

Having now compared Ebifegha's published description of *4th Origin* with the **actual text and stated purpose of the Clergy Letter Project**, I think there is an important distinction: **some of his criticisms accurately identify positions the Clergy Letter takes, but others attack a position the Project does not actually take.**

Here is the comparison point by point.

**1. Ebifegha: clergy are improperly presenting evolution as scientific fact
This criticism is substantially accurate as a description of the Clergy Letter.**

The Christian Clergy Letter explicitly says: “the theory of evolution is a foundational scientific truth” and says that treating it as merely “one theory among others” amounts to scientific ignorance. It also asks school boards to affirm evolution as a core component of science education.

So Ebifegha is justified in pointing out that **the clergy are not merely saying “I personally accept evolution.”** They are making a strong public claim about the scientific status of evolutionary theory and advocating a particular science curriculum.

But there is an important qualification.

The Project does **not** claim that the clergy's signatures constitute scientific evidence for evolution. Its argument is essentially:

“We are religious leaders, and we want to make clear that acceptance of evolution is compatible with religious faith.”

That is quite different from:

“Thousands of clergy believe evolution, therefore evolution is scientifically true.”

Ebifegha sometimes appears to treat the latter as the Project's argument, but I don't find that claim in the Clergy Letter itself.

2. Ebifegha: the clergy are acting as advocates for “evolutionism,” not merely defending science

Partly fair, but this depends heavily on what he means by “evolutionism.”

Ebifegha deliberately distinguishes *evolution* from *evolutionism*. He uses “evolutionism” for the larger worldview he believes extrapolates from observable biological variation to an unsupported account of life's ultimate origins. His book argues that Darwinian macroevolution is outside the proper boundaries of science.

The Clergy Letter, however, makes a much narrower claim. It says:

- evolution is scientifically well established;
- biblical stories need not be read as scientific textbooks;
- religion and science can coexist;
- public-school science classes should teach evolution rather than creationism.

It does not say that science has demonstrated that God does not exist.

That distinction matters enormously.

Ebifegha's criticism would be considerably stronger if he could demonstrate that the Clergy Letter's conception of evolution **necessarily entails atheism**. But that isn't the position of the Project. Indeed, the whole purpose of the Project is to demonstrate the opposite: that **religious belief and evolutionary science can coexist**.

3. Ebifegha: the Clergy Letter promotes atheism

This is the weakest of his criticisms.

The actual Christian Clergy Letter explicitly invokes God repeatedly. It says that human rationality is among “**God's good gifts**” and that failing to use reason can constitute a rejection of God's will. It describes science and religion as different but complementary forms of truth. The Project's background statement is even more explicit: it was created to counter the perception that science and religion are necessarily in conflict and to demonstrate that clergy can embrace evolutionary theory while retaining religious faith.

So there is a real logical problem with the accusation:

If accepting evolution necessarily promoted atheism, the Clergy Letter Project would be an extraordinarily strange vehicle for promoting atheism, since it consists of thousands of clergy explicitly arguing that evolution and belief in God are compatible.

Ebifegha can certainly argue that evolution *undermines* particular theological doctrines. But that's different from demonstrating that the Clergy Letter **promotes atheism**.

4. Ebifegha: clergy are improperly mixing science and religion

Here there is an interesting disagreement about what the Clergy Letter actually says.

The letter itself says: “science remain science and ... religion remain religion” and describes them as **“two very different, but complementary, forms of truth.”**

So the Project's explicit philosophy is actually **separation**, albeit not the separation Ebifegha wants.

Ebifegha's objection is that evolution itself contains philosophical assumptions about ultimate origins and therefore cannot simply be placed on the “science” side of the dividing line.

This is probably **his strongest philosophical criticism of the Project**.

The question becomes:

Where does evolutionary biology end and philosophical naturalism begin?

The Clergy Letter says, essentially, that evolutionary science belongs in the science classroom and religion belongs elsewhere.

Ebifegha says that the evolutionary account of origins has crossed the boundary into worldview territory and therefore shouldn't receive privileged treatment in a public-school science curriculum. His proposed solution is consequently not merely “separation of church and state,” but **“separation of worldviews and state.”**

That's a genuine philosophical dispute rather than a simple factual disagreement.

5. Ebifegha: the Project unfairly excludes creationism from public education

This is an accurate description of what the Project advocates—but his conclusion doesn't follow automatically.

The Project absolutely does oppose teaching creationism as science in public schools. The UU version of the letter is especially explicit: people who believe in literal creationism are free to teach those views at home, in religious institutions and parochial schools, but teaching them in public schools would amount to imposing a religious perspective.

So Ebifegha is right about the policy.

Where the disagreement lies is **why**.

The Clergy Letter's position is: Creationism is religious doctrine, therefore it does not belong in a public science classroom.

Ebifegha's position is essentially: Evolutionism also makes claims about ultimate origins that science cannot directly observe or reproduce, therefore it should not be granted exclusive scientific status.

That is a much more consequential argument than simply saying “creationism should be taught alongside evolution.”

6. The big problem with Ebifegha's argument: he treats “evolution” and “creationism” as methodological equivalents

This is where I think the book's argument becomes scientifically problematic.

Ebifegha defines genuine science very narrowly as involving events that are **observable, testable and repeatable**, and consequently argues that evolution falls outside science's proper domain.

But that definition would eliminate large portions of historical science. Geologists cannot repeatedly recreate the formation of the Grand Canyon from scratch. Astronomers cannot repeat the formation of a star. Paleontologists cannot repeat the extinction of the dinosaurs. Instead, historical sciences use **multiple independent lines of evidence** to infer past events. Evolutionary biology works in exactly this fashion, while also having experimental and directly observed components.

Consequently, Ebifegha's assertion that evolution is “outside science's purview” is considerably stronger than the claim that **some aspects of evolutionary history cannot be experimentally reproduced**.

Those are not equivalent propositions.

7. His “missing transitional fossils” argument is also more complicated than he suggests

Ebifegha emphasizes the absence of what he considers genuinely transitional organisms and points particularly to the Cambrian fossil record.

But the Clergy Letter Project isn't actually responsible for the scientific interpretation of the fossil record.

This is important when evaluating the book.

Ebifegha is arguing against evolutionary biology; he is not really refuting anything peculiar to the Clergy Letter Project.

The clergy simply accept the mainstream scientific conclusion. The Project's role is principally **religious and educational**: it says that accepting that scientific conclusion does not require rejecting religious faith. That makes the title's focus on the “folly of Clergy Letters” somewhat misleading if one expects the book to establish a scientific case specifically against the Project.

8. The Clergy Letter has evolved since Ebifegha's original book

This is particularly important for the **revised edition** you're asking about.

The Project today is broader than the original evolution campaign. Michael Zimmerman explains that the organization began with evolution but subsequently decided to broaden its mission to the general compatibility of religion and science. It now addresses issues including climate science and broader public attacks on science.

And the Project now has an **Interfaith Clergy Letter** explicitly centered on truth, science and religion rather than evolution alone.

As of August 10, 2026, the Project lists **18,921 signatures** across its various letters, including 15,745 Christian clergy.

So if Ebifegha's revised edition continues to portray the Project primarily as a campaign by clergy to promote Darwinism, **that is an incomplete description of what the organization currently is.**

The most revealing difference

I think the disagreement can be reduced to this:

Clergy Letter Project

Ebifegha

Evolution is established science.

Evolutionary *macroevolution* is not established in the sense claimed.

Religion and science address different kinds of questions.

Evolutionary claims about origins contain worldview/philosophical assumptions.

Biblical creation stories need not be scientific accounts.

Biblical creation is a historical account of God's creation.

Creationism shouldn't be taught as science in public schools.

If creationism is excluded because it is a worldview, evolutionism should not be privileged as a worldview either.

Evolution does not threaten belief in God.

Acceptance of evolution can undermine biblical claims about creation.

Science should remain science and religion religion.

The state should separate **worldviews** rather than simply church and state.

The last two rows are where the real intellectual confrontation lies.

My overall assessment

Ebifegha is strongest when he challenges the Clergy Letter's implicit assumption that saying “evolution is science” automatically resolves the philosophical questions surrounding human origins. It is legitimate to ask where empirical evolutionary biology ends and philosophical naturalism begins.

He is considerably weaker when he argues that the Clergy Letter promotes atheism or that evolutionary biology is simply another religious worldview. The Project's actual text is unusually explicit that belief in God and acceptance of evolution are compatible.

And there is a further irony: **Ebifegha accuses the clergy of improperly mixing religion and science, while his own proposed remedy is explicitly theological**—that God's claim to have created the universe should have standing in determining what may be taught publicly. His published description says that the clergy fail to recognize God's “formal claim” to having created the world and that he wants “separation of worldviews and state” rather than separation of church and state.

So I would not characterize *4th Origin* simply as a book that “refutes the Clergy Letter Project.”

It is better understood as an argument over who gets to define the boundary between scientific knowledge, philosophical interpretation and religious truth—and over whether evolutionary origins should be treated as entirely on the scientific side of that boundary.

