CULTURAL STAGES IN THE WEST IN RELATION TO CHRISTIANITY

Culture
• Roman: 33-300
• Late Antique: 300-700
  - Byzantine: 550-800
• Early Medieval: 700-1100
• Late Medieval: 1100-1400
• Renaissance: 1400-1540
• Baroque: 1540-1800
• Neoclassical: 1740-1800
• Revolution: 1789-1918
• Contemporary: 1918-today
• Postmodern proper: 1945-today

Church’s response
• Suspicion and condemnation
  - with implicit inculturation
• Active inculturation
• Presumption that Latin Christian culture is Christianity
• Imposition of European culture as the only means of living the faith (mostly)
• Entrenchment and the imposition of early modern culture as the only Christian culture
• Tentative inculturation
• Active appreciation of various cultures

EARLY CHRISTIAN ENGAGEMENTS
• Incorporation of Roman (pagan) themes to express the faith
  o Christ as Apollo, orante, good shepherd, wine harvest, peacocks
• Burial: similarities and contrasts
• Baptistry: tombs and rebirth
• Basilica
  o Transformation of the meaning of space
  o Pilgrimage imagery
• Transformations over time
  o Mosaic shifts
  o Byzantine influences

MIDDLE ADAPTIONS
• Romanesque
• Gothic
  o Reimagining the worship space
  o Ascent in diversity rather than pilgrimage
• Birth of a new style
  o Transformations of the cross
  o Embodied beauty

RENAISSANCE
• The perfect world
• The beauty of the present world
• Foretaste of blessedness
BAROQUE
- Majesty
- Transformation
- Bodies in motion
- Drama
- Sentimental

NEOCLASSICAL
- New imaginings
- Civic worship

STAGNATION
- Excessive sentimentalism
- Defensive triumphalism
- Repeating the tradition
- Archaism and eclecticism
- Kitsch realism

TWENTIETH CENTURY CULTURAL AWARENESS
First attempts at inculturation in art
- Themes from the culture
- Themes adapted to the culture
- Cross-cultural imaging, with syncretistic dangers
- Aiming for relevance in images
- Counter-example of the icon

DIALOGUE WITH CULTURE: ART
- What criteria would be used in deciding whether to place a particular image in your church or church hall?
- How much should images be drawn from the local culture?
- In what way should images challenge our current culture? In what ways should they affirm it?
- How can images be countercultural (in the positive sense that this is used in Christian discourse)?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks of easily accepted religious imagery?