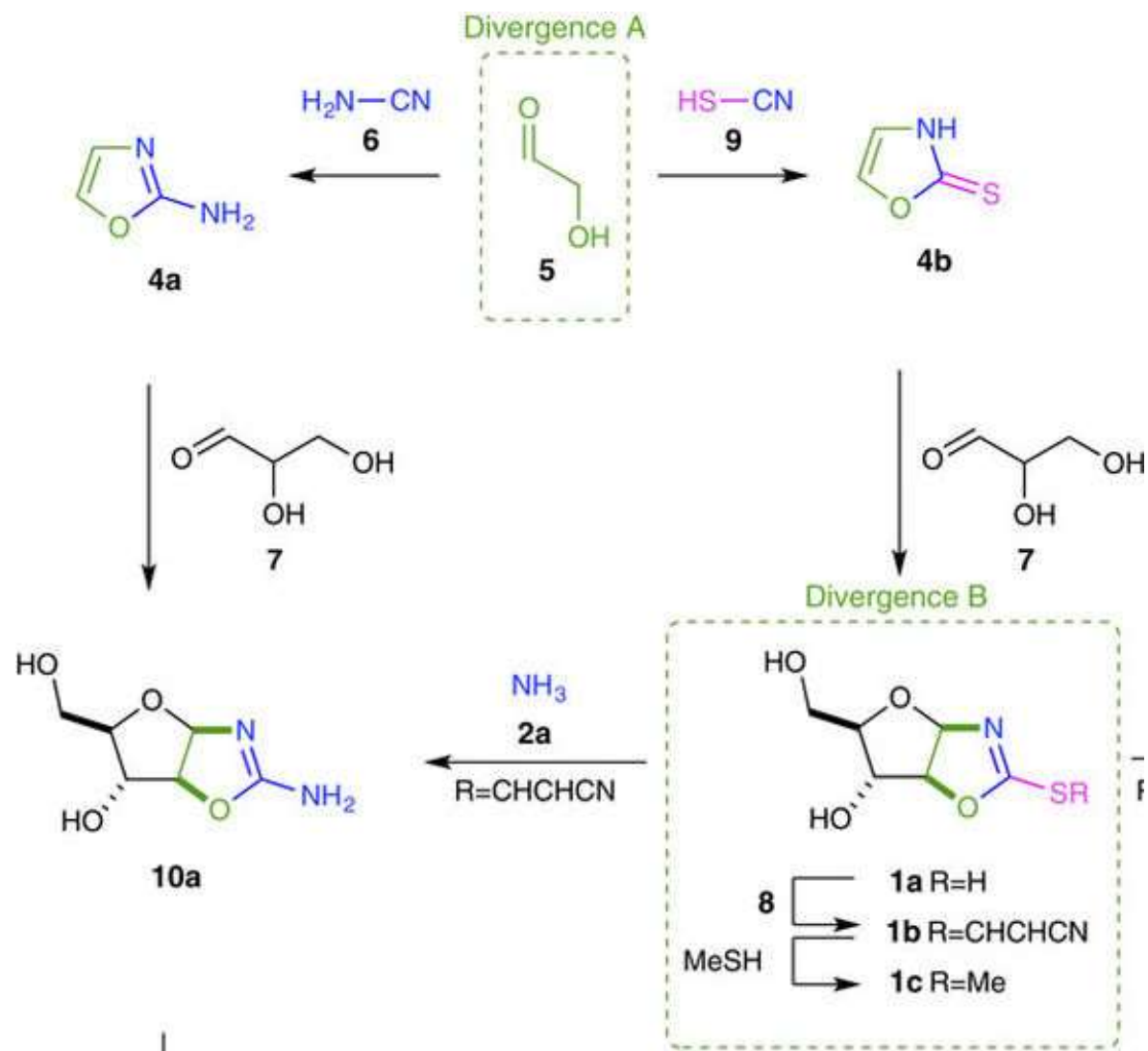
Purine nucleoside synthesis via cyanosulfidic chemistry



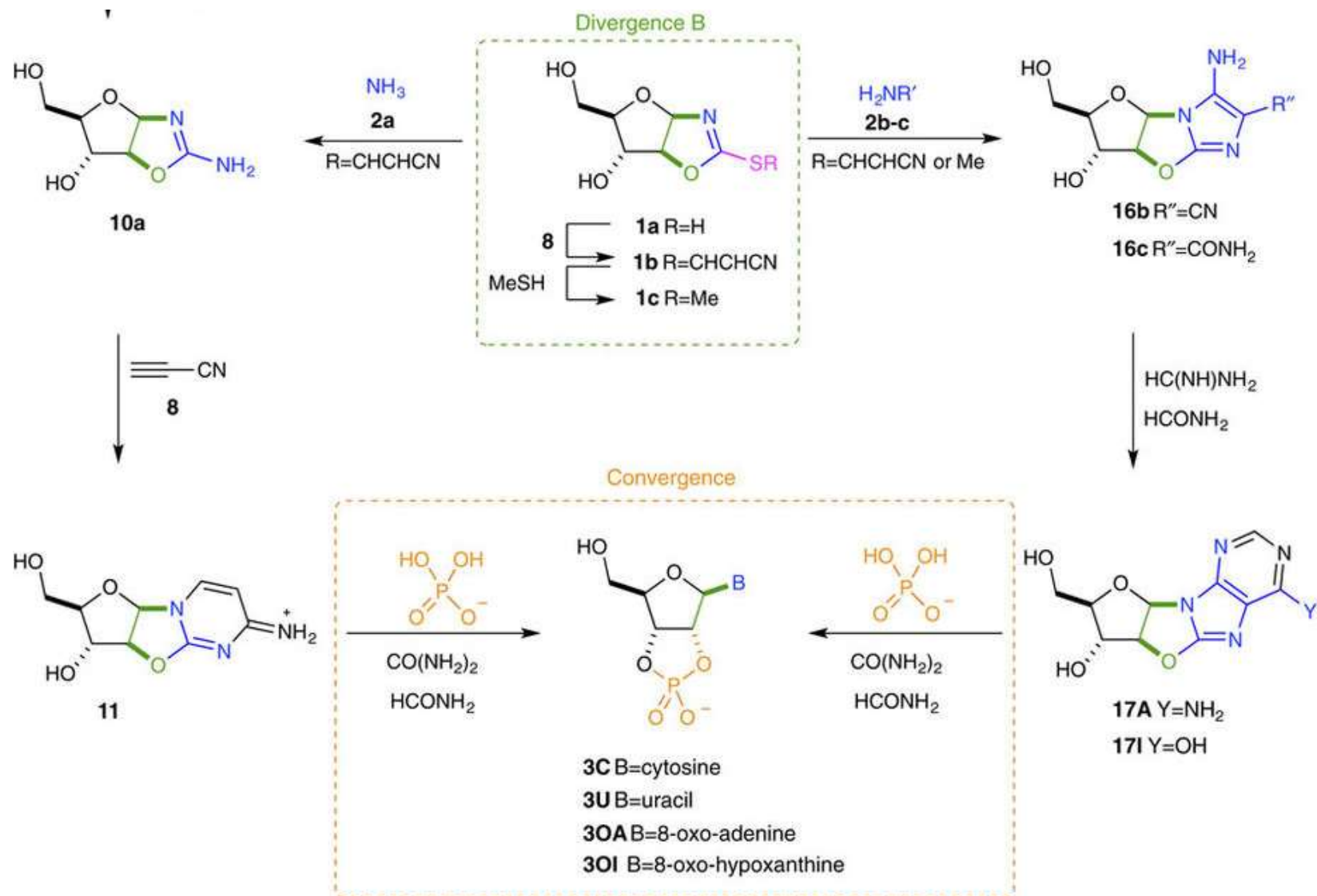
8-Oxo-purine nucleoside synthesis via cyanosulfidic chemistry



8-Oxo-purine nucleoside synthesis via cyanosulfidic chemistry

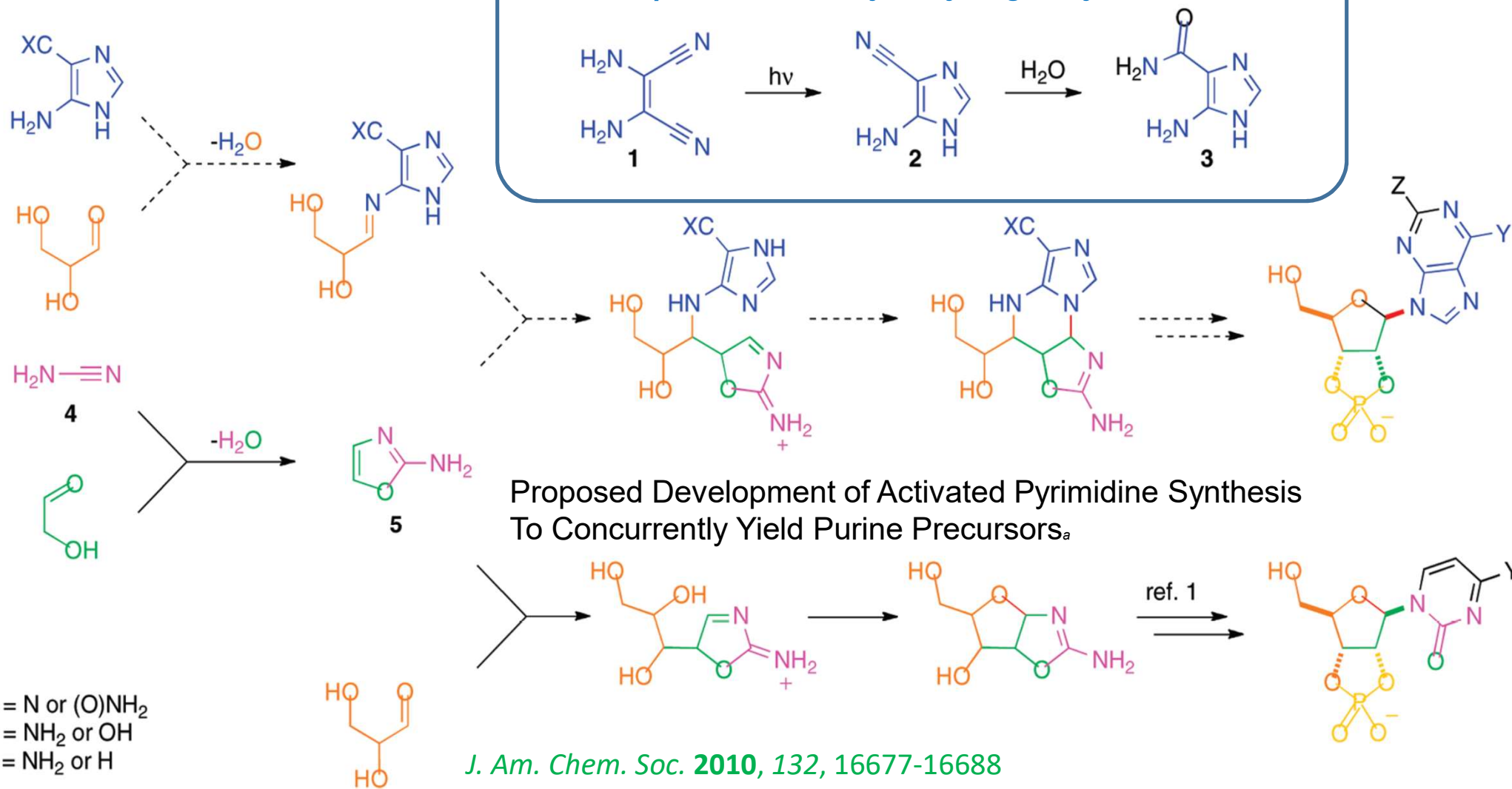


8-Oxo-purine nucleoside synthesis via cyanosulfidic chemistry



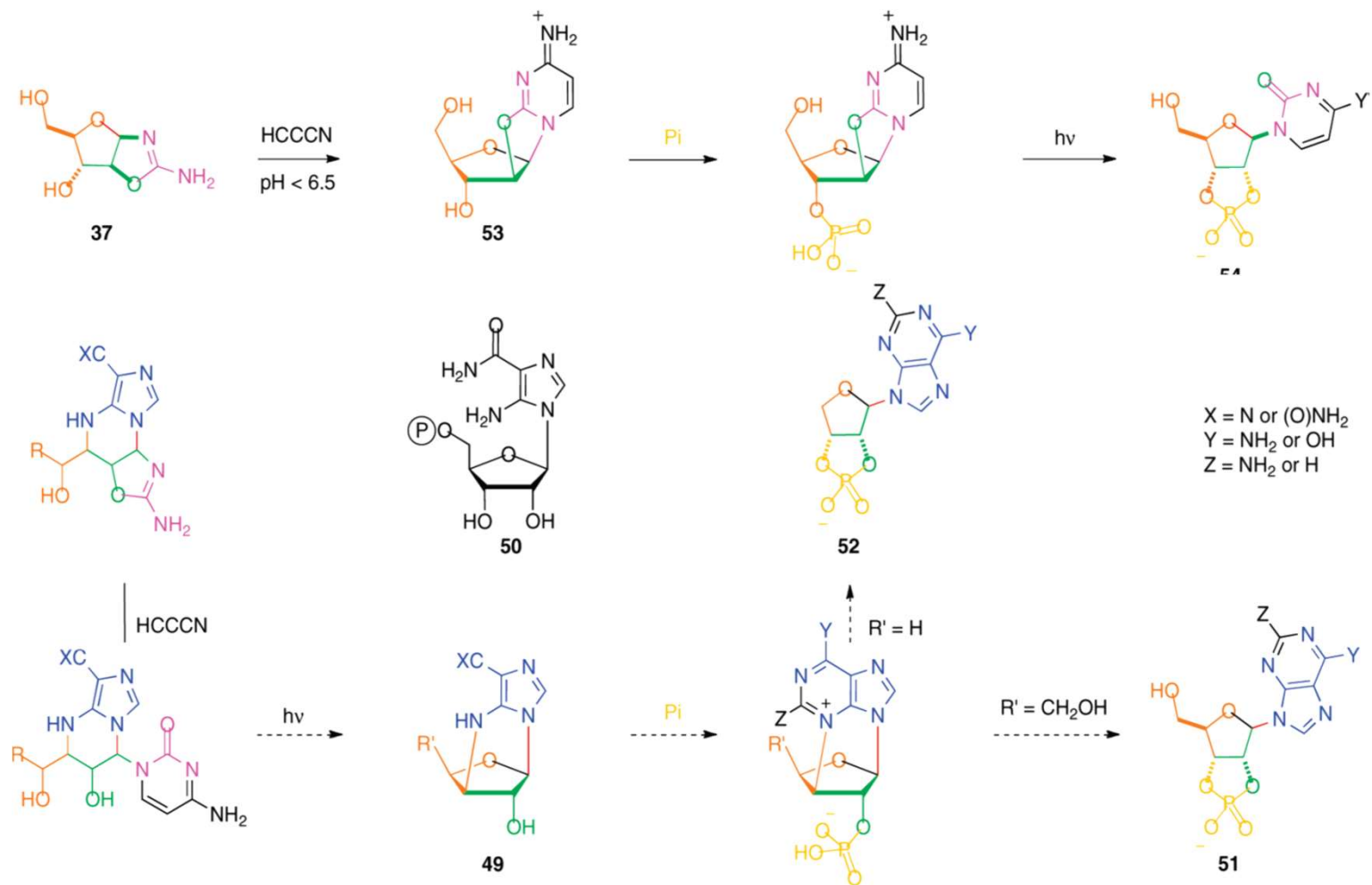
Canonical purine nucleoside synthesis via cyanosulfidic chemistry

Multicomponent Assembly of Hydrogen Cyanide Tetramers



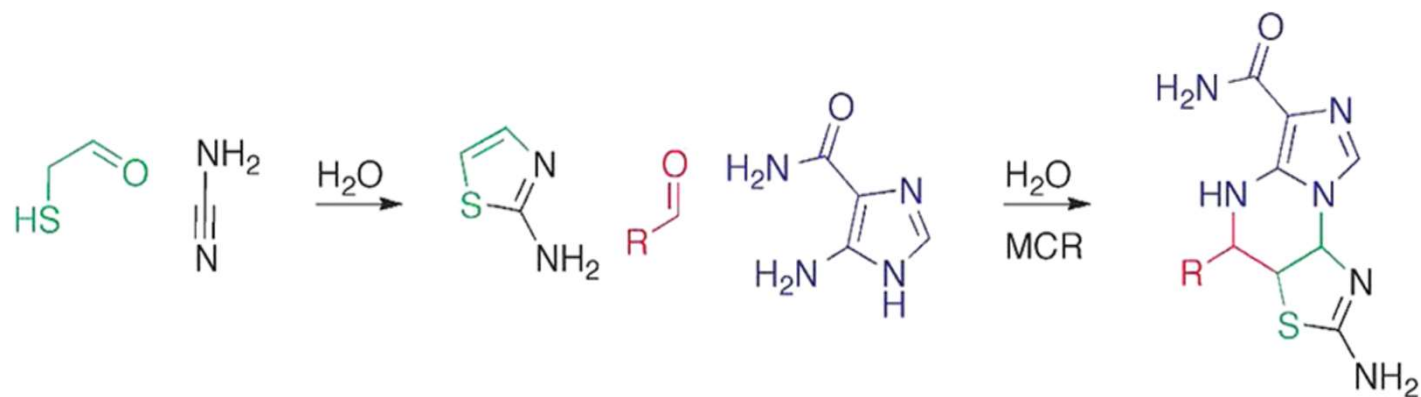
Canonical purine nucleoside synthesis via cyanosulfidic chemistry

beta-Ribofuranosyl-pyrimidine nucleotide assembly and potential stepwise, regioselective beta-ribofuranosyl-purine assembly
Pathway via the intermediacy of tetrahydroimidazo[1',3']-2''-aminooxazolo[1',2']-pyrimidines

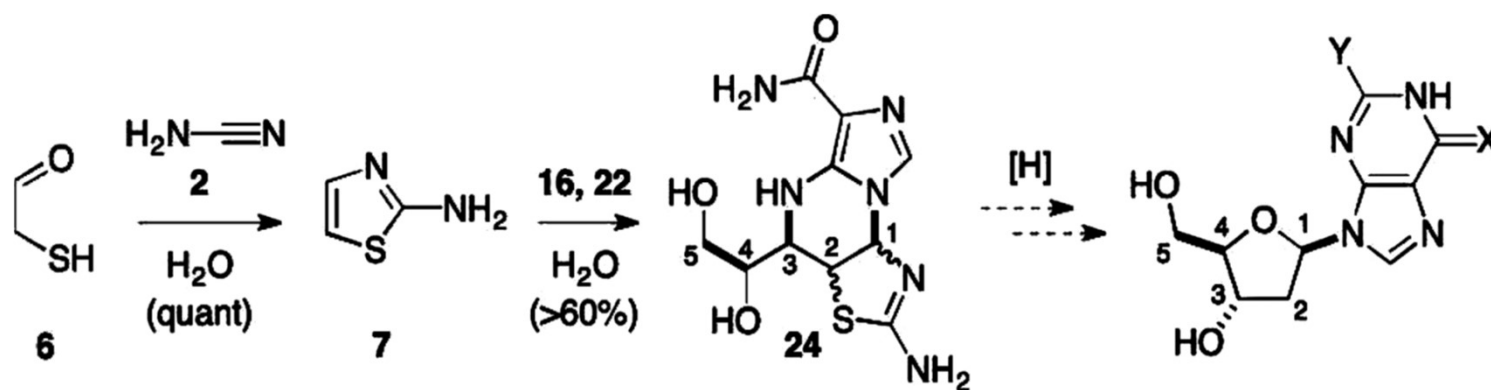


M. W. Powner, J. D. Sutherland, J. W. Szostak *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* **2010**, *132*, 16677-16688

Prebiotic synthesis of deoxyribonucleosides

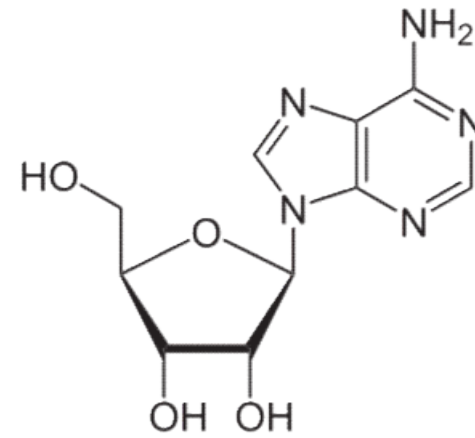
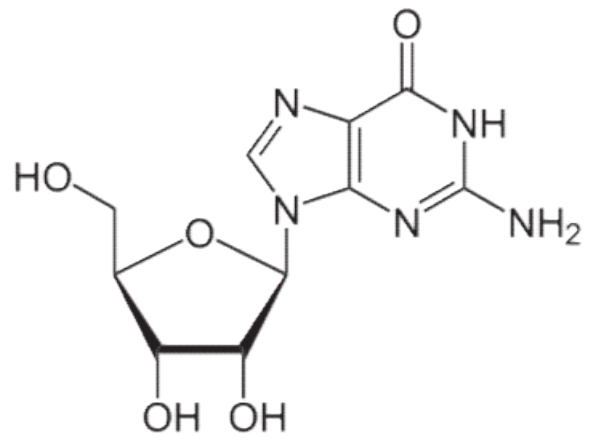
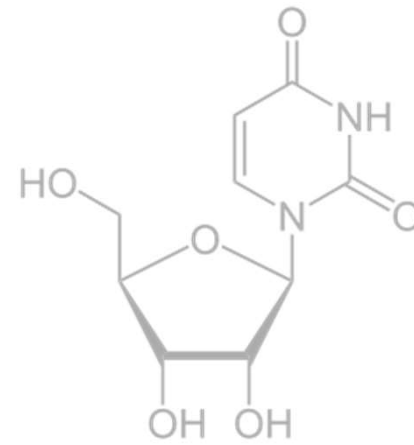
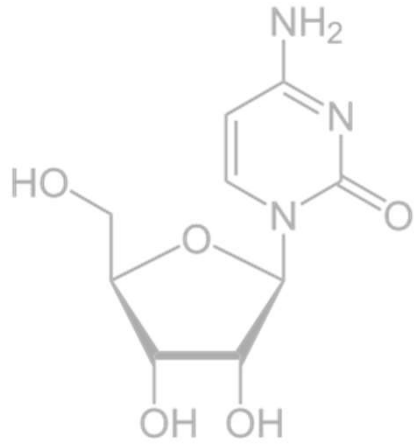


proposed multicomponent deoxyribonucleotide syntheses

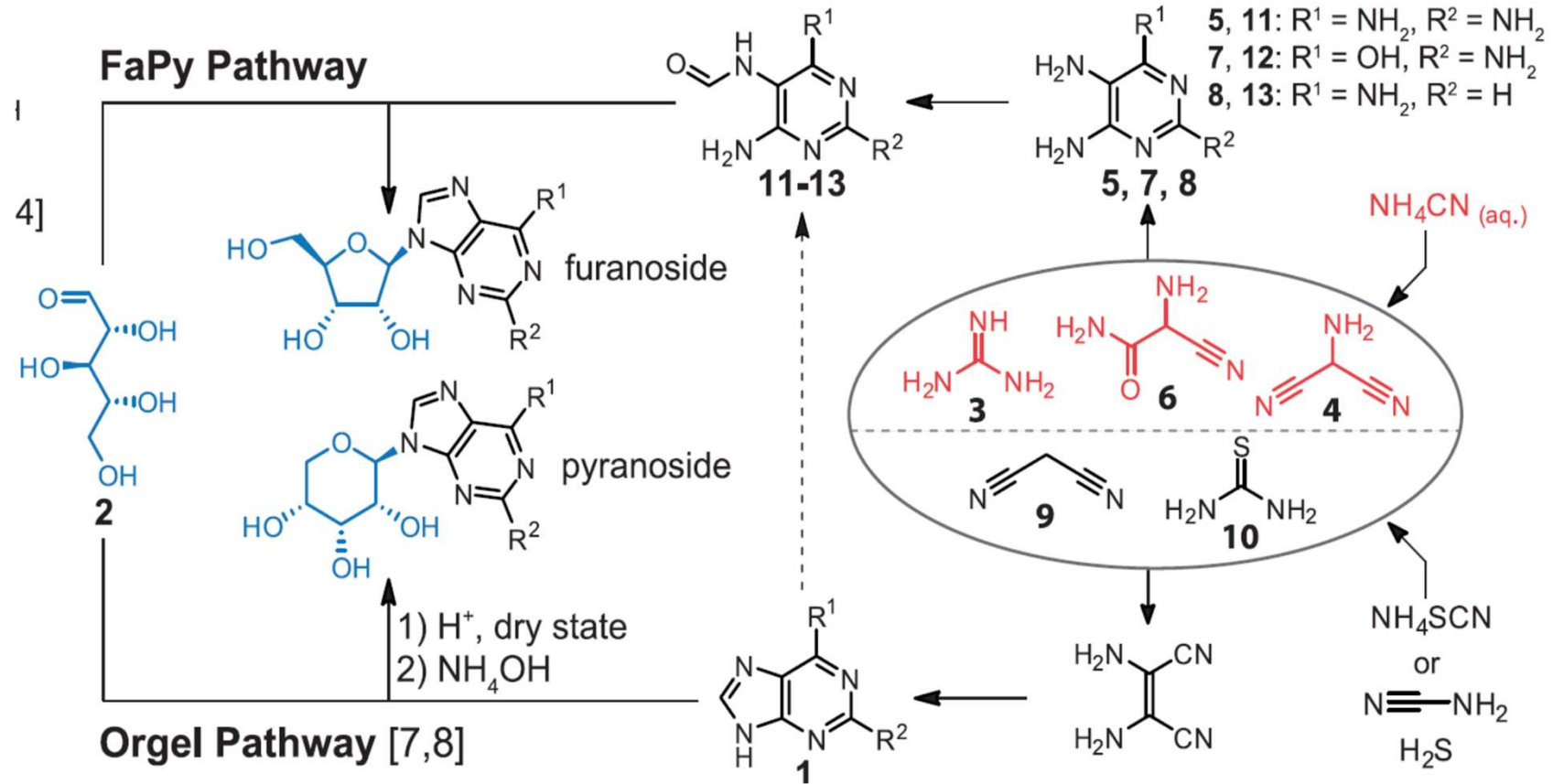


M. W. Powner, S.-L. Zheng, J. W. Szostak *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* **2012**, *134*, 13889-13895

Purine nucleoside synthesis - alternatives

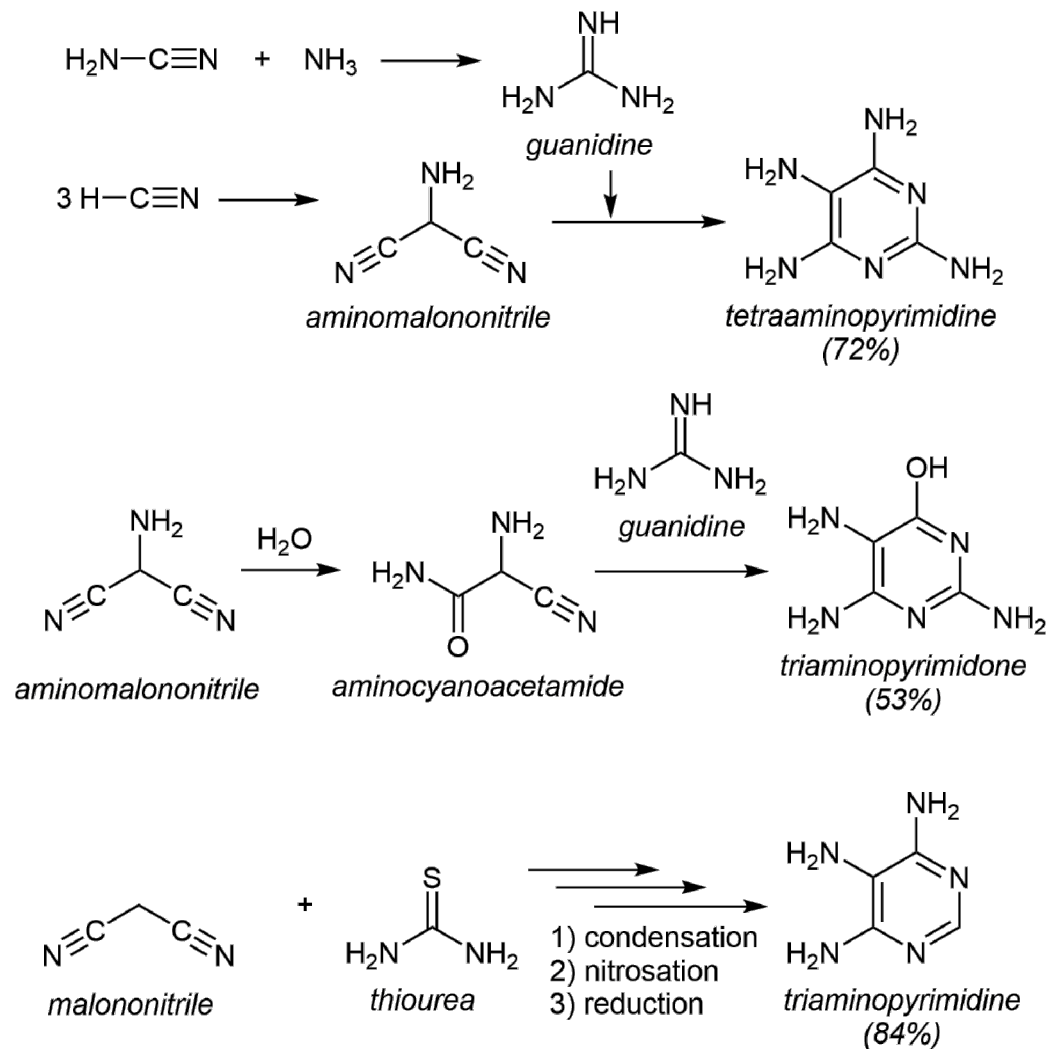


Prebiotic synthesis of purine nucleosides –FaPY pathway



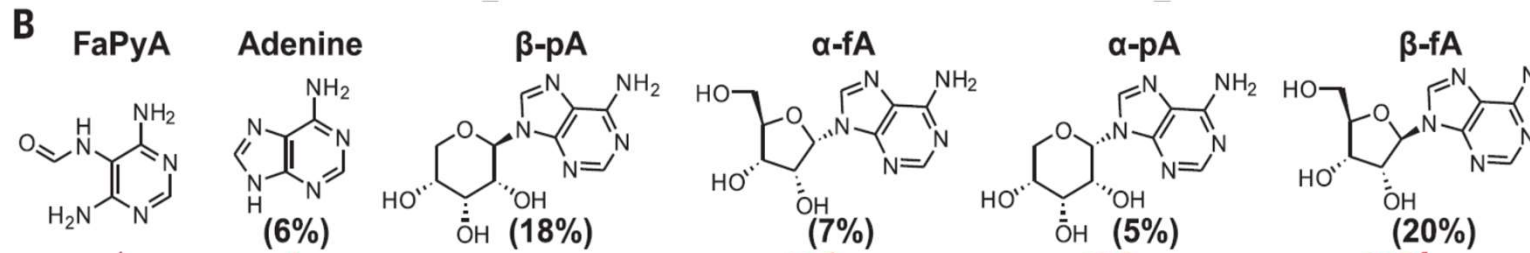
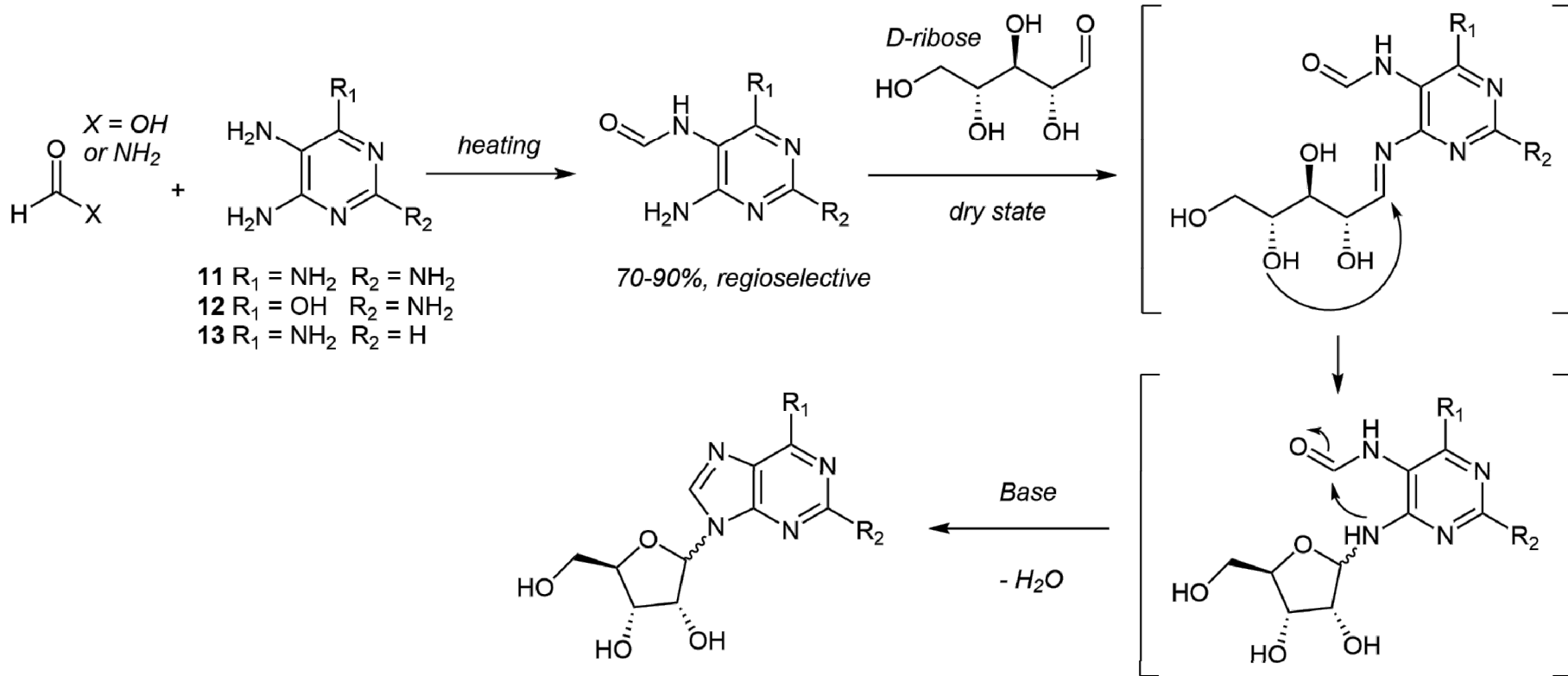
T. Carell, *Nature* **2016**, *352*(6287), 833-836

Prebiotic syntheses of aminopyrimidines



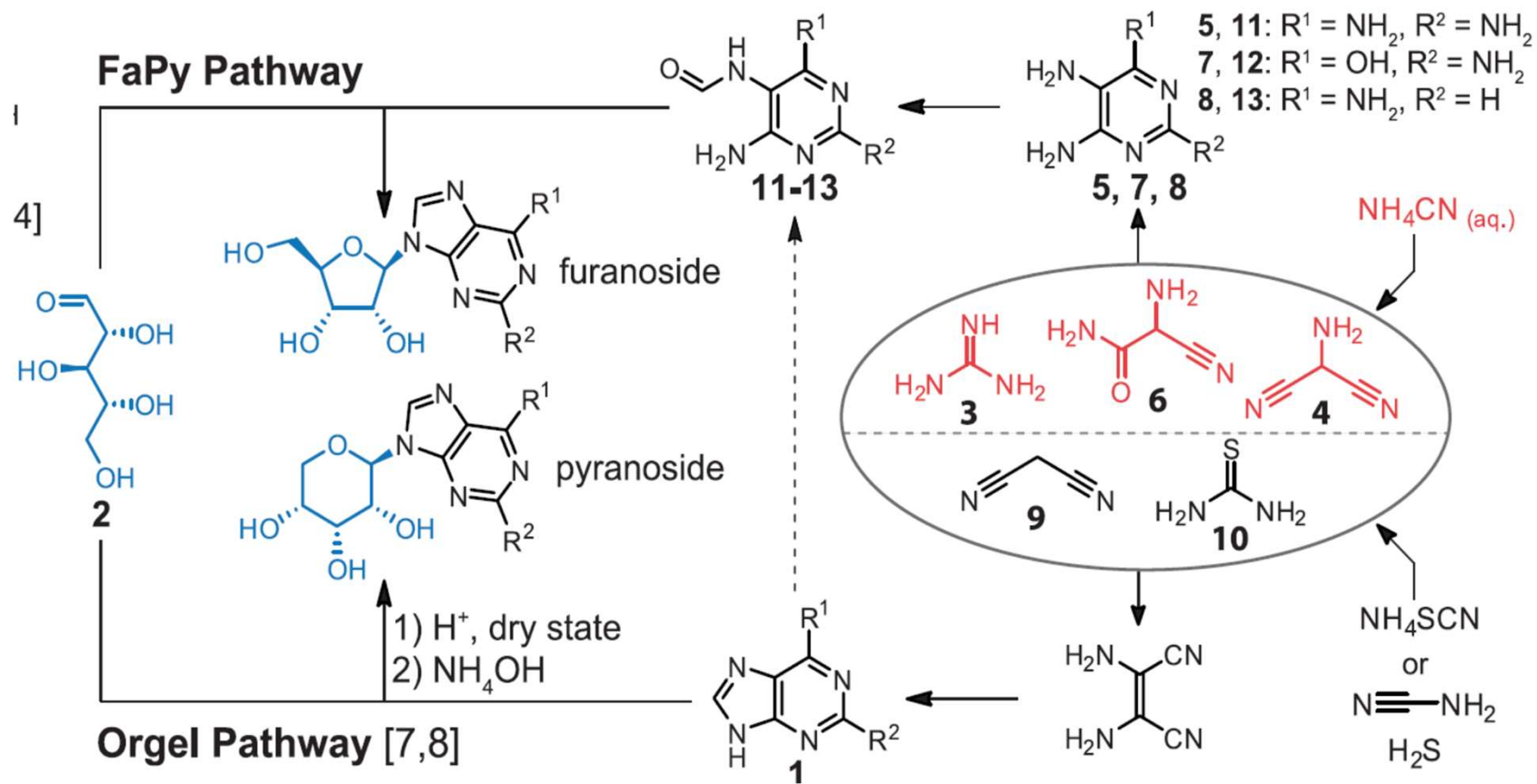
T. Carell, *Nature* 2016, 352(6287), 833-836

Prebiotic synthesis of purine nucleosides –FaPY pathway



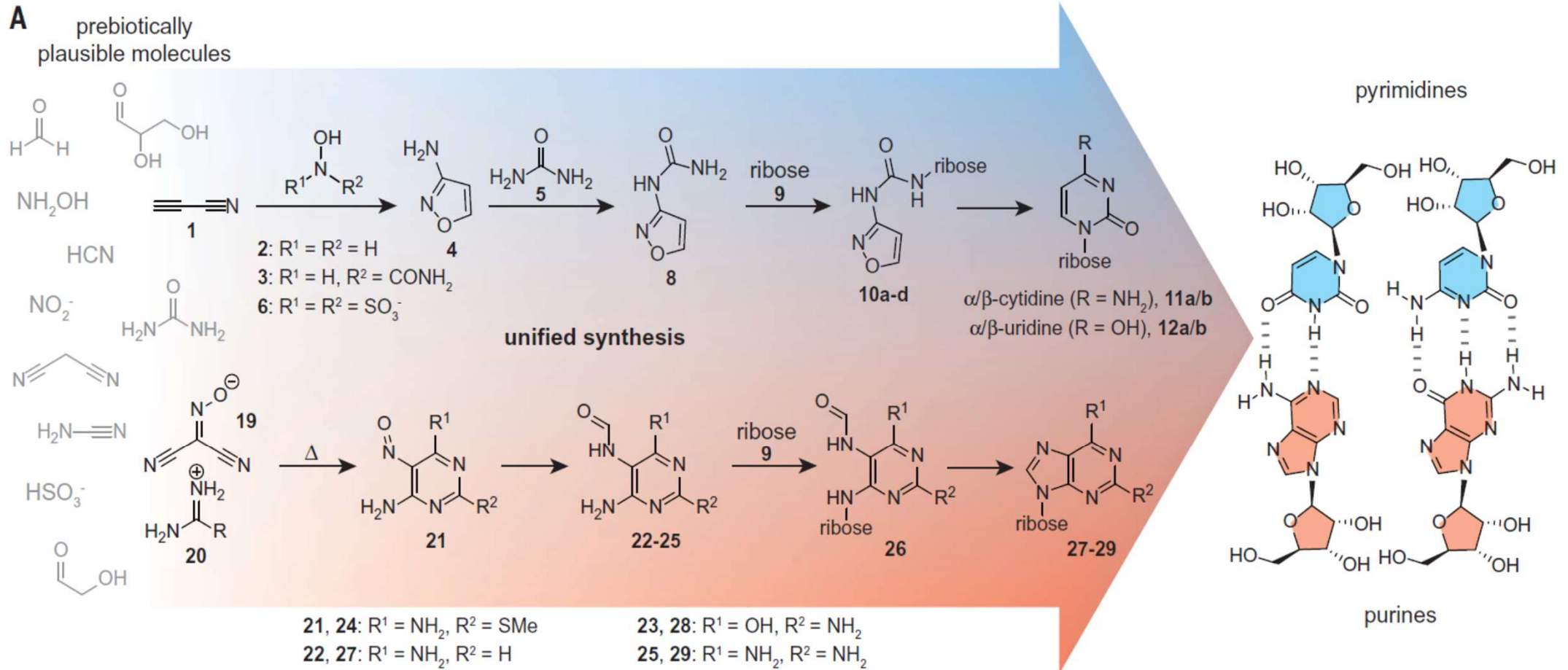
T. Carell, *Nature* **2016**, 352(6287), 833-836

Prebiotic synthesis of purine nucleosides –FaPY pathway



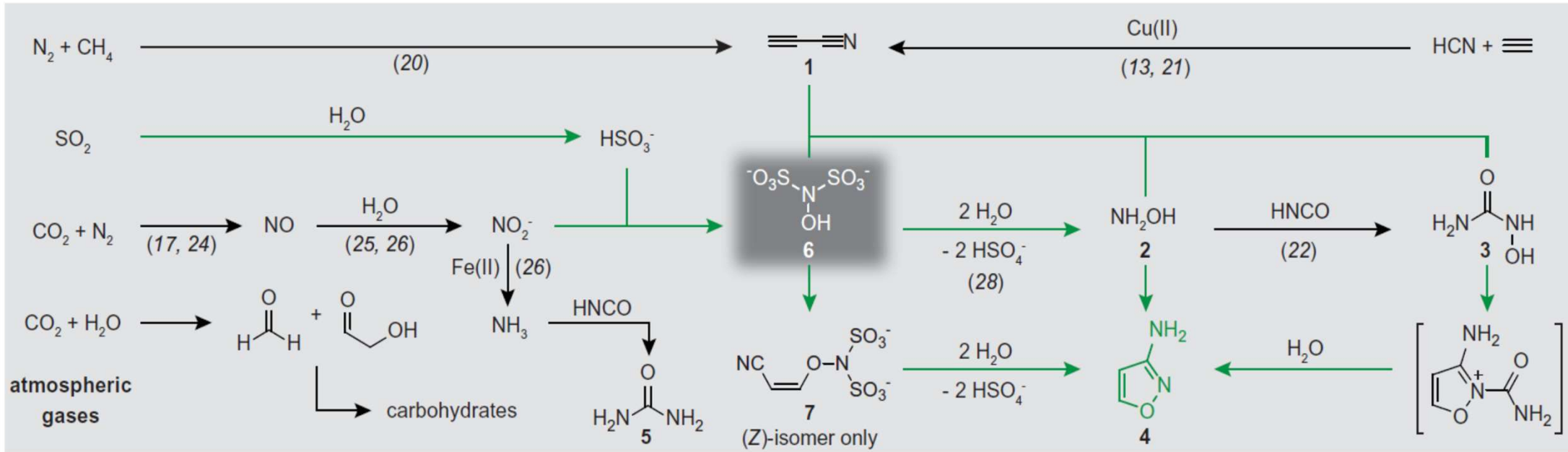
T. Carell, *Nature* **2016**, 352(6287), 833-836

Unified prebiotic synthesis of pyrimidine and purine ribonucleotides



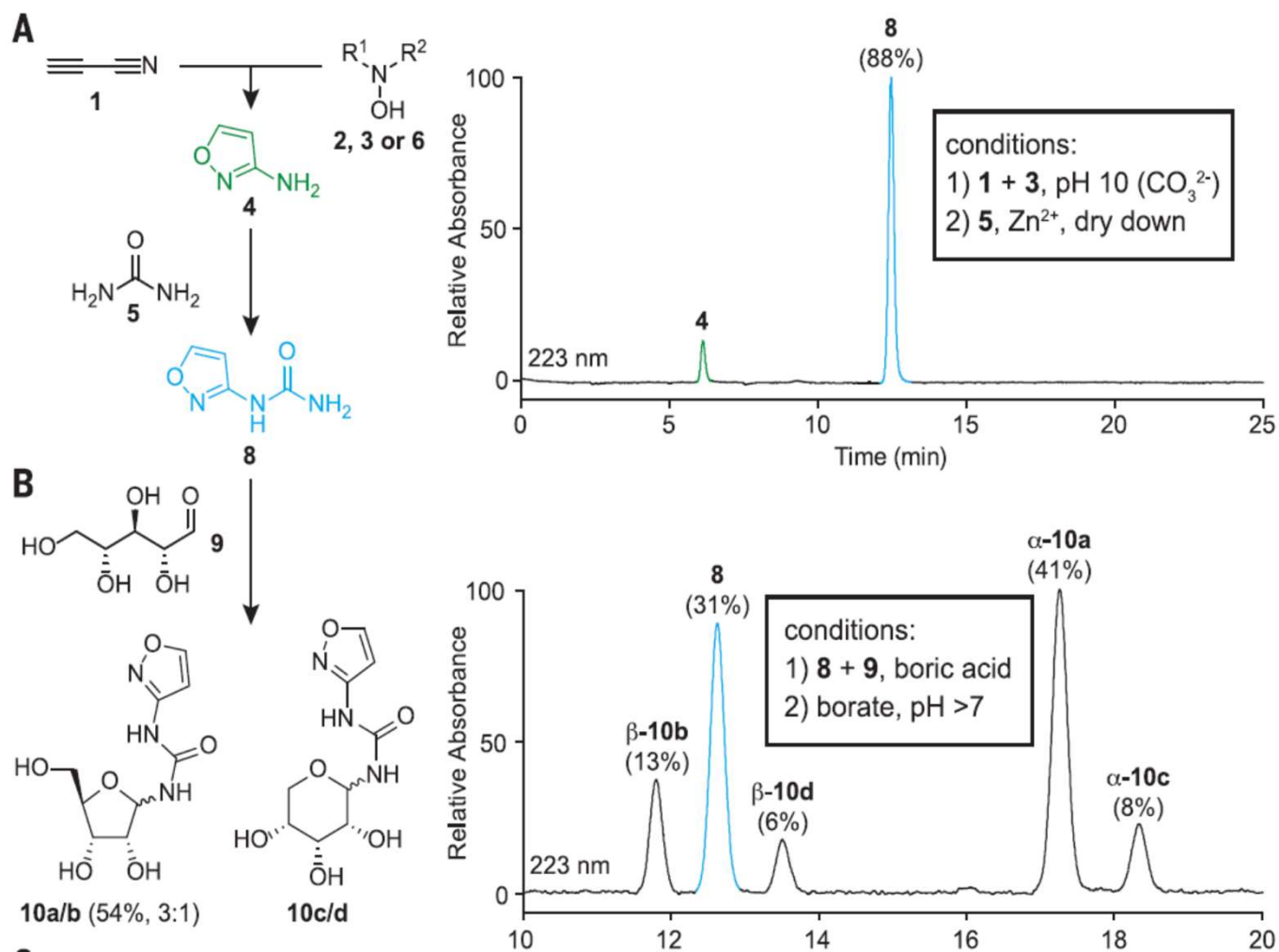
S. Becker, J. Feldmann, S. Wiedemann, ..., T. Carell, *Science* **2019**, *366*, 76-82

Unified prebiotic synthesis of pyrimidine and purine ribonucleotides



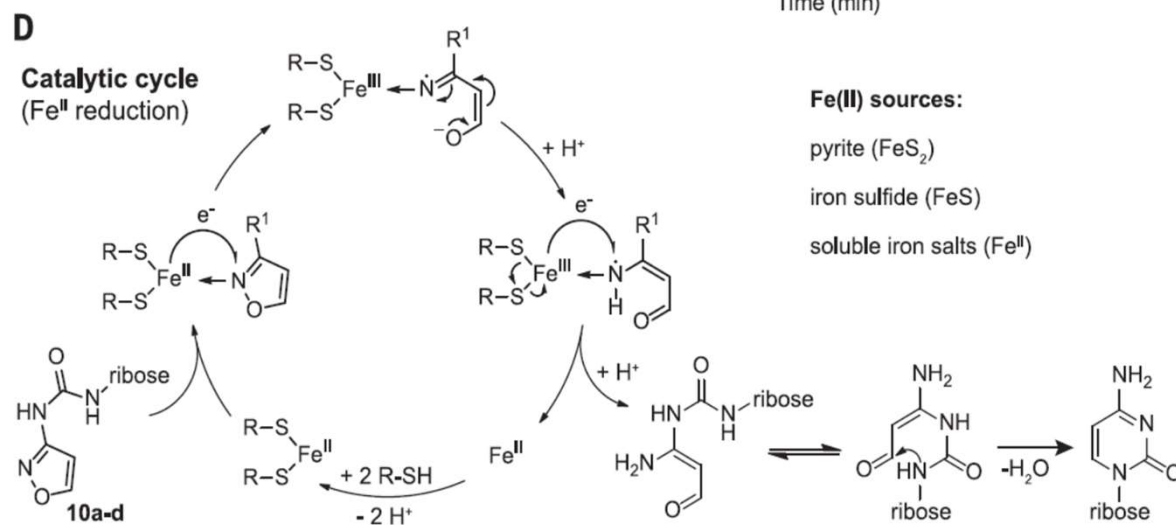
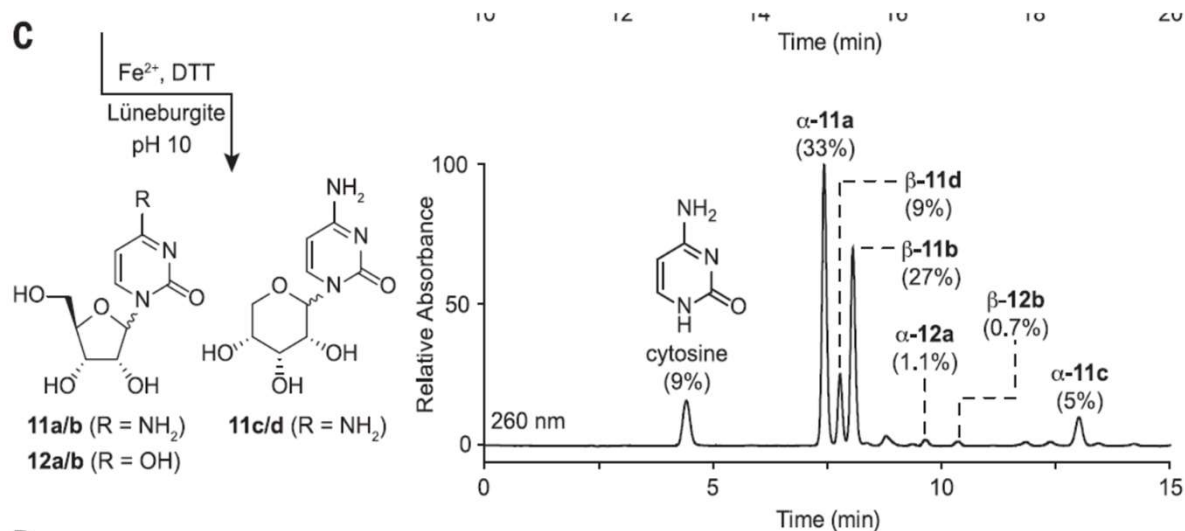
S. Becker, J. Feldmann, S. Wiedemann, ..., T. Carell, *Science* **2019**, 366, 76-82

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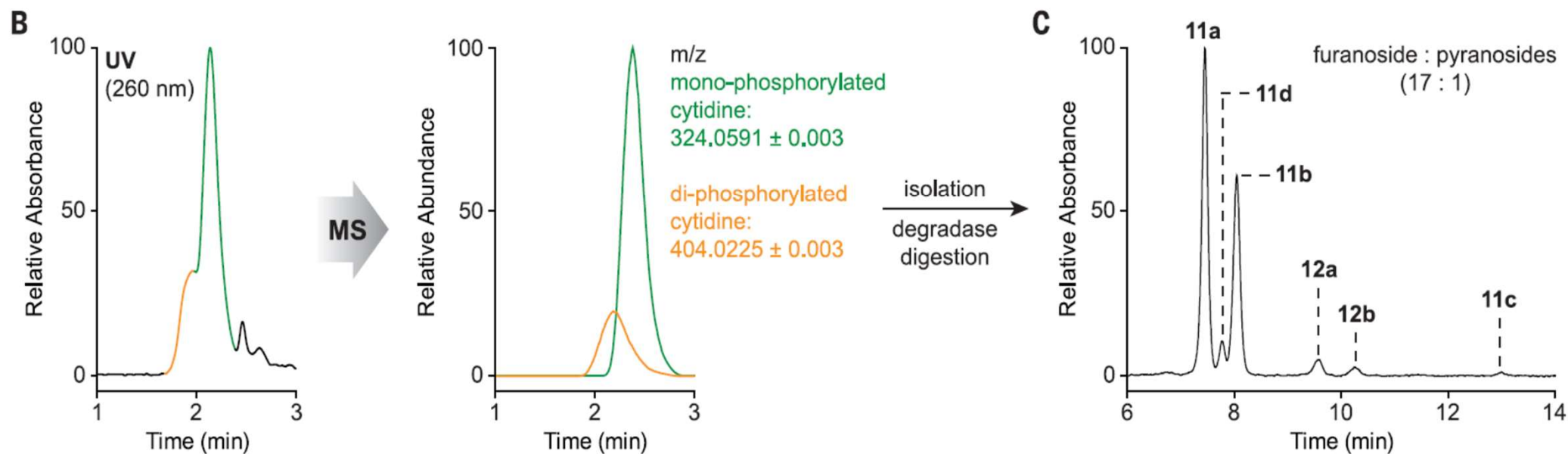
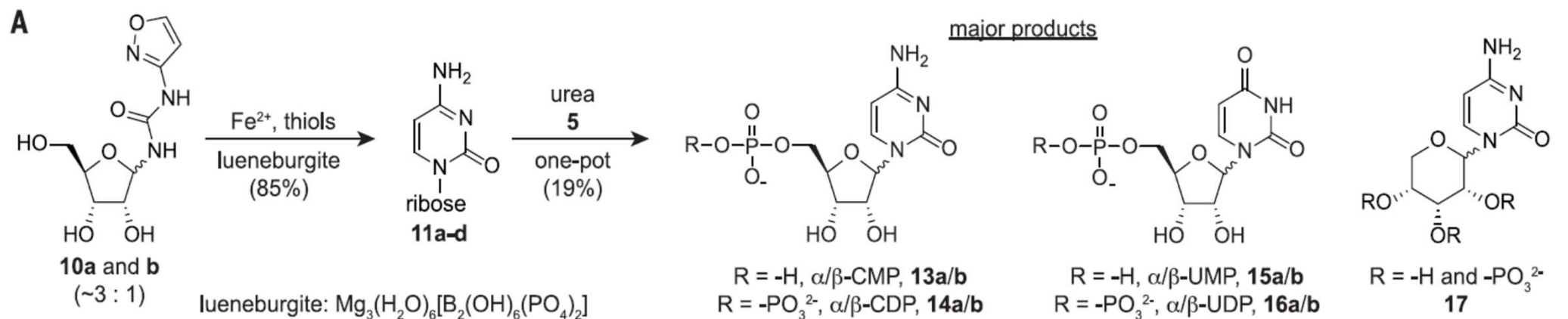
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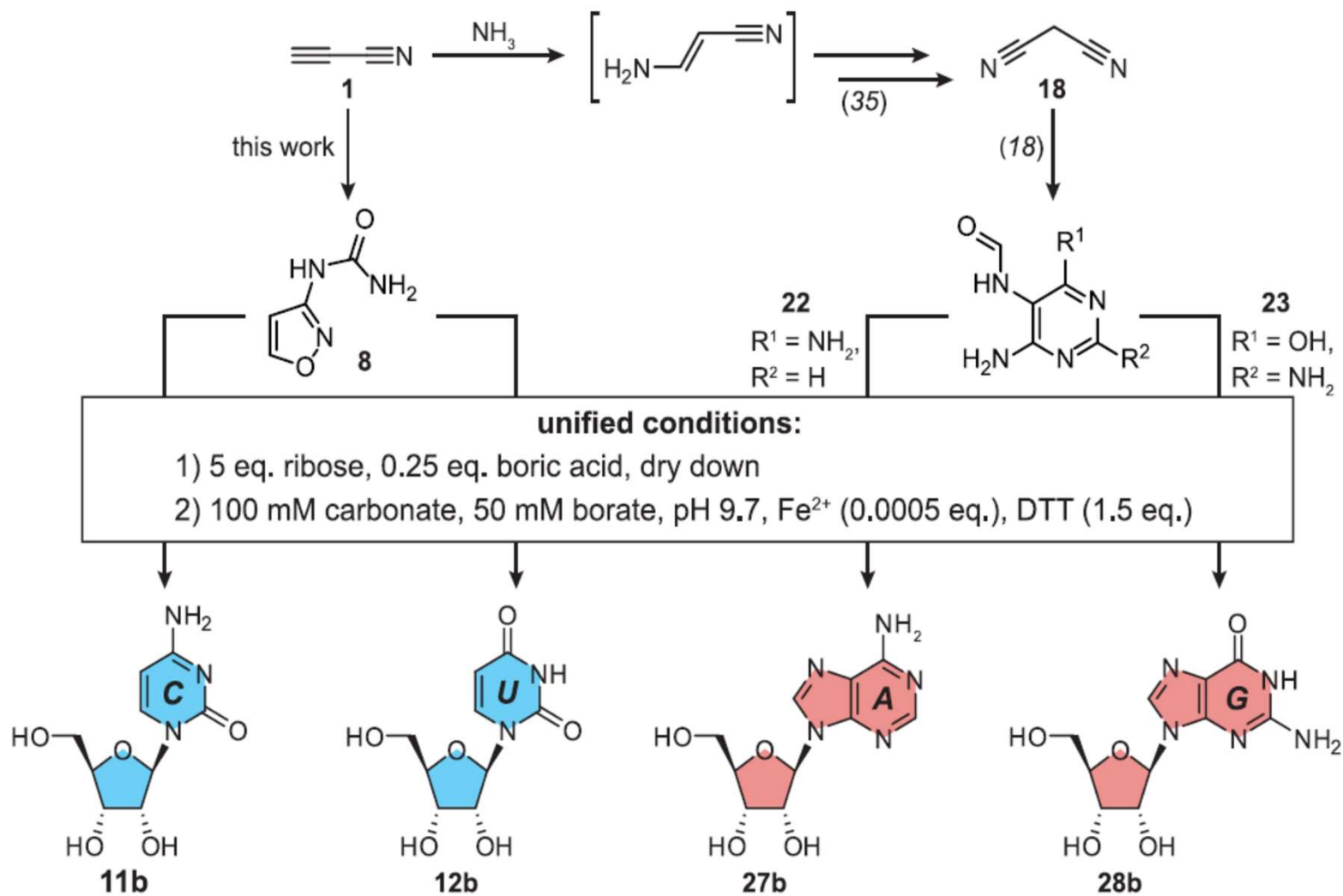
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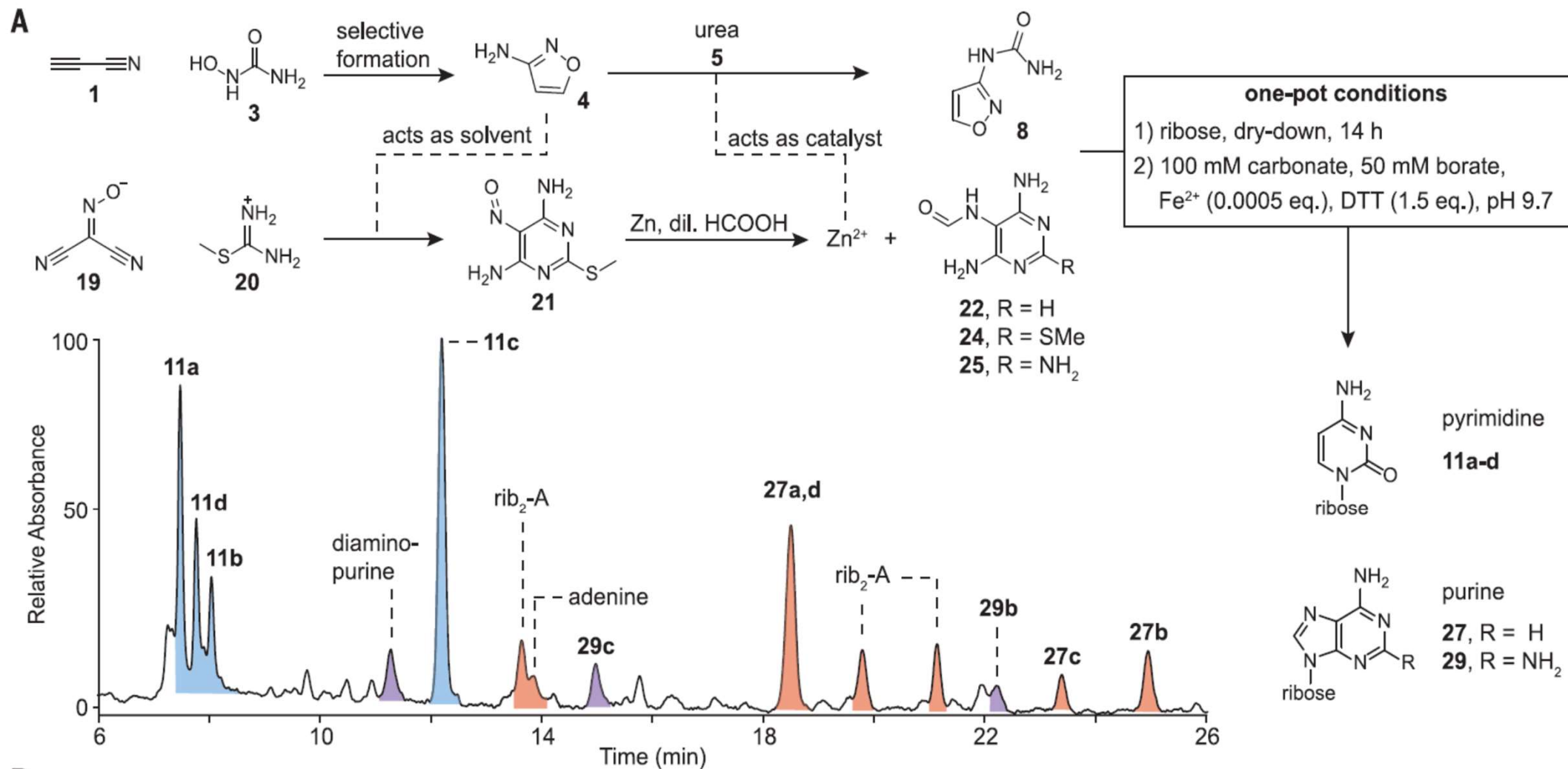
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Unified prebiotic synthesis of pyrimidine and purine ribonucleotides

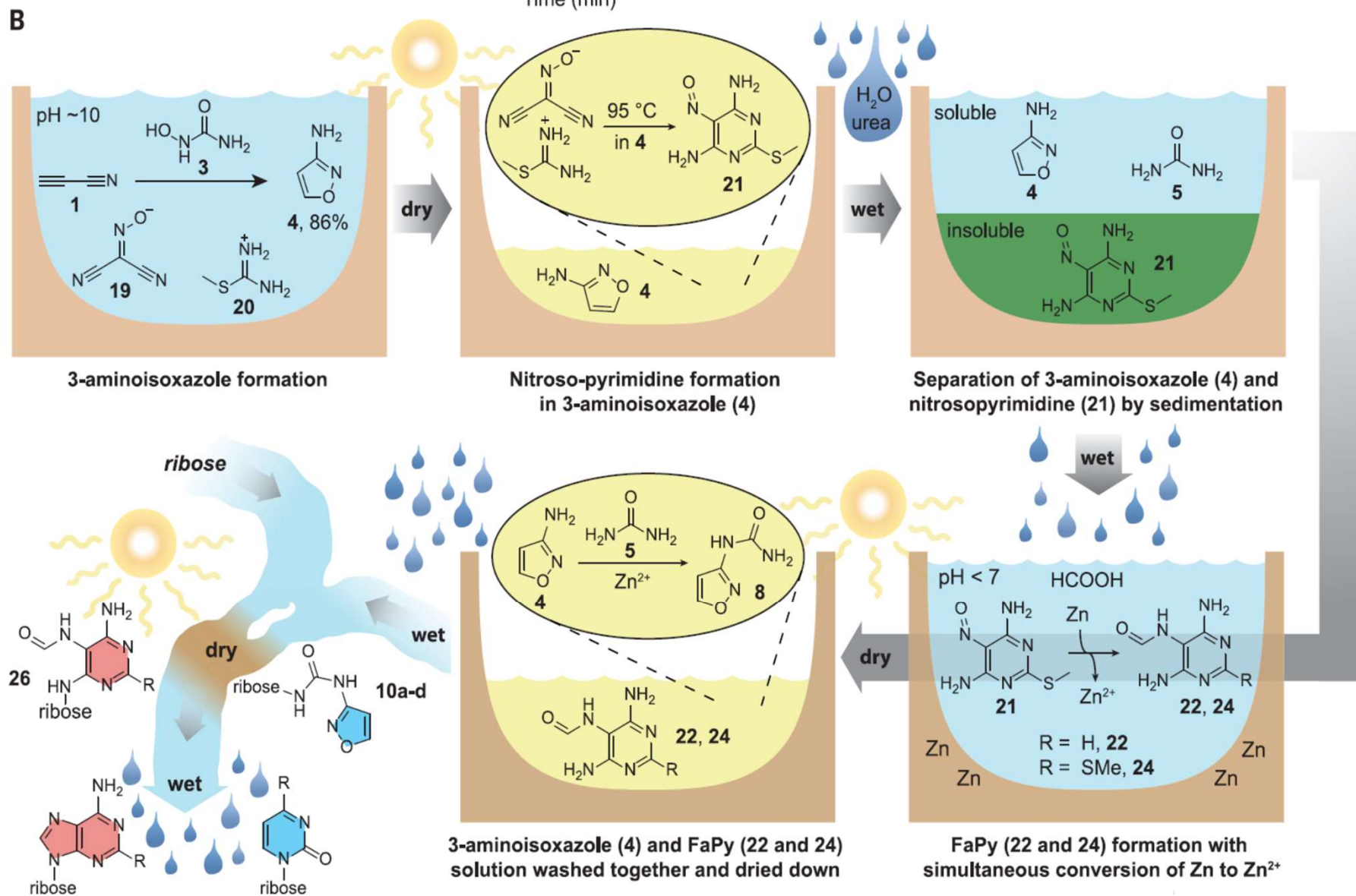


S. Becker, J. Feldmann, S. Wiedemann, ..., T. Carell, *Science* **2019**, *366*, 76-82

Unified prebiotic synthesis of pyrimidine and purine ribonucleotides



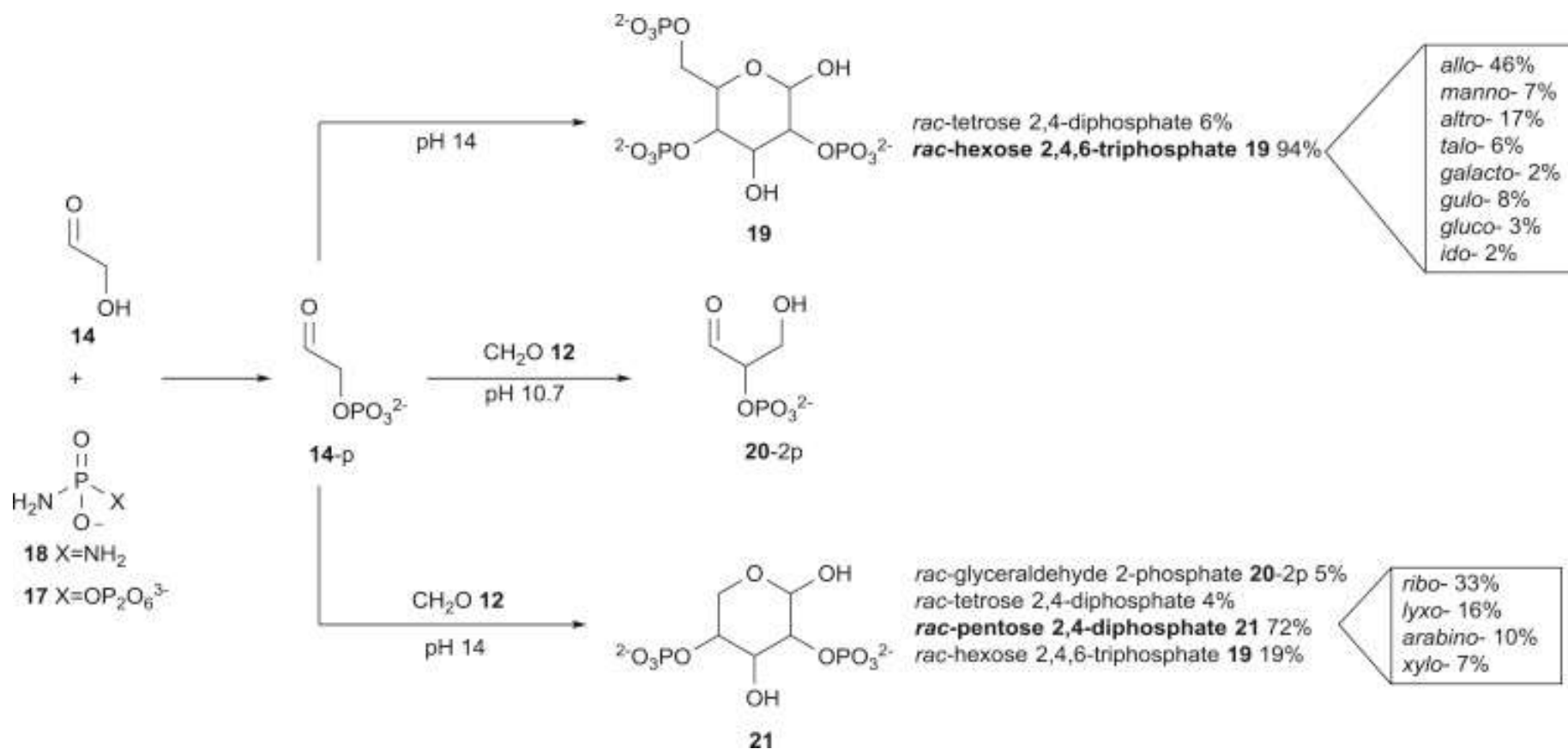
S. Becker, J. Feldmann, S. Wiedemann, ..., T. Carell, *Science* **2019**, *366*, 76-82



S. Becker, J. Feldmann, S. Wiedemann, ..., T. Carell, *Science* **2019**, *366*, 76-82

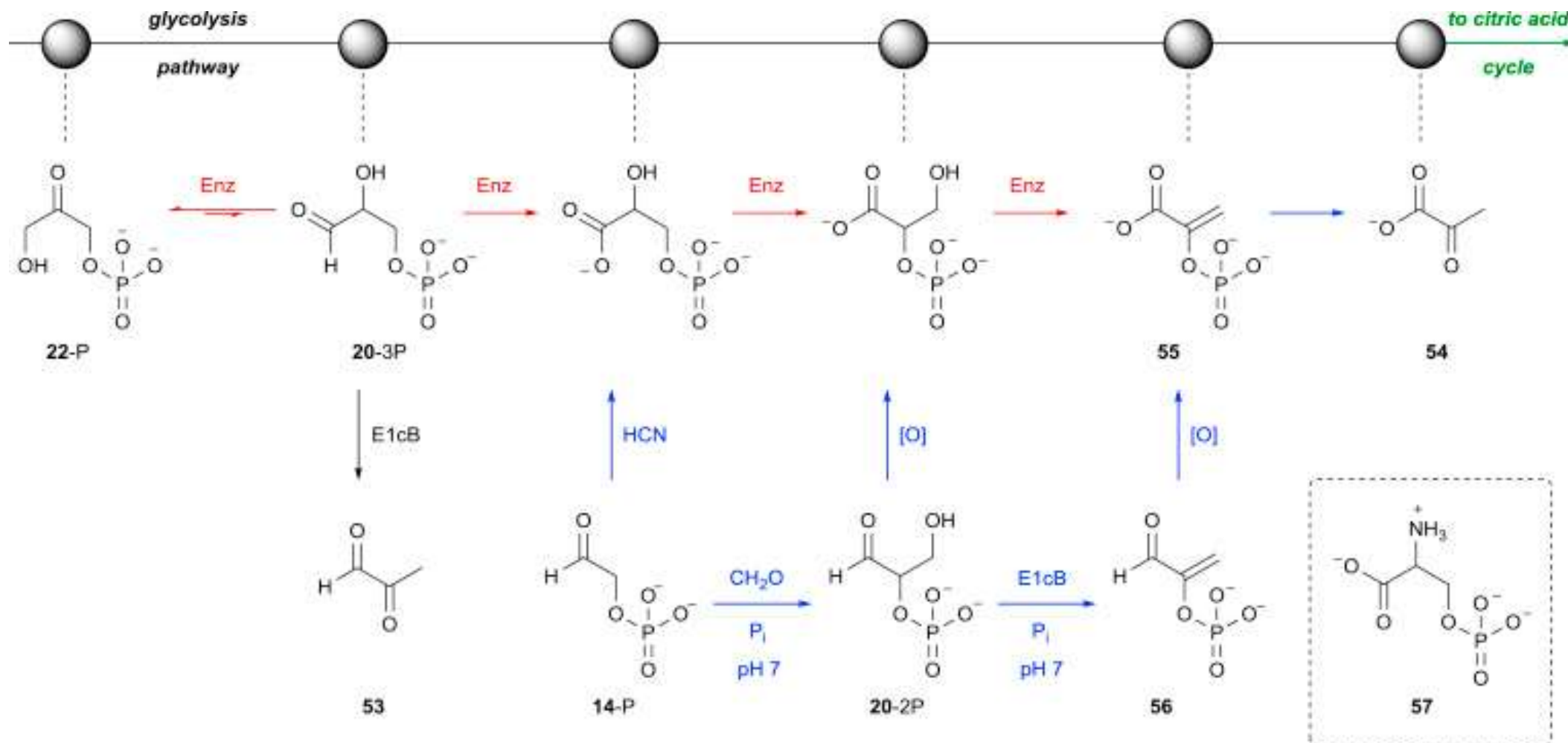
Prebiotic phosphorylations and the origins of protometabolism

Selective Phosphorylation of Glycolaldehyde and Aldol Reactions of Glycolaldehyde Phosphate

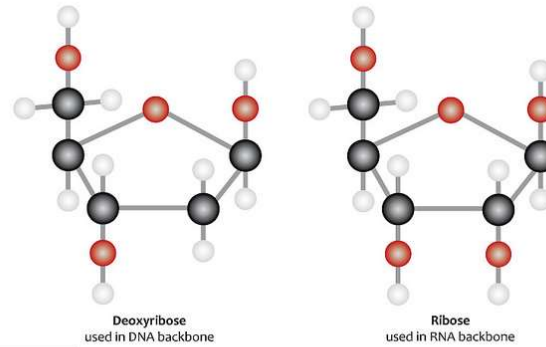
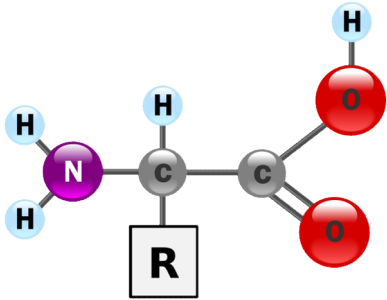


S. Islam, M. W. Powner *Chem* **2017**, *2*, 470-501

Prebiotic Reconstruction of the Triose Glycolysis Pathway by Selective α -Phosphorylation of Sugars



Prebiotic soup - summary



vivianite

