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“I didn’t know that had a name. I am Astronist”: Analysing Online Reactions to Astronism

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In July 2024, the Astronist Institution published a video on TikTok that, within a week, amassed thousands of views and, up to that point, was the single largest exposure to the public that Astronism received after being founded in 2013. Since being posted, the video has received over 77,000 views, over 1,150 likes, over 120 comments and 297 shares on the platform. The mixed response to the video among members of the public prompts the question: How have people reacted to Astronism so far online? By scouring the internet for reactions to the story of how Astronism was founded and Astronist beliefs and practices, this article answers that question. In turn, it develops an ethnography of Astronists and non-Astronists about their initial

response to content published by the Astronist Institution. The article begins by focusing on the “What is Astronism?” video posted on TikTok but broadens its scope to address reactions to Astronism appearing on other platforms. The aim is to analyse comments on the TikTok video and elsewhere to understand early forms of Astronist self-identification, lines of criticism against Astronist doctrine and the themes that people tend to raise whenever they discuss Astronism.

Keywords: Astronism, Astronist ethnography, Astronist self-identification, religious expression online, TikTok.

“What is Astronism?” TikTok Video

On the morning of 22nd July 2024, the official TikTok account of the Astronist Institution posted a video titled “What is Astronism?”.¹ The video consisted of fifteen photographs of starry night skies with a sentence or two written over each explaining some aspect of the beliefs of Astronism and the history of how the religion was founded. By three days later, the video had amassed 3,000 views and received 3,215 views on the 26th July alone, 2,703 views on the 27th July and 4,202 views on the 28th July. Although traffic to official Astronist websites, combined with traffic to videos like the *A Conversation with Cometan* series and other online materials addressing Astronism had amassed

thousands of views before the TikTok video was posted, this video was the single largest exposure of the public to Astronism.

Following the TikTok video's title slide, the second slide includes an affirmation that Astronism is a religion, followed by a general description of Astronism covering three basic facts: where it was founded, when and by whom. The third slide asserts how Astronism's theology is panentheistic, with slide four providing an extended explanation of Astronist theology. The fifth slide addresses how Astronists derive meaning in life and spirituality from observing the night sky, while the sixth is the first to mention the central Astronist dogma of transcension. The seventh slide affirms the Astronist belief that transcension is a sacred endeavour and the eighth addresses Astronist eschatology, including the doctrine of the Overworld.

The ninth slide has a historical focus, addressing how Astronism descends from Cosmodeism in the twentieth century and Cosmism in the nineteenth century. The tenth slide sees the concept of transcosmisation—framed as “the ultimate goal of transcension”—introduced, leading, in Astronist belief, to theosis or unification with God. The eleventh slide addresses the Astronist belief that transcension will lead to humanity's salvation, pointing to the central position of transcension in Astronist soteriology. The twelfth slide asserts an Astronist ethic that “Astronists emphasise transcending our personal



limitations by living a healthy life, protecting human life and advancing human life.” The thirteenth slide reconfirms that to be an Astronist “is to affirm transcension and to use one’s limited life to contribute to transcension in as many ways as possible.” The fourteenth slide addresses my life and work in founding Astronism when I was fifteen years old and how I published books to “bring Astronism to the world”, with the fifteenth and final slide promoting Astronism.com over a picture of hardback copies of *The Astronist Statement* published in 2022.



By the end of 2024, the “What is Astronism?” video had amassed over 75,000 views and 126 comments, with 1,120 users having pressed the like button. While it would be mere speculation or possibly an exaggeration to suggest that all of the users who liked the video now self-identify as Astronists, the precise nature of the content of the video suggests that these individuals at least resonated with some of the beliefs and practices they read while watching the video. Perhaps a more reliable number of people who specifically self-identify as Astronists following watching the video is the number of people who favouredited it: 297, as of the end of April 2025. The 124 comments (as of the end of 2024) on the video were studied during the writing of this article: 24 made a positive affirmation about Astronism; 58 were neutral in that they showed neither a preference for Astronism nor were

critical of the religion; and 42 were negative in that they were either deprecatory towards Astronism specifically or religion more broadly. Each category of comments shares common themes that will become apparent as they are analysed in this article, beginning with the comments designated ‘positive.’

The first theme arising among the ‘positive’ comments was direct self-identification, with the user @Proxima Centauri B commenting: “I’m an Astronist now.” Sub-comments ensued, some criticising the user but most raising seemingly unrelated topics, including Israel and the Prophet Muhammad. However, the last sub-comment from user @mo🥰🌀 made a positive response to the original comment: “I’m sorry for these comments, I respect your religious beliefs. I am looking more into this religion [Astronism] and might be one too! We will see.” Another user @(Cox) Britian_alt affirmed: “I am Gon [going to] be Astronist now.”

Other ‘positive’ commenters defended against critics of Astronism, including the user @Scarlett🌐 who commented: “Why are people hating? This sounds like a lovely religion.” Some commenters self-identified with non-Astronist religions, including the user @👁️Smart alien👁️, who said: “I’m Catholic but I love this kind of religion❤️.” In response, the user @jm said the following: “Don’t fall for it stay





focused on who is the light ” while the user @[] Ultraviolence said the following in another sub-comment: “Bro Astronism is like a minion version of our religion.” Another main comment of a similar theme that was classified as ‘positive’ came from the user @rickymartinez, who wrote: “Catholic but I fw [fuck with] this.” These comments represent examples of multiple religious belonging among new Astronists, namely, Astronist converts who identify Astronism as their religion but still also feel that they belong to their original religion, whether that be Christianity, Islam or another. Due to online privacy, it is difficult to derive more information about the types of individuals who commented on the video and professed their belief in Astronism. However, given that 69.4% of TikTok’s users were between eighteen and thirty-four years old as of the beginning of 2025², it is likely that the vast majority of the commenters were below thirty years old, many of them probably under eighteen years old, indicating a growing youth population of Astronists.



Other ‘positive’ comments shared the theme of indicating that the individuals already had beliefs similar to those found in Astronism but had no word to ascribe them. For example, in response to user @ACBirch’s comment “space gnostics” describing the beliefs of Astronism, the user @Y³myneckneverhurts⁴ sub-commented:

“For real somebody gets it 😭😭.” The user @Just_.World commented: “Hold on, I didn’t know this existed, this may be the religion I’ve believed in without knowing.” Another user @Marissa🤖👉 commented: “This. I’ve been trying to find the word for it.” In response to this comment, the user @FREEDOM🦅 commented the following: “Made 2013 really?? Don’t fall for this. If u seek the truth the truth will find u study and read all religions then see if this can click.” This sub-comment raised one of the main criticisms levied against Astronism in the comments designated ‘negative’, namely, that the religion was founded in 2013 in an attempt to justify discrediting Astronist beliefs. In response to this sub-comment, the user @Archie!! wrote the following: “Religion is belief and however someone believes is their own choice, if the idea I’ve had of what happens after death becomes a religion I’d believe it too.”

Another user @SayNoToRacism commented: “I didn't know that had a name. I was believing that one almighty creature exists and all nations call it by different names. I’m Astronist.” This comment emblematised Astronist self-identification and affirmation, including using the main noun identifier ‘Astronist.’ Most religious adherents have a variety of nouns and adjectives they use to refer to themselves and those used by outsiders. Having a standard noun identifier from the

outset can make it easier for new converts and outsiders to distinguish a new religion from others, which, based on the responses to the video, appears to work well for Astronism, given the frequent use of the clear and closely related noun identifier ‘Astronist.’ For example, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have had issues in this area as they became primarily known to outsiders as ‘Mormons’ in the nineteenth century, a term that members today regard as pejorative, opting instead for ‘Latter-day Saints.’ However, the term ‘Mormon’ continues to be used by outsiders despite the Church formally ceasing its use of the noun in 2018.³


Studying the comments left on the TikTok video also demonstrated the different levels of affiliation people were willing to express for Astronism. For example, while previous comments highlighted expressly identified with Astronism, others were less direct, opting instead to show interest in Astronism. The user @Galaxy_Cosmos     commented: “Interesting religion ngl [not going to lie].” The user @Hayley Deonna also commented, “I can see this!”, interpreted as a ‘positive’ comment. These types of comments were classified ‘positive’ during the review but also do not constitute direct self-identifications with Astronism. Finally, other ‘positive’ comments referred to specific aspects of Astronist history, with the user @Justin

commenting the following: “@Toby @chadtrisplat @miaa   Lancashire mention.” This user refers to the fact that Astronism was founded in and around Preston in the English county of Lancashire. Therefore, some ‘positive’ comments sat on the borderline between a ‘positive’ and ‘neutral’ classification.

Moving to the comments classified as ‘neutral’ under the TikTok video, some of the ‘neutral’ comments were framed as questions, such as the following comment by the user @Cherry: “Wait do u HAVE to believe in God to be an Astronist?” The Astronist Institution was active in responding to such questions to ensure Astronist beliefs were clarified, commenting back the following: “No, you can be an atheist or agnostic Astronist but the official theology espoused remains panentheism. Panentheism is not the bottom line for being Astronist, but belief in transcension is essential.” Several users appeared to appreciate this kind of active clarification by an official source, given that eight users liked this comment.

Some ‘neutral’ commenters made judgements about Astronism, with the comment by the user @_(\`)_ an example: “Elon Musk religion.” This comment made reference to the work of Elon Musk in the field of rocket propulsion, reusable launch vehicles, human spaceflight and satellite constellation technology through his space company SpaceX. The comment is not the first instance of people

associating Astronism with Musk due to his interest in space colonisation. However, as of 2025, Musk has never expressed belief in Astronism's main doctrine transcension or self-identified as an Astronist. Other commenters shared a similar sentiment but were more sceptical, including the user @Oburn: "Nice try NASA, you're not getting any more funding, that's going to the military baby." A similar comment from the user @Covid worrier read: "Sounds like something made up by the space exploration companies." Presumptive comments such as these were not necessarily negative but were sceptical regarding the origin and development of Astronism. For example, many such comments did not refute the fundamental beliefs of Astronism or its practices but questioned who promotes and funds the religion.

Another subset of 'neutral' comments were those that claimed that the beliefs of Astronism described in the TikTok video can be found in other religions. However, these comments were classified as 'neutral' because they were not necessarily intended to be forms of criticism. For example, the user @ABU commented: "These are beliefs we also have in Islam, it's actually a crucial part too without the belief of akhira (afterworld a.k.a. hereafter) you can't be Muslim." The user @say it with me "Tawn ah Lee" similarly commented: "Sikhi adjacent .


It should be noted that none of the commenters who made these claims provided supporting evidence. Such claims remain in dispute, given


that the beliefs of many religions can overlap. More research needs to be conducted by sociologists of religion on Astronism specifically to determine the veracity of the claim that it shares beliefs with Islam and Sikhism. Whatever the case, these comments may reasonably be interpreted as an insult against Astronists or as a means to subtly undermine the legitimacy of Astronism as a bone fide religion, with the intention of the comments perhaps directed towards the notion that people should instead show interest in Islam or Sikhism. Since these comments did not outwardly express hostility or criticism towards Astronism, they cannot be classified as ‘negative’ despite the misconceptions of Astronism they could spread. Astronists are likely to argue that Astronism does not share beliefs with either Islam or Sikhism and is not part of either the Abrahamic or Dharmic religions but instead is part of the Astronic religious tradition, which is completely separate.⁴



A comment related to this theme was written by the user @SucioDan2030, who asked: “So just like the Mexicas? 🤔.” The term ‘Mexicas’ was used, in this instance, to refer to the Aztecs, known for their practice of astrolatry and worshipping other astronomical bodies.⁵ I have consistently discussed that there is a place for astrolatry in Astronism.⁶ While the commenter’s attribution of Astronists to ‘Mexicas’ is inaccurate given that there is far more complexity to

Astronist theology than astrolatry alone and astrolatry does not play a central role in Astronism, Astronists are nonetheless permitted to engage in astrolatry. A similar comment came from the user @King Kamehameha, who described Astronism in the following way: “Native American religion but with rockets 🤔.” Present in these examples are presumptions about Astronist beliefs, oversimplification of Astronism and the practice of overlapping Astronism with other religions to undermine its legitimacy as a new religion. While the first comment fits into the ‘neutral’ category, the second comment fits more into the ‘negative’ classification, given the unamused emoji used to indicate the user’s disapproval of Astronism.

Other commenters attributed Astronist beliefs and the story of the founding of Astronism to media they had consumed. For example, the user @DevynDark0 commented the following: “Bro, this is giving Octavia Butler’s Parable Series.” The user @user859955 commented back: “My First Thought!” The user @Army also commented the following reply: “Everything you touch, you change. Everything you change, changes you. God is change.” These were classified as ‘neutral’ comments during the analysis because they involve individuals making connections between Astronism and other media they have watched or read but without expressing belief in Astronism or self-identifying as an Astronist.

Other users asked questions, showing their confusion over how Astronism is classified, including the user @Thor Twwunty, who commented: “So is it another branch of Christianity?” Others seemed to misunderstand Astronism as a form of astrology, with the Christian commenter @nick  asking: “Doesn’t astrology go against religion?” This shows another example of the misattribution of Astronism to other religions and beliefs. Moving into the ‘negative’ classification was the following comment by the user @(Lord Javon Phantom): “So...a part of Occultism.” The user @DanteVarro commented something similar: “This is literally essence energy distinction (EED) in a nutshell.” The themes of misattribution, misclassification and misinterpretation of Astronism were widespread in the comment section of the video despite the clarity of the descriptions given in the video. What this also highlights is how comments asking questions can either be classified as ‘neutral’ or ‘negative’

Many ‘negative’ comments ridiculed Astronism for having only been founded in 2013, with its status as a ‘young’ religion framed to undermine its legitimacy or its worthiness to be believed in and practised. For example, the user @RT commented: “I’m older than their religion .

Another commenter @المياو الفضائي  wrote: “PS4 is older .

The user @Kevin (You) commented: “I’m older than a

religion 😭.” The user @TierIhate® commented: “I’m a whole 8 years older than this goofy ahh religion 🦴.” The user @Quinn ☆ commented: “One of the dumbest religions I’ve ever seen idk [I don’t know] why it was even invented.” In response to this particular comment, the user @VIKT~ᄇRIA 🌿 wrote the following ‘positive’ comment: “Why is it dumb? It’s sounds lovely, I thought we were supposed to respect all religions not just the famous ones 🧑.” This person coming to the defence of Astronism proves that people who are not necessarily Astronists are willing to defend the religion and its followers, thereby recognising Astronism as a religion and highlighting respect for the religious freedom of Astronists among some non-Astronists. The recognition of Astronism as a bona fide religion appears to be the key point of contention, resulting in the variety of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ responses to the explanation of Astronism in the video.

Another subset of ‘negative’ comments accused Astronists of following a cult, with the user @user4541990812620 commenting: “So a cult, got it thanks.” The contemporary and pejorative use of the term ‘cult’ to refer to any religion or belief a person does not like or follow has left the term with very little substance or serious meaning in a sociological context.⁷ There is no universal qualification for a ‘cult’ and

the term's weaponisation as an insult is too often directed towards new religious movements because they usually introduce new terminology, beliefs and practices deemed unusual by the mainstream, including having objects of worship that appear heretical to older religions.

One indirectly 'negative' comment came from the user @astronomy addicted person who wrote: "Don't let Christians and Muslims see this 🥹🙏." In response, the user @what commented: "As a Muslim I find it great." Conversely, the user @Certified Baller🔥 commented: "Too late. I kinda find it silly." The user @We're nothing 🦏 responded: "I'm a Christian & this is interesting af [as fuck]." Other Christian commenters found Astronism less appealing, with the user @Sherirea Hernandez 🍰🎂🎉 commenting the following about Astronists: "So they don't believe Christ shed his blood for them? Count me out 100." In response to that sub-comment, the user @michi🐾 replied: "Not everyone has to be in your religion, everyone has different beliefs." Another Christian commenter said the following about Astronism: "Yikes, Jesus is coming soon." Meanwhile, the user @Sergdapurge commented: "*sigh* Call up the crusaders again." Another Christian commenter, the user @Noah, wrote the following: "God created the cosmos and more. May you find Christ who is the God you've been

searching for and who has been waiting for you. He loves you enough to give you the stars and his own life for u. ❤️🔥🕊️.”

Other ‘negative’ comments were more direct and vulgar about their criticism, with user @l writing the following: “Sounds like bullshit just like every other religion.” The user @vitaliy_enjoi was more critical of all religion, writing that “all religion is BS [bullshit]”, while the user @Jessica Salena said the following: “NOPE to all religions.” The user @R criticised Astronism specifically, calling it “really silly lol”, while the user @Wretchedly Gaming criticised: “Source: trust me bro.” The user @Cruist22 commented: “People making up religions since dawn of time and coming up with gibberish new terms 😂😂😂.” A running theme appears in these comments, namely, how the commenters criticised religion and religions in general as a way of criticising Astronism. This aversion to all religion points to a contention in early Astronist discourse about calling Astronism a religion rather than classifying it using more ambiguous terms such as ‘organised philosophy’ that avoids the connotations some attach to religion.

Other critical comments were more specific to Astronism, including the user @Psalm 51, who commented the following: “I saw England, and it was over for me 😂😂 FOH [fuck outta here] Europeans have been trying to compete with the middle east for centuries. Just give up.

Y'all suck.” The user @sakhir95 also commented the following: “Founded in 2013 and we're no where near space exploration. What have they been doing this whole time? praying?” The user @Şervan Ter commented the following: “Goofy ‘religion’.” In response, the user @Tiktok account ez commented in defence of Astronism: “It makes more sense than some flying dude.” The user @👉👈 also commented the following about Astronists: “We need to make a slur for y'all 🍋.”

Some users used sarcasm in their comments criticising Astronism, with the user @Boomer and Puppy commenting the following: “Doesn't sound crazy at all.” In response, the user @Megstrerella replied the following in a sub-comment: “No more crazy than some old dude sending people to hell for eating shrimp, or some other old non-binary dude gifting men dozens of virgins upon their death lmfa0.”

Reactions to Astronism on YouTube

Videos about Astronism started to be posted on YouTube in late 2018, five years after the religion was originally founded. The negative comment ‘this channel is astronomically cringe’ by the user @joop5415 appeared on a video of Cometan discussing Astronism published on 14th December 2019. With the *A Conversation with Cometan* series of videos first appearing on 22nd October 2020, many

more comments have been made about Astronism on the video platform.

In a more recent response to Episode 8 of Season 1 of *A Conversation with Cometan* featuring Giulio Prisco, published on 8th February 2021, the user @momentx282 commented: “I will spread your message Cometan.” Responding to Episode 10 of Season 2, published on 21st June 2021, the user @metascape3797 commented: “Curious what astronic positions are on psi or parapsychology? Came across this recently, saw there is a page (w/ assuming info to come) on Goertzel cosmism, and since I think it's probably related to Ben Goertzel, assuming there is astronic positions on psi and even similarly the meta to it, Goertzel's 'eurycosm' which seems kinda related to the cosmos to universal stuff?”

Responding to Episode 16 of Season 2, published on 26th July 2021, the user @MrSpudguncat wrote: “Is your name derived from comet one in a Lancashire accent? I've been waking up over the last few years so to speak (and totally disillusioned with society), and little did I know there was a man in my home town Preston (priest-Town) has started a religion of his own! I enjoy a coincidence and a random search for philosophy on ducduck guided me to Preston. Following with interest as the universe hasn't let me down so far!! I feel I'm towards the end of my tribulations as the future which was once just too

much to face, has become replaced with a nervous excitement of possibility... There's still a void but it looks more like fertile land than the abyss. Keep up your good work. Regards and thanks. Graeme. An atheist society is where the people have given over possession of their soul and feelings will quickly follow. It would look like an Amazon warehouse as opposed to what Preston open air market used to be. To me God is permission to be, my god doesn't have a face but I could point at it from pretty much anywhere. Religion killed God maybe, well it did for me until recently. Excuse this being fragmented I was typing as listening n kept hearing great questions!!”

The same user returned to comment on the video Episode 3 of Season 3 of the show, published on 17th January 2022: “You should maybe think about a large dose psilocybin trip, give that some real consideration. Don’t worry, things work out just fine!” The same user returned again to comment on a video from 14th March 2022, but the comment has more of a negative tone: “The longer it takes to explain something the less it is understood. Someone is playing God.”

Reactions to Astronism Elsewhere Online

Another popular platform for commenting about Astronism since it was founded is X (formerly Twitter). For example, some users have shown confusion over Astronism, with the X user @ShaunNoodlez tweeting

on 2nd September 2024: “I don’t get how Astronism is a new religion. That [is] really a fundamental base of mostly all religions.” The user @revolutional_JP showed similar confusion when on 26th June 2024, they commented: “I don’t know the difference between Cosmism and Astronism!” To remedy these issues of confusion, I have developed lecture presentations and published them online, such as the *Astronism vs. Cosmism* edition, published on 21st February 2022.⁸







In response to a post about new religions being founded, the X commenter @truthfreesusall wrote on 30th August 2024: “And still happening Astronism 12 years old probably the youngest? 🤔.” From the review of comments, a significant amount of the discussion regarding Astronism revolves around its young age as a religion. A recent example was when Astronism was mentioned in a viral video originally posted on TikTok by the user @officialnamour on 11th July 2024, which received over two million views, 168,000 likes, almost eight thousand comments and more than ten thousand shares. The video was later co-posted on 25th July 2024 by @jepaloon02 and @officialnamour on Instagram, receiving over 278,000 likes on that platform by the end of 2024.⁹ A remixed version of the video was also re-posted by Jepaloon on their TikTok account on 25th July 2024, which has since received 2.3 million views, almost 300,000 likes, 3,400 comments, over 37,000 favourites and nearly 27,000 shares.¹⁰ In the

video, the host asks various people on the street in an unidentified American city the following question: “What is the newest religion in the world?” The final interviewee gives the answer ‘Astronism’ to which the interviewer replies that she is correct. In the description of the video, there is a short description of Astronism, focusing on the Omnidoxy as Astronism’s main text, the worldview of cosmocentrism and the recognition of Astronism as a new religious movement.

On 23rd January 2024, the user @precipitateWF23 commented: “Watched video...sounds like the Astronism could be an AI made up thing. Only way all that could be written & created so fast. I’m seeing this now as far as AI can do it in [the] blink of an eye. IMO [in my opinion] but open to being wrong. AI could rewrite [our] past history and current day in nanoseconds.” Some other X users have made attempts at explaining Astronism, which is another common theme emerging in online comments about Astronism. For example, the user @1712_JJRousseau posted on 25th February 2023: “The basic principles of the Astronism religion are based on preparing oneself for outer space.” The user @Klabangijo posted on 8th December 2022: “The newest religion in 2013: Astronism. It has 4.7 million followers. The founder is Brandon Taylorian in England. Hehehe...” In response to a post by the Catholic News Agency, the user @MirzaSana1961 commented: “Good effort. Can we come out from Polyism? A type of

system of salvation that emphasises individual, moral redemption over collective, existential redemption; the former type is characteristic of Christian soteriology while the latter is characteristic of the soteriology of Astronism.”

On 21st June 2023, the user @Salomonijulien wrote the following:

 Finally, someone get it ;)   Kosmocentric = Ken Wilber theory of everything  but also  Cosmocentrism = Astronism 
Just to encourage everyone to have a look.” As witnessed with the earlier highlighted comment suggesting Astronism was made using AI, conspiracies about Astronism have also started being popularised by other commenters on X, including the user @FamilyCourtUSA, who posted the following on 6th September 2021: “Jeff Bezos apparently bought IMDb. It looks like Amazon and/or Jeff Bezos are promoting a young man called ‘Cometan’ and a new religion called, ‘Astronism’. (Oh, how I wish this were just a ‘conspiracy theory’).” The same X user commented more about Astronism the same day: “Speaking about ‘the broad decline of religion in the West’ he tells atheists they should call themselves agnostic. It looks like ‘Astronism’ is Freemasonry preparing populations to accept his new religion ‘of the human race’ based on space exploration.”

In response to the discussion of Astronism on the 463rd episode of the podcast *Tin Foil Hat with Sam Tripoli*, the X user commented the following about Astronism: “It was weird but I enjoy different lenses to peek through. There’s a piece of the divine in every explanation.” On the official website for the podcast episode, other watchers made comments about Astronism. The user @Bonez commented about Cometan’s “brilliant mind for a 23 year old”, while the user @syxtems commented: “I think this kid should read the KYBALION, and so do all of y’all...” In response, the user @bornallah commented: “Yeah lol this idiot should build on some knowledge before starting his own religion and writing books LOL. He talks like a politician a lot of shit no substance. Everythings fractal as above so below.”

In response to a 29th January 2020 article on Blog Preston about a talk ‘Astronism and the future of religion’, the user @rickster999 wrote: “He’s starting a cult, I guarantee it!” In response, the user @Abbie Taylor commented: “How about you go and see what he's all about first before judging him? I'm going to go just to see what he has to say, but I'll judge him afterwards.” The user @Aidan Turner-Bishop commented: “Is he a Protestant Astronist or a Catholic one?” The user @Phil commented: “Is this David Icke’s lad?” The user @kieran darragh commented: “Another Tom Cruise nutter? Tell him to visit my sons grave...religion...Pahhhh!” The user @Anthrax Puppy

commented: “Penwortham comedy club is becoming very avant garde.” On 18th February 2020, the X user @Rory_Evan commented the following about Astronism after seeing the talk advertised: “Just been advertised a talk by a founder of a new religion called Astronism that makes a lot of the same claims as normal religions but is clearly made up. Websites all newly put up. Loads of self-promotion recently. Worth a look into it for a video?”

In response to the question about whether there have been any new religions founded, the X user @sophiiiiiee__ replied on 12th July 2019: “Astronism. Although that is more of a philosophy than it is religion.” On 12th March 2020, Max Lewy left the following review of an Astronist book on Amazon :

Cometan (Brandon Taylor) is a very bright & savvy guy, & his project is absolutely refreshing & noble, both in its ideas & its execution. He has got almost everything right in his approach, so unlike other philosophers today or of recent history. While its possible that a lot more depth needs to be added to the basic worldview (I don't know, as I can't afford his main treatise! But, what impresses me most is the orientation, rather than the detailed contribution), I believe that he could be the Copernicus or Aleister Crowley of our times -- a founder or at least major outpost for our times of a significant fundamental, profound

attitude & understanding of life. His concepts are about 100x more healthy & useful than the average high-school education or public ideology handed down in Universities. They will give you the right orientation to succeed in life, just as he has done already (at least by average standards).

On the platform Medium, articles began being published by the Astronist Institution as early as 2019. In an article titled ‘Astronism is a new cosmocentric religion founded by Cometan in the Omnidoxy’, published on 3rd June 2019 on the Medium platform, the user @Andrea Friedell commented: “Why make this a religion?” While another user @Clifton Middleton commented: “Universal Birthright has you covered.” The user @Raphael Klarfeld commented: “I agree with the previous comments, but there is more to this. I'm concerned about the motives of Cometan which is what Andrea and Clifton are asking "what is your motive for creating a religion out of Cosmology and Astronomy?" There is something grandiose about creating a new religion or language. Making up words that are not in the dictionary and not defining them creates an incomprehensible text that implies that you are creative even a genius like Edgar Casey if one does not know better, but the words created are simply derivatives of other words that we all understand. I cannot see what makes Astronism a religion, and Cometan does not seem to offer anything new or different from any

other religion. By that I mean that there are elements of other religions that cover what is contained in "Astronism" that already are there to choose from. I also had trouble even finding the "Doximity" on which it is based. It seems to me this is at best a personal belief system of Cometan."

The following month, another article titled 'Introducing Astronism' was published on Medium on 6th July 2019, with the user @Moon Beam commenting the following: "Hm I can see why it would appeal to many, particularly the younger set whose thought processes are not 'set in stone' so to phrase as in organized religions. It captures the imagination and encourages freer and more flexible thinking as to man's ultimate destiny. This cycle is coming to end unless there is an intervention, a sudden turnaround in our seemingly chaotic mentality. Technologically we're moving fast, but we really haven't progressed within ourselves as a species from when we were cave dwellers. Small steps here and there, but as yet not enough to take our place in this big beautiful Universe we share." In response to an article titled 'Why stargazing is the perfect spiritual practice during the Coronavirus lockdown' published on 28th March 2020, the Medium user @Amy Marley commented: "Love the sky. Anytime of day. We lay in my daughters bed and look at the stars at night. She has a direct view of the night sky. Looking forward to camping again to see the night sky

without the city lights filtering the view. Thanks for sharing your words. Thanks for being you.”









Finally, in response to an article published on Medium on 26th June 2020 titled ‘Why astrolatry (star worship) is both logical and moral’, the user @Jadyn Danielle commented: “Thanks for sharing this. I really enjoyed the read and especially the idea that ‘humanity created the supernatural and permeated it throughout the culture.’ I grew up in a home where we went to church. As a child I didn’t understand aside from it was the ‘respectable’ and ‘right’ thing to do. I watched my family growing up in hardship give so much money to the church to only be spat on. I myself was also very involved and now I am opening my mind to other possibilities. Can’t wait for Part 2.”

Conclusion

In conclusion, people have responded in diverse ways to coming across content about Astronism online or have used online platforms to react to hearing about Astronism or reading Astronist books or other media. While many comments regarding Astronism have been ‘negative’, these do not outweigh the ‘positive’ and ‘neutral’ comments. What can be taken away from this review is that several themes are emerging in terms of the online discourse surrounding Astronism and Astronists, including the following: (1) the young age of Astronism; (2) the

misattribution of Astronist beliefs with other religions or the spread of misconceptions about Astronism and Astronists; (3) conspiracy theories involving Astronism; (4) the criticism of religion in general and the application of this criticism to Astronism; (5) the variety of ways that people self-identify as Astronists and express their identity online; (6) the oversimplification of Astronist beliefs; (7) multiple religious belonging (also called multiformism) among new Astronists, given that they continue to self-identify with their original religion; (8) and the phenomenon of individuals already believing in Astronist beliefs or engaging in Astronist practices without knowing that there was a named religion that they could self-identify with that professes and organises these beliefs and practices. This final theme indicates that there are many other Astronists in the world who do not yet know they are indeed Astronist because the word has not come to their attention, with the terms ‘Astronism’ and ‘Astronist’ only having been ascribed to the beliefs and practices of Cometan in 2018.

From the review conducted, it appears there are forms of Astronist self-identification that have gained popularity through online platforms. What also appeared as a practice among early Astronists following the release of the video was that individuals began self-identifying as Astronists or showing their support for the video by using one or more combinations of the following space-related emojis: rocket 🚀,

telescope () , milky way () , shooting star () or sparkles (). I first started this way of self-identifying as an Astronist with the rocket and stars emojis on Instagram in 2020. A similar practice had already appeared online among vegans principally using the seedling emoji () , with less common emojis used by vegans including the sunflower () , globe () , or herb (). The practice of using emojis or specific combinations of emojis to show one's affiliation with a movement, religion or belief has become a popular trend since the early 2010s as it conveys solidarity among online users.

More sociological and ethnographical research must be conducted on Astronists in both online and real-world settings to understand the dynamics of how Astronists self-identify and communicate, including with each other and with non-Astronists. Conducting more ethnographical research on Astronism would support studies on the public discourse regarding Astronism. Improving our understanding of how Astronists communicate as well as the reactions of non-Astronists will help monitor Astronism's role in contemporary cultures and monitor the spread of Astronist beliefs, practices and the use of Astronist terminology. This will help to determine the rate of success over time enjoyed by the Astronist Institution in disseminating Astronism as a new religion.

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