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Long Island Medium

By Dr. Brady Blevins

Name: Theresa Caputo

Television Show: *Long Island Medium* (TLC Network),

Publications and Media: http://www.theresacaputo.com, *There's More to Life Than This: Healing Messages, Remarkable Stories, and Insight About the Other Side from the Long Island Medium* (2013), Appearances on: *Anderson Live, Ellen, Live with Kelly and Michael, 20/20, The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, Dr. Oz, Steve Harvey, The Talk,* and *Late Show with David Letterman.*

Other Organizations: Forever-Family Foundation

Practices: Divination, Spiritism, Channeling, Automatic Writings, Psychic Mediumship (a.k.a. Communication with the Dead or necromancy).

HISTORY

Theresa Caputo was born July 3rd 1966 and raised on Long Island in Hicksville, New York and is married with two adult children. Caputo claims that she began seeing spirits at the age of four but did not realize she had a psychic "gift" until years later. She is a practicing Roman Catholic and believes that she has a "sixth sense" or psychic abilities to communicate with the dead. She also believes her "abilities" are a gift from God.[1]

After suffering a number of years with anxiety Caputo sought out Pat Longo a spiritual healer/teacher and family friend in Long Island.[2] Longo is a self-described healer who claims to have helped many develop their gifts in areas such as mediumship and divine guidance.[3] Caputo credits Longo with helping her to realize and hone her ability to see and communicate with spirits through a practice known as channeling. Channeling has been described by Caputo as; "a way for me to ease some of my chronic anxieties that were linked to Spirit."[4]

Caputo is a certified medium through the Forever-Family Foundation.[5] Forever-Family Foundation offers a free medium certification program that claims to be "a science-based examination of the ability of a specific medium to bring forth information without the use of fraudulent or deceptive means."[6]

Caputo came to fame on a national level when The Learning Channel Network (TLC) premiered her show *Long Island Medium* in 2011. The show has posted strong ratings and a great deal of demand on her.[7] Caputo has been a guest on a plethora of daytime and nighttime talk shows in addition to being the item of discussion on many gossip and news shows. She also was a spokeswoman for Priceline.com in 2012; however, her time as spokeswoman was cut short amid controversy over her commercial. She released her book: *There's More to Life than This: Healing Messages, Remarkable Stories, and Insight About the Other Side from the Long Island Medium* on October 1, 2013. Her book is a manifesto of her beliefs and philosophy of life and the after life; along with accounts of readings she has done over the years.

DOCTRINES AND PRACTICES

On Caputo's television show, live appearances and private readings she regularly takes part in an occult practice called channeling.[8] This is where she claims to be able to communicate with the dead. She also takes part in a practice called automatic writings, which she describes as "basically taking dictation from Spirit."[9] Caputo claims to speak to Spirit, which should not be confused with the Holy Spirit. Instead Spirit should be understood as a collective and general term for all souls that no longer occupy bodies. Like other mediums she claims to have a sixth sense, which is her psychic ability. She claims to be clairempathic meaning that she communicates with spirits through thoughts and emotions. Caputo, while a practicing Roman Catholic, espouses a New Age philosophy of living that rejects both traditional Catholic beliefs and biblical theology. This philosophy has shaped her views on the following topics:

Spiritual Healing: Caputo's struggle with chronic anxiety led her to gain, through the tutelage of Pat Longo, a connection to spiritual healing and New Age philosophy.[10] The reason for Caputo's chronic anxiety, according to Longo, was that she was ignoring Spirit and needed to channel Spirit through her chakras.[11] Longo, supposedly, aligned Caputo's chakras and Caputo claimed to experience relief for three weeks but not permanent relief or healing.[12]

New Age Movement (NAM): Caputo's worldview presents a reality in which everything is energy. All energy has vibrations and the spirit world operates at higher levels of vibrations and changing one's vibrations is crucial in making connection to the spirit world or Other Side.[13] Caputo maintains that vibrations will increase with positivity. She also holds to the New Age teaching of reincarnation and belief that one can learn about past lives through hypnosis. She also espouses the idea of déjà vu which; "is when you remember something your soul did in a previous life."[14] Caputo also believes that karma balances life out from previous life times. Caputo describes karma as "the laws of cause and effect that are said to dictate our lives–determines our good and bad fortune in our many existences."[15]

Pluralism: Caputo states that; "God is a positive, pure, and good entity, and religion is a set of beliefs and practices created to serve and worship God. It's our egos that cause us to believe our group or values are the only acceptable ones out there, and that's not the case. I don't feel that God aligns Himself with one faith over another."[16] Ultimately she believes as long as one follows a path that path will ultimately lead them to the Higher Power.

God: Despite Caputo's competing worldviews of Catholicism and NAM, she believes that there is only one true God but says He could be called God, Yahweh, Creator or Allah. Caputo identifies God as big energy, which she names God because of her Catholic upbringing; but He can be called by any name. She believes that God is nonjudgmental because He is unconditional love and therefore He does not punish people.

Jesus: Caputo puts Jesus, Buddha, Muhammad, Mother Teresa and the Virgin Mary in the same category. She views Jesus as a very highly ascended soul but He is not the same as God and is simply a teacher.

Holy Spirit: Caputo mentions the Holy Spirit but claims to have never spoken to Him. She does emphasize a distinction between Spirit and the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Caputo believes that visualization along with thoughts can be substituted for prayer and if you can see it with your mind's eye then it can happen. She states, "different faiths have various rituals that accompany prayer, and God honors all of them if they're done with a full heart and pure intent."[17]

Heaven: According to Caputo Heaven is a place where one glides around doing what Spirit needs them to do. There is no talk about worship of God or exclusion for unbelievers. Caputo states that a person does not have a body in heaven and will feel only momentary sadness of leaving loved ones but will be quickly comforted by the understanding that they will be seen again. "Like God, your departed loved ones also don't have a sex – none of our souls do when we are in Heaven – but they do present themselves to me with human traits, like gender, so that you can recognize them."[18]

Guides: One's progress is judged by a teacher-like soul and all the events of one's life are reviewed. "The review includes experiencing life through the eyes of people you knew in the physical world – you will feel their pain, happiness, fear, you name it – and you'll understand the chain reactions of your words and behavior."[19] An individual's progress will be judged by how their life related to what their objective was for that lifetime. Guides can also be loved ones reassigned or family that passed before you were born.

Lessons: While in Heaven an individual has a choice in how they learn their lessons. They may choose to stay in heaven as long as they would like but the quicker way to learn one's lesson is to go back to the physical world.[20] One has the option to choose their family dynamics, body, religions, ethnicities, and jobs. The lessons one wishes to learn help them in making the decision of the type of person they will come back as. Caputo states that it is possible to do soul-searching to find out what one's lesson is in the here and now. Lessons can be figured out through activities such as "yoga, prayer, or anytime you have focused intentions or a clear and relaxed mind."[21] The goal for souls in heaven is to learn their lessons so that they may gain a higher level inside a dimension. Caputo states that she is unsure of the number of dimensions or levels inside a dimension. Souls are capable of ascending to different responsibilities in Heaven that includes guides, teachers or other positions. By learning lessons one is able to get closer to God.

Hell: Caputo explains that there are lower levels on the Other Side and that this could be what was interpreted as Hell in the Bible. However, there is no fire, brimstone, or torment in the lower levels. "You aren't chastised for things you did wrong. Cruel punishment and judgment that make you feel bad about yourself are things we inflict on each other in the physical world."[22] Caputo explains that there could be no judgment or condemnation because God is unconditional love. Even the worst people will still go to Heaven but be at the lowest levels. It is possible for the souls, even at the lowest levels, to work their way up. Caputo mentions that some souls get stuck between the physical world and heaven but does not elaborate or claim to have known or worked with "stuck souls." She does mention that there are mediums that can help get them "unstuck" and in Heaven.

Angels: Caputo believes that angels work for God as messengers, protectors, rescuers and intercederers. She states that angels are Spirit but that no angel has lived on earth. Angels do not have bodies but offer protection, guidance, deliver messages, encourage us, strengthen us and help to answer our prayers. Caputo says her guardian angel that guides her is Solerna, who is female. She also claims that Solerna is a direct liaison between her and God.[23]

CONTROVERSY

Like other psychic mediums such as John Edwards, James Van Praagh, and the late Sylvia Browne there is much controversy about the abilities Caputo claims to have. Caputo addresses her critics by saying that they only wish to disprove that she is a real medium and not the fact that Spirit is around. She asks for critics to respect what she does and refrain from negative comments or conclusions about her until they have experienced Spirit with an open heart and mind. She does not address specific criticisms but admits that what she does is hard to believe.

One of the most often heard criticisms of Caputo is her use of a technique called a "cold reading."[24] Her television appearances serve as examples of her use of general questions posed to gain information thus giving the impression that she has gained information from the "Other Side."[25]

In addition to allegations of cold readings there have also been rumors of "hot readings."[26] One such allegation was on an episode of *Long Island Medium* where she visited a motorcycle shop. What viewers did not know is that it was her husband's place of employment and the workers interviewed were her husband's coworkers.[27]

Despite her skillful use of these techniques Caputo often fails to get even general things right with her clients. When this occurs Caputo deflects and redirects the conversation to another person. For example in the above referenced videos she quickly changes the subject and asks another general question that will be applicable to many people. This method is referred to as "shot gunning." This method often results in multiple people giving an affirmative answer. When multiple people relate to the same message she calls this "piggybacking."[28] This is her way of making sense out of multiple people accepting the same response or message she provides. Caputo is often accused of relying on the Forer effect which relies on the individuals desire to believe to be so great that they fill in crucial information and believe the person has told them the information.[29]

One of the biggest controversies in her career has been a commercial she did as a spokesperson for Priceline.com. In the commercial she is "channeling" the previous spokesperson, the Priceline Negotiator character, played by William Shatner. She was using a technique that involves a drum and feather but some thought she was making light of the Native American belief of smudging. This commercial and subsequent backlash caught the attention of D.J. Grothe, the president of the James Randi Educational Foundation (JREF). JREF has offered a one million dollar challenge to many psychics, mediums and those claiming supernatural abilities. Mr. Grothe issued a letter to Jeff Boyd CEO of Priceline.com asking him to have the company's new spokesperson back up her claims of communicating with the dead. In January 2013 Priceline moved to a new spokesperson.[30]

CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

There is a possibility that spirits are communicating with Caputo; but these spirits could not be deceased loved ones according to the Bible. Jesus explains in Luke 16:19-31 that those who are deceased do not have the ability to travel back and forth to the earth. People are not capable of making a connection and gaining spiritual insight from the dead. What spirits could Caputo make connection with? If she is hearing, feeling or making some connection to spirits she is connecting with demonic spirits. The Bible refers to these spirits as "seducing spirits" who teach "doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. 4:1).

Caputo identifies herself as a medium, one who communicates with the dead. The Bible calls this behavior "an abomination unto the Lord" and tells believers to avoid anyone who takes part in this type of activity (Deut. 18:10-12). The Bible instructs believers to test the spirits (1John 4:1) and avoid mediums (Lev. 19:31). As one can see through Caputo's rise to popularity there are many people who desire to make connection with a deceased loved one. Satan uses this desire to move people away from the truth of the word of God through "all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9).

Caputo's book is a detailed account concerning certain areas of belief that the Bible addresses specifically. The following represents what the Bible says concerning each topic:

New Age Movement: The Bible does not teach reincarnation (1 Cor. 15:12-28). Caputo's view of life and death is that when one dies the process of life starts all over again. However, Hebrews 9:27 states, "…it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Furthermore, issues such as **spiritual healing** can only come through the great physician, Jesus Christ, who is capable of providing true, permanent healing (John 5:1-16). Therefore, déjà vu, karma, vibrations, energy, chakras and the other tenets of NAM have no biblical standing. There is nothing in the Bible that teaches or supports any of the philosophies of NAM.

Pluralism: Caputo claims that there are many paths to God and that He is called by many names. All religions are not true and there is only one way to God (Matt. 7:21, 24:24; John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

God: God is called by many names but His identity is clear (Isa. 44:6). God's love is unconditional; but Caputo fails to understand what that means. Mankind has been separated from God by sin (Isa. 59:2). God is forgiving but He is also just and "will by no means clear the guilty" (Ex. 34:7); therefore He must punish sin (Rom. 6:23). God is love and is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to

repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). This is why God demonstrated His love to mankind and offered Jesus to pay the price of man's sin on the cross, so that salvation could be possible (Rom. 5:8; 6:23).

Jesus: Jesus is not on the same level as Buddha, Muhammad, Mother Teresa or Mary; He is God (John 1:1) and specifically the second Person of the Trinity (1 John 5:7). He came to earth, took on a human body and lived a sinless life to be our propitiation (1 John 4:10) so that He could serve as man's proxy in place of God's judgment of sin (Gal. 3:2-3; Heb. 8:6-7). Jesus is the only way to God the Father (John 14:6) and is the mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5). Therefore, **prayer** is to be directly to God through Jesus who is the mediator; angels do not have anything to do with delivering man's prayer to God. Thus, no practices such as: visualization, yoga, transcendental meditation or any other activity can propel request to God or obtain His approval.

Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is God and the third Person of the Trinity (1 John 5:7) and is active in teaching (John 14:26), indwelling (Rom. 8:11), guiding (John 16:13), sanctifying (1 Pet. 1:2), and anointing (1 John 2:27) the believer.

Angels: Caputo's beliefs about angels contradict what the Bible teaches. Angels are spirit beings (Heb. 1:14) who God created (Psalm 148:2-5; Col. 1:16) and do not die (Luke 20:36). Angels do not have gender (Matt. 22:30) but can manifest themselves in human form (Num. 22:22-31; Heb. 13:2). The Bible does teach that angels protect (Psalm 34:7), comfort (Acts 27:24) and guide believers (Gen. 24:7). There are good angels (Psalm 91:11) and there are demons (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6); who followed Lucifer and rebelled against God (Isa. 14:12-16; Rev. 12:3-9).

Heaven: Caputo's picture of heaven does not match what the Bible says about heaven. She does not believe that souls have bodies in Heaven however; 1 Thess. 4:16-17 speaks of the coming resurrection at which time the believer will receive a glorified body (1 Cor. 15:40, 53; 2 Cor. 5:1-4). The Bible does not discuss lessons to be learned, feeling the pain you caused others, guides to help you ascend to higher levels, or the idea that there are varying levels in heaven. According to the Bible only believers, people who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior will be in heaven (John 14:1-4; Heb. 3:1, 12:22-24). Believers will spend their time in heaven worshiping, praising and glorifying God (Rev. 5:9-10). The Bible does not teach that souls are stuck or in a temporary holding place such as purgatory or spirit prison.

Hell: The existence of hell is seen in Luke 16:19-31. Eternal condemnation in the Lake of Fire has been reserved for Satan, his demons (Mat. 23:33, 25:41; 2 Pet. 2:4), and the wicked that reject God (Rev. 19:20, 21:8).

NOTES

[1] *Theresa Caputo website "About Me"* http://www.theresacaputo.com/about-me/ (accessed November 13, 2013)

[2] Ibid and *There's More to Life Than This: Healing Messages, Remarkable Stories, and Insight About the Other Side from the Long Island Medium* (Atria Books, New York, 2013.)

[3] *Pat Longo website "About Me"* http://patlongo.net/about (accessed November 13, 2013)

[4] *There's More to Life Than This*, xii

[5] *Theresa Caputo website "About Me"* http://www.theresacaputo.com/about-me/ (accessed November 13, 2013)

[6] Forever Family Foundation website: http://www.foreverfamilyfoundation.org/index2.html (accessed November 13, 2013)

[7] *The Long Island Medium Dominates Ratings With Contest to Contact Fans Deceased Loved Ones.* http://www.deadline.com/2013/10/tlcs-long-island-medium-dominates-ratings-with-contest-to-contact-fans-deceased-loved-ones/ (accessed November 20, 2013)

[8] A separate Profile has been published on channeling: Rick Branch, "Channeling," Profile Notebook, Watchman Fellowship, Inc. (Arlington, Texas: 1997-2012). A complete Profile Notebook (over 400 pages) is available at www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/channelingprofile.pdf.

[9] *There's More to Life Than This*, 20

[10] A separate Profile has been published on channeling: Craig Branch, "The New Age Movement," Profile Notebook, Watchman Fellowship, Inc. (Arlington, Texas: 1996-2012). A complete Profile Notebook (over 400 pages) is available at www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/newageprofile.pdf.

[11] Chakras are supposedly, seven energy locations that exist in people. According to Hinduism, Buddhism and NAM, chakras are manipulated through energy transference exercises; which are said to keep the body in balance and better health.

[12] *There's More to Life Than This, 17-20*

[13] Vibration rates work under the idea that energy is composed of molecules in vibration. In the physical realm the vibration of the molecules are slow but at a constant speed.

[14] *There's More to Life Than This*, 134

[15] Ibid, 136

[16] Ibid, 144

[17] Ibid, 156

[18] Ibid, 143

[19] Ibid, 118

[20] Ibid, 120

[21] Ibid, 124

[22] Ibid, 118

[23] Ibid, 57-8

[24] For more information on cold readings see, James Walker, "John Edwards" Profile Watchman Fellowship, Inc. Arlington, Texas, 2003, www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/johnedwardprofile.pdf. See Also: *Inside Edition,* air date November 8, 2012. *The Long Island Medium – Can She really Communicate with the Dead?* http://www.insideedition.com/investigative/5331-the-long-island-medium-can-she-really-communicate-with-the-dead (accessed November 21, 2013)

[25] *Live with Kelly and Michael*, original airdate unknown. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzxCkGxipyI; and *Anderson Live,* original airdate unknown. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flw_xLqS3UE (accessed November 21, 2013)

[26] Hot readings occur when a medium has prior knowledge or information concerning an individual. The individual is often unaware of the medium's prior knowledge to the reading; thus giving the appearance that the medium has a supernatural ability.

[27] *Long Island Medium: A Tall Story.* http://www.randi.org/site/index.php/swift-blog/1755-long-island-medium-a-tall-story.html (accessed November 21, 2013)

[28] *There's More to Life Than This*, 48

[29] *Forer Effect*: http://atheism.about.com/library/glossary/paranormal/bldef_forereffect.htm (accessed November 23, 2013)

[30] *Priceline.com: Will You Prove Your Spokesperson Worthy for a Million Dollars?* http://www.randi.org/site/index.php/swift-blog/1803-dj-grothe.html (accessed November 21, 2013)

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