

The Conversion of St Paul

January 25th

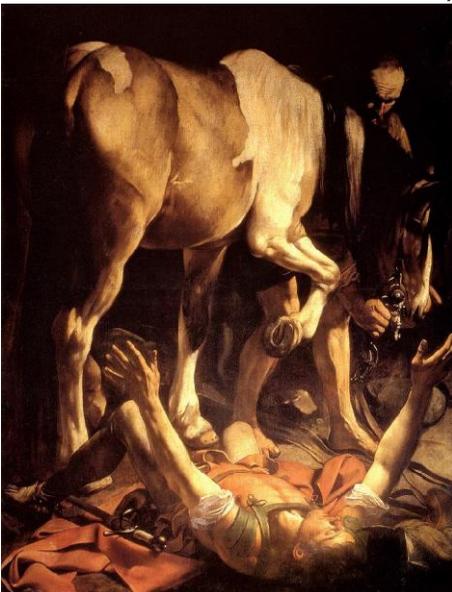


Paul, originally Saul, was a persecutor of Christians, who was travelling to Damascus to arrest any Christians that he might find there. But on the road a light from heaven flashed around him, and he fell to the ground, hearing the voice of Jesus asking *Saul, why do you persecute me?* Paul was blinded, but after being healed by a Christian, Ananias, he

began to preach the message that Jesus is the Son of God. And so the bitterest of opponents of Christians became one of the leading forces in winning people for Christ and shaping the early Church. The drama of the event has been depicted by many artists, and a selection is shown on this page. The earliest is a hand-painted woodcut from Nuremburg Chronicle of the late 15th century. Here Paul is shown alone, overtaken by the light of God.



From 1542 we have a fresco by Michelangelo. Here Paul is shown amongst a great crowd of followers as the heavens open to reveal the risen Christ. The final picture is from around 1600, by Caravaggio. Here the painter zooms in to focus on Paul, although he is part of a group. Caravaggio shows the light of God not by its source, but by the way it falls on Paul as he opens his arms and stretches them to embrace Jesus, now known as the Son of God and his saviour.



Three very different images of a very significant event.