**A Strong Delusion**

by Kyle Campbell

In 1877, Percival Lowell heard that an Italian astronomer had seen straight lines crisscrossing the surface of the planet Mars. 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. About the turn of the century, Lowell’s theories had gained wide acceptance.

Now, of course, the situation is different. Space probes have orbited Mars and landed on its surface. The entire planet has been mapped, and no one has seen a channel or canal of any kind. How could Lowell have “seen” so much that was not there? There are two possibilities: he wanted to see canals so badly that he deceived himself into thinking they existed, or 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.”

The apostle Paul wrote, *“... they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness”* (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). These facts about Mr. Lowell well illustrate how a *“strong delusion”* can similarly come to those who do not love the truth. This delusion is as real as a hand in front of their face, but it is false. Has this happened to you?

## Is There Just One Church?

by H. E. Phillips

Religious leaders of this generation would have all of us to believe that Jesus provided many churches" from which each individual can have his "choice." It is not important to them to be a member of any particular church; it is only important to "accept Christ as your personal Saviour" by "faith only" and then join "the church of your choice." These expressions are so common that many think they are actually scriptural terms.

Those on Pentecost who "gladly received" the word that was preached to them by the apostles "were baptized," and when they "were baptized," "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). When these men heard Peter preaching the resurrected Christ, they inquired what they must do "for the remission of sins," and Peter told them to "repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (they had already believed the word which had been preached). When they had done this "the Lord added to the church" those who were receiving the remission of sins, or who were being saved.

To what church did the Lord add these saved people? He certainly did not add them to a church that did not exist at that time. Consequently, every denomination that came into existence since that day of Pentecost two thousand years ago was NOT the one to which the Lord added the saved. If the Lord is still doing today what He did in Acts 2:47, He does not add the saved to any denomination today. But what church did exist on Pentecost? The answer to this question will solve our problem.

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, "I WILL build my church." He evidently did what he said he would do, for he was adding to it on Pentecost. From Pentecost on the church is pictured as being in existence. Furthermore, the idea of more than one church is never given.

I should like to give three reasons why we know the Lord authorizes and recognizes but one church.

1. The Bible says there is only one. This evidence cannot be denied. "So we, being many are one body in Christ" (Rom. 12:5). "There is one body, and one Spirit" (Eph. 4:4). This same book identifies what the body is, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, WHICH IS HIS BODY, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23). "But now are they many members, yet BUT ONE body" (1 Cor. 12:20). "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in ONE body . . ." (Col. 3:15). "And that he might reconcile both (Jew and Gentile) unto God in ONE body by the cross" (Eph. 2:16). The Bible says there is ONE, and BUT ONE, body or church.

2. Its Nature permits but one. "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather TOGETHER in ONE all things in Christ" (Eph. 1:10). All that are in Christ are gathered together in ONE. Christ has made both Jew and Gentile ONE, which is called "one new men" (Eph. 2:14-15). "For by one Spirit are we ALL baptized into ONE BODY, whether we be Jews or Gentiles..." (1 Cor. 12:13). All who have been baptized into Christ by faith "are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one" (Heb. 2:11). All the sanctified are in one body. All in Christ are to be of the same mind and speak the same thing (Phil. 2:2; 1 Cor. 1:10). This is not possible of the many churches today. All who will be heirs of God must be in Christ, which means to be in his body (Gal. 3:28-29; Eph. 3:6).

3. Other Inferences allow but one. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). What God requires of one man, He requires of all. By all doing the same thing, all will be in the same body. Christ made but one offering to sanctify all for all times (Heb. 10:12-14). Through his Blood one testament was sealed (1 Cor. 11:25; Matt. 26:28), one church was purchased (Acts 20:28). There is only one gospel (Gal. 1:8-9), one faith (Eph. 4:5; Jude 3), and one way (John 14:6). It is not possible to have "many churches" in the light of these truths. Study them for yourself.