

Red Planet 'Canals'

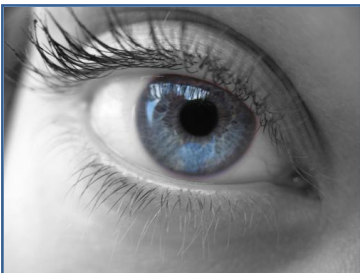
As the 20th century arrived, the world's most distinguished astronomer was certain there were canals on Mars. Sir Percival Lowell, esteemed for his study of the solar system, had a particular fascination with the Red Planet. Author Craig Brian Larson, writing in *Leadership Journal*, tells the story.

In 1877, when he heard that an Italian astronomer had seen straight lines crisscrossing the Martian surface, Lowell spent the rest of his years squinting into the eyepiece of his giant telescope in Arizona, mapping the channels and canals he saw. He was convinced the canals were proof of intelligent life on Mars, possibly an older but wiser race than humanity.

Lowell's observations gained wide acceptance. So eminent was he, none dared contradict him.

Now, of course, things are different. Space probes have orbited Mars and landed on its surface. The entire planet has been mapped, and no one has seen a canal. How could Lowell have "seen" so much that wasn't there? Two possibilities:

1. He so wanted to see canals that he did, over and over again.
2. We know now that he suffered from a rare eye disease that made him see the blood vessels in his own eyes. The Martian "canals" he saw were nothing more than the bulging veins of his eyeballs. Today, the malady is known as *Lowell's syndrome*.



When Jesus cautions that "in the same way you judge others, you will be judged," and warns of seeing "the speck of sawdust" in another's eye while missing the plank in our own (Matthew 7:1-3), could He not be referring to the spiritual equivalent of *Lowell's syndrome*?

Over and over, we see faults in others because we don't want to believe anything better about them. And so often, we think we have a first-hand view of their shortcomings, when in fact our vision is distorted by our own disease; it's called sin.

– Beecher Hunter