



## STATEMENT DM620

### MORNINGLAND

Morningland was founded in Long Beach, California, in 1973 by Daniel Sperato (adored by cult members as "Master Donato, the Christ"). After establishing the Long Beach and Escondido centers and the retreat center in Cres tline (located in Southern California's San Bernadino Mountains), Donato "ascended" (i.e., died) on November 7, 1976. Leadership of the burgeoning organization was assumed by his widow, "Sri Donato, the Queen of Peace" ("Sri" is a Hindu title denoting spi ritual attainment). Directly underneath her in authority are eight "gopis," all of whom had been personally trained by Donato, and all of whom are female celibates. Thus, upon Donato's death, leadership of the cult passed exclusively into female hands.

Morningland Publications is responsible for *As It Is*, a monthly magazine; an annual calendar; and a handful of books (*The Way to Oneness*; *A Thought Away from Donato*, and others dealing with occult topics such as astrology and palmistry).

Morningland is an "Ascended Master" cult. Belief in ascended masters (supposedly divine beings who have transcended the cycle of reincarnation and now work from a higher sphere for the good of lower creatures) was first popularized in the late 19th century and has been carried on by many occultic groups, today's most notable being the Church Universal and Triumphant in Montana, headed by Elizabeth Clare Prophet. While Morningland advocates devotion to Jesus, Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi, and St. Germain, it is clearly Master Donato who dominates their consciousness. He is lauded as the mediator between earth and heaven.

Morningland offers classes and reading on almost every occult subject conceivable, including astrology, tarot, numerology, auras, telepsychology, palmistry, and yoga. Psychic healing and telepathy are the two most emphasized occult powers at Morningland. Testimonies abound to the healing powers of Donato, and now that he has "ascended," those powers are supposedly transmitted through select "gopis."

Morningland is dangerous because of its doctrine, which denies that Jesus Christ is the unique God and that salvation comes through His atoning work on the cross alone. The cult is also dangerous because those who submit to the group's teachings and disciplines become extremely vulnerable to spiritual oppression and possession. The central aim of the members of Morningland is to achieve a constant telepathic rapport with Master Donato through being open to influences from the spiritual realm. Yet, Master Donato himself acknowledged the danger of such a practice: "Once you become an open channel, you are susceptible to being possessed" (*A Thought Away from Donato*, p. 163). Because they believe there is goodness as well as evil in the occult realm, Morningland's solution to the problem of possession is for one to be discriminating about which spirits he opens himself up to: "When we understand the different levels of people, places, and planes, we can begin to understand how possession can be a positive experience" (*ibid.*, p. 171). Thus, being led to believe that some occultic spirits are benevolent, the disciples of Morningland are encouraged to become spirit-possessed. From a Christian perspective, undoubtedly, such a notion originated from such spirits, whom the Bible consistently identifies as demons -- deceivers working in league with Satan. In the Bible, possession is never a positive experience, but the most severe of afflictions from which spiritual deliverance is the only solution, even in cases where the powers derived from possession parallel those sought in Morningland. (Acts 16:16-18).

Morningland is so steeped in the occult that the sensitive person immediately discerns the same kind of spirit that one encounters in witchcraft. Anyone who considers attending any of the cult's functions should pay serious heed to the warning in Deuteronomy 18:10-12: "There shall not be found anyone among you who...uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord."

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