

OUT OF BODY OR OUT OF MIND?

Out On A Limb presented a demonstration of spiritual power that has shaken many Christian viewers. MacLaine's encounter with trance channelers, her psychic connection with other people miles distant, the apparent directing of her life from some unseen powers that seem to have chosen her for a special mission in life—these all worked together to weave a story with tremendous impact. One of the most unnerving sequences dramatized her first out-of-body experience while on her trip to the Peruvian Andes with David Manning.

Sensing MacLaine's call to be a witness for the New Age, Manning led her step-by-step to her own self-realization. Knowing the impact that an out-of-body experience would have in persuading her that she was on the path to truth, his first approach was gentle and seemingly innocent.

Taking MacLaine to a hot mineral spring, Manning's objective was to teach her to allow her body to relax so that her mind—specifically her subconscious—would take control of her senses. While in the hot spring, Manning told her to concentrate on the light from a candle located on a ledge directly across from her, and to think of herself as one with the light—to become the light; to become the candle.

This exercise caused MacLaine to momentarily slip into a hypnotic trance, but she snapped out of it before entering totally into an altered state of consciousness. Though not knowing where she was headed through submission to Manning's direction, she was impressed by the euphoria that had swept over her.

Later on, in another hot spring, MacLaine went fully into an altered state. She saw energy in the form of colored auras emanating from the plants surrounding them and from Manning, resting in a trance across from her in the spring.

Suddenly she felt herself rising out of her body, and was soon above the spring looking down on herself, connected by a thin, silver cord. Her ascent accelerated, taking her above the clouds and into outer space toward the moon and beyond. Seeing a distant galaxy whirling in space, she wondered if her silver cord would stretch that far. "With that limiting thought," she said, she returned to her body.

Such an experience attested to by someone as reputable as Shirley MacLaine can easily plant seeds of doubt in Christians who take their eyes off God's Word. It is difficult to maintain faith in Jesus as the only way to truth when unquestionable spiritual experiences of a seemingly beautiful nature take place among those whose beliefs conflict with God's Word.



Media Spotlight

A BIBLICAL ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR MEDIA

SPECIAL REPORT

OUT ON A LIMB

NEW AGE EVANGELISM AND THE CHURCH

by Albert James Dager

In February, 1987, ABC-TV aired a two-part made-for-TV movie version of Shirley MacLaine's best selling book, *Out On A Limb*. Though the ratings were not as good as ABC had anticipated, the number of viewers was substantial.

In its attempt at good theater the movie fell short due to much of the dialogue which was obviously contrived to elicit the philosophical underpinnings of MacLaine's testimony. But in terms of viewer impact the results were significant, as evidenced by a surge of interest not only in MacLaine's writings, but in New Age writings in general after the film was aired.

Though *Out On A Limb* was obviously an evangelistic outreach for New Age philosophy, MacLaine denies that that has been her intent in writing her books or promoting her film. Rather, she says, her purpose is merely to express her own inner feelings in order to fulfill herself. Whether or not anyone accepts what she says isn't important to her.

Out On A Limb traced MacLaine's quest for spiritual truth apart from that afforded her by her Protestant upbringing. Having abandoned Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life, she was open to the possibility that an inward search of self would reveal truth and bring her into contact with God (the higher Self in New Age philosophy).

Through her acquaintance with David Manning, an artist whose paintings reflected his own New Age beliefs, she came to believe that she is God, as are all people—a pantheistic concept that denies the reality of a personal, transcendent God, and relegates Him to the position of Universal Mind or Cosmic Consciousness.

Her trips to Peru with Manning proved spiritually satisfying, and resulted in her first out-of-body experience as well as the consideration that UFO's are real. Many New Agers believe that they are manned by superior beings who are observing humanity and guiding us along the evolutionary path to perfection.

It was MacLaine's trip to Stockholm, Sweden, to rendezvous with her married lover, that provided an experience that would set her on a new course in life. While there she witnessed her first channeling session—a method by which a spiritual entity (supposedly a highly evolved being) speaks through a willing "trance-channeler" (medium). The spirit's messages are generally designed to guide listeners into realms of higher consciousness and affirm their essential deity.

Miss MacLaine has herself become a channeler of a different sort. She does not claim to be a channel for another spirit being, but rather for her own higher Self (her subconscious).



Shirley MacLaine

What we saw in *Out On A Limb* was an account of New Age philosophy packaged in an entertainment format. Though the film was a reenactment of MacLaine's personal experiences, portions of it incorporated actual channeling sessions. MacLaine conversed with the spirits through the mediums or "trance-channelers" beforehand so the spirits could rehearse their lines.

As shocking to the sensibilities of many Christians as the overall message was, there were specific points within the film that caused inordinate consternation and must be addressed.

