

Philosophical Approaches to History – by Nicholas Miller

General Revelation ----->Special Revelation

Name	1. Closed Secular Confessional	2. Open Critical History	3. Critical Apologetic	4. Critical Confessional	5. Closed Fideist Confessional
Description	Critical, Materialistic, positivistic; no allowance for non-material causes or transcendent categories; religion as an epiphenomena of other human experiences and motives	Uses primarily materialistic categories in a critical way, but does not deny transcendent or non-material causes; religion as a meaningful, causative feature of human existence.	Uses materialistic categories to overtly argue for the value and reality of certain transcendent or non-material categories; takes religion, including theology, as a significant historical factor	In a critical fashion, uses materialistic categories, as well as transcendent categories and causes guided by confessional, revealed sources, to explain history and reality	Hagiography, naïve providentialism, and uncritical confessionalism, driven by denominational or faith identity and partisanship
Examples	Ronal Numbers, <i>Prophetess of Health</i> ; Fawn Brodie, <i>No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith</i> ; anything by Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens	George Marsden, <i>Jonathan Edwards</i> ; Mark Noll, <i>America's God</i> ; Brad Gregory, <i>Salvation at Stake</i> ; Nathan Hatch, <i>The Democratization of American Christianity</i> ; Grant Whacker, <i>Heaven Below</i>	Richard Bushman, <i>Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling</i> ; Brad Gregory, <i>The Unintended Reformation</i> , Land, ed., <i>Adventism in America: A History</i>	Noll, <i>Christ and the Life of the Mind</i> ; Marsden, <i>The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship</i> ; Foxes <i>Book of Martyrs</i> ; Adventist Classic Library Series; careful denominational history and mission books.	Butler's <i>Lives of the Saints</i> ; conspiracy versions of history; Protestant and Catholic fantasy stories of Warburg Castle; careless denominational history and mission books.
Intended Audiences	Secularists; "seeking" religionists	Primarily secular; secondarily religious	Primarily religious; Secondarily secular	Primarily co-religionist, Secondarily, a religious outlook; "seeking" secularists	Co-religionists only

1. These categories are ideal types and not exhaustive; the categories could be sub-divided further.
2. Particular works may not fall in any single category, but may contain parts that belong in two or even three categories, but most books, at least that take audience identification seriously, will be written primarily in one category.
3. Categories 2 and 3 overlap somewhat, and may not be distinct categories as much as differing emphases.
4. Adventist historians should, I think, write in category 4, for the edification of the church and faith seekers, and some combination of categories 2 and 3, as part of their outreach efforts to their secular peers, colleagues and general public.