



Demythologizing Satan in the Qur'an: Shifting the Focus from Mythological Entities to Ethical Functional Dimensions

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Abstract

The phenomenon of Satan as an absolute supernatural entity that can force humans to sin often reduces the moral responsibility of individuals. This hinders the understanding of human free will and autonomy in religious narratives. This research aims to investigate how the Qur'an inherently demythologizes satanism by shifting the focus from mythological entities to concepts oriented towards ethics and functionality. This qualitative research, based on literature studies, conducts an in-depth analysis of key verses about the devil and Satan by applying the method of thematic interpretation (*mauḍū'iy*), enriched by humanistic hermeneutic approaches, especially those of Fazlur Rahman and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd. The results of the analysis crystallized in three main findings: first, the characterization of Satan as the personification of internal arrogance and Satan as a representation of temptation that is internal and external; second, the Qur'an's affirmation of the absence of satanic coercion and the placing of absolute responsibility for choice on man; and third, the pragmatic function of the phrase "real enemy" as an ethical warning rather than an ontological description. The study's main contribution lies in the detailed textual evidence of how the Qur'an constructs a human-centered moral narrative. This enriches the understanding of the Qur'anic hermeneutics, particularly in interpreting potentially mythological elements functionally and ethically. This study has implications for the realm of da'wah and Islamic education, namely emphasizing rationality and personal accountability to eliminate superstitious and fatalistic tendencies in some Muslim societies. This study is limited to textual analysis and lacks empirical data on communal perceptions. Future research should pursue field studies on social behavior or explore Sufi and philosophical interpretations in order to provide broader cross-disciplinary insights.



Keywords: Demythologizing; Satan; Moral Responsibility; Hermeneutics of the Qur'an

Introduction

The demythologization of Satan is a crucial aspect in understanding the Qur'an's narrative of evil and temptation. The Qur'an fundamentally shifts the understanding of the devil from an external, mythological entity with autonomous power to a more functional and ethical representation. This shift is evident in a few key facts: first, the Qur'an describes Satan specifically with pride (*kibr*) as the main motive for his disobedience, and Satan (*shayṭān*) as a whisperer (*waswasah*) who operates on a psychological or moral level. This suggests that temptation is more of an internal dynamic than a mere external force (Busari Afeez Babatunde et al., 2025; Rahman, 1980) Second, this sacred text explicitly affirms man's full responsibility for his choices and actions, as illustrated in Q.S. Ibrahim (14:22), where Satan himself admits that he only persuades and has no coercive power over man (Asad, 2003; Kostylev, 2025). Third, the use of the term "real enemy" (*'aduwwun mubīn*) for satans in the Qur'an serves more as a pragmatic ethical-theological warning than an ontological description of supernatural beings to encourage moral vigilance (Cherifi, 2020; Heryadi, 2017). Thus, this demythologization encourages a deeper understanding of evil as a human choice and not a destiny imposed by external forces.

Studies of the concept of Satan in the Islamic tradition have shown three main tendencies that differ in their approach and focus. Understanding these trends is crucial for positioning these studies and highlighting existing research gaps. The first is a theological-dogmatic study that tends to focus on the literal existence of Satan as a supernatural being, supernatural powers, and his role as a tempter in Islamic cosmology (Anwari, 2020; Aziz, 2017; Sakat et al., 2015) This study is usually based on classical interpretations and hadith histories that emphasize its ontological aspects. The second is a philosophical-sufistic study that is more likely to understand Satan as a symbol of ego power (*nafs ammārah*), lust, or spiritual obstacles on the way to God. This study emphasizes the internal and psychological dimensions of temptation (Basharin, 2018; Zayd, 2004) The third is a historical-anthropological study that examines how the concept of Satan evolves in Islamic culture and tradition, as well as its influence on religious practices and popular narratives in society (Huneidi, 2014; Hussain, 2018; Saeed, 2008) Although rich in perspective, these studies tend to focus less on the textual analysis of the Qur'an, specifically to uncover the process of demythologizing inherent in the text itself. This is the gap that this research seeks to fill.

This article aims to analyze in depth how the Qur'an demythologizes Satanism through its key verses. This analysis reveals nuances of meaning that are often overlooked in interpretations that are too literal or overly mythological. Specifically, this study identifies and interprets verses that directly or indirectly describe the nature, role, and interaction of demons with humans, focusing on their ethical and moral implications rather than mere ontological aspects. Clearly, this study examines how the Qur'an distinguishes between Satan as a specific figure and Satan as a broader concept, as well as how the Qur'an directs attention to man's moral responsibility in the face of temptation. This study aims to offer a more nuanced and functional understanding of the concept of Satan in the Qur'an, which is pertinent to contemporary moral and spiritual challenges. In line with all that, the main questions can be asked, namely: first; how the Qur'an distinguishes the characterization of Satan as the personification of pride from the broader concept of Satan as a representation of temptation, second; in what extent does the Qur'an's affirmation of the absence of Satanic coercion and man's absolute responsibility shift the understanding of evil from mythological destiny to the consequences of ethical choice, and thirdly; How does the pragmatic function of the phrase "real enemy" serve as an ethical-theological warning rather than simply an ontological description of a supernatural entity?

The authors hypothesize that the Qur'an deliberately presents the concept of the devil with a narrative that minimizes its mythological aspects and emphasizes its functional and ethical



dimensions more. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that the primary purpose of the Qur'an is to guide humans toward truth and goodness, rather than introducing supernatural entities that could compromise their moral autonomy. Early observations show that the Qur'an places more emphasis on the consequences of human behavior influenced by Satan's temptations than on the coercive power of Satan itself. In addition, the use of language that tends to be metaphorical or symbolic to describe satanic intervention also supports this hypothesis. It directs the reader to view temptation as a test, not a fate. Therefore, this article argues that the demythologization of Satan by the Qur'an is an attempt to reinforce the concept of monotheism (the oneness of God) and human moral autonomy in the face of temptation, as well as encourage them to take more responsibility for their choices and actions.

Literature Review Demythologization

Demythologization comes from two elements: "de", meaning elimination, elimination, or reversal, and "mythology", which refers to myths, i.e., stories, traditional beliefs, or symbolic narratives whose origins are often unknown (Buxton, Richard G.A., 2024; Congdon, 2017) In terms of demythologization, it is a method of interpretation that aims to separate the substantive truth or core message of a text from its mythological context (Bultmann, 1958; Roslan, 2017) This concept was originally introduced by Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) in the context of Christian theology. Furthermore, he found significant resonance and adaptation in the study of other religious texts, including the Qur'an. Demythology aims to dissect the mythological layers of religious narratives in order to reveal deeper existential, moral, or theological meanings, without negating the core truth of the message (Ayu, 2024; Bleicher, 2017) Bultmann, a pioneer of the demythologization of the gospel, argues that supernatural narratives must be reinterpreted to find relevance for modern humans living in a scientific world, who can no longer accept a literal interpretation of the mythological world (Bleicher, 2017; Bultmann, 1958; Kalalo et al., 2021) This study borrows the term "demythologization" to be applied in the interpretation of the Qur'an, specifically to verses about the devil or Satan. This is an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the devil or demon in the Qur'an, one that transcends the mere image of supernatural beings and moves towards a more functional and symbolic interpretation. Thus, this study proposes interpreting the concept of satanism in the Qur'an as a symbol of internal or external forces that challenge human moral autonomy (Awwaliyah & Tajuddin, 2024; Mohamed El-Baz El-Sheakh et al., 2023).

The implementation of demythologization of the Qur'an operates within the framework of recontextualization of meaning that is in harmony with the characteristics of revelation as a dynamic and authoritative text ((Abu Shareea, 2019; Zayd, 2004). Rather than negates the ontological aspects that the text asserts, this approach reinforces the relevance of the Qur'an as the eternal kalam of Allah through its emphasis on its functional significance. Fazlur Rahman, for example, points out that the functional-historical approach does not in the slightest reduce the divine authority of the text, but rather clarifies the position of the Qur'an as a living moral and ethical guide for humanity ((Awwaliyah & Tajuddin, 2024; Muhtolib, 2018; Rahman, 1980; Rozaq, 2023). In this framework, demythologizing is understood as an attempt to interpret the figure of the devil for pedagogical and ethical purposes, in order to dissect its functional role in human testing as well as the moral implications of each temptation ((Grasso, 2023; Rohmah, 2024). Thus, efforts to uncover the moral and existential meaning behind satanic narratives maintain the integrity of revelation while expanding its ecotheological dimension in responding to the challenges of the times (Sya'roni et al., 2025).

Satan

The concept of Satan (*Iblīs*) and Satan in the Qur'an has been the subject of diverse interpretations in academic literature centered on his nature and role as a specific dissident



figure (Achmad, 2022; Denny, 2004 (vol 12: 663-663); Sakat et al., 2015). Much of the literature discusses whether Satan is a fallen angel or a jinn, and how his refusal to bow down to Adam forms the archetype (prototype) of evil. Classical mufassir differs on the origin of Satan. Some of them, such as at-Ṭabarī, consider him to be a jinn who is among the angels (Adel, Rahimi, and Mohammadi 2025; Al-Ṭabarī 2001 (Juz 1: 662-672)), while others consider him to be an angel who later disobeyed (Muhtolib & Fauzi, 2020; Muzakki & Irham, 2021). Modern studies tend to highlight Satan's arrogance (*kibr*) as the core of his disobedience, i.e., making him the personification of an ego that rejects divine truth and authority (Mustafa, 2023; Siddiqui, 2025). Jane Dammen McAuliffe, for example, analyzes how the Qur'anic narrative of Satan serves as a moral lesson about the dangers of pride and rebellion against God's commands (McAuliffe, 2006; Setiawati et al., 2024). This dissent illustrates the attempt to understand Satan not merely as a mythological entity, but also as a symbolic representation of rebellion against the divine will that has profound ethical implications for humans.

In addition to Satan as a specific figure, the concept of "satan" (*syaiṭān*) in the Qur'an encompasses a broader spectrum of dissenting and tempting forces (Abu Khaer & Fatkhul Mubin, 2022; McAuliffe, 2006). The Qur'an shows that Satan refers not only to the disobedient jinn, but also to the "devil of men" (*shayāṭīn al-ins wal jinn*), who whispers evil and misleads. Verses describing Satan as "whisperers" (*waswasah*) are often interpreted as manifestations of negative internal impulses in humans (such as lust and ego) or the adverse influence of the social environment and other misleading individuals. Reuven Firestone, in his analysis of the issue of evil in the Qur'an, highlights how this sacred text consistently places primary responsibility on humans despite the temptations of Satan, and asserts that Satan has no coercive power (Ahmadi Motamayel et al., 2024; Firestone, 1994) This broader understanding of demonism favors demythologization by shifting the focus from mere external entities to the internal and social dimensions of evil, and encourages humans to identify and counter the sources of temptation within themselves and their surrounding environment (Čekić, 2025; Khan, 2023)

Hermeneutics of the Qur'an

Etymologically, the term "hermeneutics" has its roots in the Greek word *hermēneuein* (interpret, translate, reveal), which is associated with the god Hermes in Greek mythology as the bearer of the messages of the gods (Palmer, 1969: 12-14). Terminologically, hermeneutics is a philosophical discipline that discusses the theory and methodology of interpretation, not only for written texts but also for all forms of symbolic expression (Ricoeur, 1976:71). In the context of Islamic studies, "Qur'anic hermeneutics" is defined as a reflective discipline that questions the epistemological foundations, philosophical assumptions, and historical-social conditions that underlie any attempt to understand and interpret the Qur'an (Zayd, 2004: 10). It goes beyond the descriptive work of classical tafsīr by criticizing the interpreter's *pre-understanding*, the horizon of meaning, and the dynamic process of constructing significance (Moosa, 2000: 5-10).

The history of the development of the Qur'anic hermeneutics as a modern critical discourse can be traced to 20th-century Muslim thinkers who were influenced by Western philosophical traditions. Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988) is considered a pioneer who systematically introduced a historical-critical approach through the "*double movement*" method, which is to understand verse in the context of 7th-century Arab society first, then extract its universal moral principles to be applied in the contemporary context (Rahman, 1982: 5-7). Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (1943-2010) made a fundamental contribution by deconstructing the concept of "text" itself. Through a humanistic approach, he views the Qur'an as a "*discourse*" that is open, historical, and produced in a specific cultural context, requiring a creative and contextual interpretation (Zayd, 2004:30-32). Other important figures include Mohammed Arkoun (1928-2010), whose "critique of Islamic reason" employs semiotic and anthropological analysis, and Abdullah Saeed, with



his hierarchical contextual interpretation model (Arkoun, 2002; Saeed, 2005) This development marked a transition from a single interpretive authority to a methodological plurality that recognized the role of the reader and socio-historical context.

Methodologically, contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics is generally interdisciplinary, combining analytical tools from linguistics, critical history, sociology of knowledge, and philosophy (Christmann, 2003) His methods include semantic-historical analysis of key vocabulary, critical reconstruction of situational context (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), and readings that pay attention to literary structure (*nazm*) and thematic coherence in the Qur'an (Rahman, 1980: xi-xv). Approaches such as philosophical hermeneutics (using the insights of Gadamer and Ricoeur), critical hermeneutics (recognizing the relationship between text, power, and ideology), and theological hermeneutics (which still maintain the dimension of textual transcendence) coexist in academic discourse (Esack, 1997:50-60). At the heart of this methodological difference lies its emphasis on aspects of the text's historicity and the reader's authority to produce new meanings relevant to the challenges of the times, while still attempting to maintain continuity with the established tradition of Islamic interpretation (Soroush, 2009:1-10).

Method

This research focuses on the concept of the devil and Satan (*satan* (*sata*) in the Qur'an as material objects. He was chosen for his theological and ethical significance in understanding evil, temptation, and its potential to be read in a demythological manner. The analysis process is carried out by identifying both verses that explicitly mention the devil (as in the story of his disobedience in (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 34) and verses that implicitly describe their role as whisperers and enemies of man (as in Q.S. An-Nās) (Al-Bâqī, 1994) By focusing on these key verses, the research aims to trace how the Qur'an itself leads readers to a functional and ethical understanding of the devil, one that transcends mere mythological understandings.

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a library research methodology (Mamta & Kumar, 2024; Patil, 2024) This type of research was chosen because the core of the investigation is textual analysis and interpretation of primary religious texts as well as secondary scientific works, rather than empirical field data. The primary data of this study is the original text of the Qur'an. Meanwhile, the secondary data includes various classical and modern interpretations, books on Islamic theology, Qur'anic hermeneutics, Islamic philosophy, as well as articles from internationally reputable journals that discuss the concept of demon/demon and demythology (Creswell, 2014) Through this approach, researchers can explore the nuances of meaning, historical context, and theological implications of Qur'anic verses that are essential to constructing a strong demythologizing argument.

The Qur'an was chosen as the primary source because of its fundamental and authoritative position in Islam. The data collection was carried out using a standard mushaf and digital software to search for all verses containing the keywords "devil" and "satan" (Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf al-Qur'an, 2016) As a support, the study also refers to classical interpretations (such as *Tafsīr at-Ṭabarī* and *ar-Rāzī*) to understand traditional interpretations, as well as modern interpretations (such as the works of Fazlur Rahman, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, and Muhammad Asad) that offer a more rational and functional perspective (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Asad, 2003; Rahman, 1980; Shihab, 2005) The involvement of these diverse secondary sources ensures that the analysis is not only text-based but also enriched by various interpretive traditions, creating a needed comprehensive synthesis.

Data collection in this study uses documentary techniques (Ali, 2024; "Content Analysis," 2010) to systematically extract information from textual sources. The process begins with an in-depth reading of all the verses of the Qur'an that contain the words "devil" and "devil", noting the



context, nuances of language, and their narrative function. This primary data is then compared with the interpretations of various books, especially highlighting the explanations of the mufasir about the power of Satan and human responsibility. This systematic approach ensures that all textual evidence is thoroughly identified, categorized, and analyzed to form a solid foundation of argument.

The primary methodology of this study is thematic analysis (*tafsir mauḍū'iy*) ((Al-Farmawi, 1977; Lubis & Milhan, 2024), which serves as the foundational framework for organizing and categorizing relevant Qur'anic verses. This thematic structure is then augmented by the hermeneutical principles of Fazlur Rahman's "Double Movement" and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's humanistic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Lochmiller, 2021; J. Thompson, 2022). Rather than a full-scale application of multiple standalone methods, these hermeneutical lenses are utilized specifically to deepen the interpretation of the gathered themes, moving the analysis from a descriptive textual survey to a contextually relevant and functional reading ((Rahman, 1982; Zayd, 2004).

Operationally, the analysis process begins with the thematic grouping of verses, followed by a hermeneutic inquiry into their historical and linguistic underpinnings to uncover moral meanings that extend beyond literalism (Palmer, 1969; Rahman, 1980). This integrated approach ensures that while the study remains rooted in traditional thematic exegesis, it is critically enriched by modern hermeneutics to highlight the text's emphasis on human agency and ethical choice.

Result

This section presents the results of a search for the key verses of the Qur'an that support the argument of demonic demythology. The results found three significant pieces of evidence: first, the Qur'an shifted the focus from Satan as an external supernatural entity to an internal and moral force; Second, this sacred text emphasizes man's full responsibility for his choices and actions; and third, the portrayal of Satan as a "real enemy" serves more as an ethical-theological warning than a purely ontological description. These results underscore how the Qur'an inherently encourages a more functional understanding of Satan. This functional shift implies that the Qur'an treats the narrative of Satan not as a metaphysical map of the unseen world, but as a pedagogical tool designed to cultivate moral vigilance. Instead of engaging in speculative debates about the biological or physical nature of the jinn and Iblis, the text directs the reader's attention to the mechanism of temptation -such as arrogance (*kibr*) and insidious whispering (*waswasah*). In this framework, Satan functions as an "ethical mirror" for the human condition; the focus is not on the character of the deceiver, but on the vulnerability and agency of the one being deceived. By demythologizing the threat, the Qur'an strips away the excuse of external victimhood, transforming the struggle against "Satan" into a proactive journey of self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and radical personal accountability.

Shift in Focus from Occult Entities to Internal/Moral Forces

This study reveals that a search of key verses, such as Q.S. Al-Baqarah (2:34), Q.S. Al-A'raf (7:11-18), Q.S. Al-Hijr (15:28-43), and Q.S. Şād (38:71-85), regarding Satan's refusal to prostrate to Adam, exhibits a consistent narrative pattern. Ahmad Muşţafā Al-Marāgī, in *Tafsīr Al-Marāgī*, states that this rejection of Satan is not merely physical disobedience, but a manifestation of the internal nature of takabbur ((Al-Marāgī, 1946). Meanwhile, Muhammad 'Izzah Darwazah in *At-Tafsīr Al-Ḥadīş* interprets the story contained in the above verses as a representation of the conflict between spiritual pride and humility (Darwazah, 2000: vol. 2, 88-90). The Devil, in this case, represents pride, and the Angel represents humility. Fazlur Rahman in *Major Themes of the Qur'an* further states that the repetition of this narrative in



various surahs hints at the importance of understanding Satan as a psychological symbol rather than a literal entity (Rahman, 1980:122-124). Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, in his humanistic hermeneutics, views the narrative of Satan as a metaphor for humanity's tendency to reject the truth when it feels superior (Zayd, 2004: 82-84).

Meanwhile, the study of verses on the concept of Satanism (Satan), such as Q.S. An-Nās (114:1-6) and Q.S. Al-An'ām (6:112), reveals a significant expansion of meaning, namely from a literal-ontological understanding to a functional-psychological one. Al-Marāgī interprets "waswasah" in Q.S. An-Nās as a whisper of the heart arising from the impulse of internal lust (Al-Marāgī, 1946: vol. 30, 215-217). Darwazah understands the "the demons of humans and jinn" as recognizing that the source of temptation is not limited to supernatural beings, but also includes the negative influence of the social environment (Darwazah, 2000), Fazlur Rahman said that this expansion of the concept of satanism shows a functional approach to the Qur'an, where the most important thing is not the ontology of satanism but the destructive effects of its temptations (Rahman, 1980:126-128). Meanwhile, Abu Zayd shows how this expansion of meaning reflects the Qur'an's awareness of the complexity of human psychology and the social dynamics that occur (Zayd, 2004: 86-88).

Furthermore, the study of verses such as Q.S. An-Naḥl (16:99-100) and Q.S. Al-Ḥijr (15:42) on the limitations of satanic power reveals an emphasis on internal aspects. Al-Marāgī interprets these verses as affirming that Satan has only the ability to whisper, while the final decision is entirely within the domain of the human will (Al-Marāgī, 1946: vol. 14, 89-91). Darwazah interprets the claim of the absence of satanic power over believers in these verses as a reinforcement of the concept of human moral responsibility (Darwazah, 2000). Rahman reveals that this repeated assertion of the absence of power to force Satan is part of the project of demythologizing the Qur'an (Rahman, 1982: 12-14). Meanwhile, Abu Zayd views the narrative in these verses as a deconstruction of the concept of mythological determinism and a strengthening of human moral autonomy in the face of various forms of temptation, both internal and external (Zayd, 2004: 90-92).

Emphasis on Fully Human Responsibility

Based on the analysis of Q.S. Al-A'rāf (7:16-17) and Q.S. Al-Isrā' (17:65), this study reveals the fundamental limits of satanic power. Al-Marāgī interprets Satan's confession, "I will hinder them from Your path," in Q.S. Al-A'rāf as a form of threat limited to persuasion, not the ability to coerce people (Al-Marāgī, 1946), Darwazah explains that the phrase "there is no power for you over My servants" in Q.S. Al-Isrā' affirms the absolute sovereignty of Allah in protecting His faithful servants from the domination of Satan (Darwazah, 2000: vol. 9, 112-114). Fazlur Rahman stated that this setting of limits on satanic power by Allah demonstrates the principle of divine justice, which does not burden man beyond his ability (Rahman, 1980: 88-90). Abu Zayd saw this as a form of restriction of Satan's jurisdiction that only applies to those who voluntarily follow his temptations (Zayd, 2004:115). Muhammad Asad added that these verses affirm the concept of *'ismah* (divine protection) for the pious ((Asad, 2003)

Meanwhile, Q.S. Ibrāhīm (14:22) reveals Satan's dramatic recognition of the limitations of his power. Al-Marāgī interprets the confession "I have no power over you" as a judicial confession in the court of the hereafter, which nullifies all forms of defense based on external coercion (Al-Marāgī, 1946), Darwazah understands the phrase "be close to yourself" as an affirmation that the source of moral catastrophe actually lies in man's own decisions, not external parties (Darwazah, 2000: vol. 7, 332). Fazlur Rahman explains that this confession of Satan marks the climax of the demythologized narrative, which positions humans as autonomous moral subjects (Rahman, 1982:45). Abu Zayd interprets that with this confession of Satan, the Qur'an reverses the traditional narrative that has been blaming Satan by asserting that it is humans



who are actually responsible for their own actions (Zayd, 2004: 108). Muhammad Asad stated that this confession removes all forms of pretext for human sinful actions (Asad, 2003). A study of the implications of these verses reveals a profound conceptual transformation. According to Fazlur Rahman, this rejection of external coercion leads to the doctrine of *jihad al-nafs* as a form of active moral responsibility (Rahman, 1980: 92). Abu Zayd stated that placing full responsibility on human beings is a form of theological humanization that frees us from mythological determinism (Zayd, 2004: 118). Al-Marāgī notes that this concept promotes *muhāsabah al-nafs* (self-introspection) as a preventive measure against various temptations (Al-Marāgī, 1946: Vol. 1). Darwazah sees this as the basis for the formation of a law- and morally conscious society (Darwazah, 2000: Vol. 8). Meanwhile, Muhammad Asad interpreted it as an affirmation of the concept of *istita'ah* (capacity) of human beings in determining their way of life (Asad, 2003).

Satan as an Ethical-Theological Warning, not an Ontological Description

A study of verses that contain the phrase "demon the real enemy" (*'aduwwun mubīn*), such as Q.S. Al-Baqarah (2:168), Q.S. Fāṭir (35:6), and Q.S. Yāsīn (36:60), shows its pragmatic function as a moral warning. Al-Marāgī states that the repeated mention of this phrase is not an ontological description of Satan's nature, but rather an affirmation of Satan's function as an actively misleading entity, thus demanding constant vigilance from humans (Al-Marāgī, 1946: vol. 1, 235). Darwazah views this repetition as a rhetorical strategy employed by the Qur'an to foster a collective awareness of the dangers inherent in the spiritual journey. According to him, the enemy can take an internal form, such as lust, or an external form, such as negative social influences (Darwazah, 2000: vol. 1, 189). Rahman said that the phrase *'aduwwun mubīn* serves as a functional categorization that shifts attention from metaphysical speculation about the nature of Satan to a practical attitude in the face of temptation (Rahman, 1980: 67). Zayd interprets the use of this phrase as a form of prophetic communication that understands the cultural context of Arab society at the time, while transcending it by offering a more universal and morally relevant concept of the enemy (Zayd, 2004: 132). Asad added that the emphasis on the word *mubīn* (the real) serves to concretize abstract threats, making them easier to understand and watch out for in everyday life (Asad, 2003).

The shift from an ontological question to a functional approach to understanding Satan is a hallmark of the demythologization of the Qur'an. The main assumption behind the shift from an ontological question to a functional approach to Satan is the belief that the Qur'an is essentially a pedagogical book of moral instruction (*Huda*), rather than a metaphysical treatise on the supernatural. This approach assumes that the narrative of the devil serves as a means of sharpening human moral vigilance, in which the figure of Satan or the devil is positioned not as an entity with coercive power, but rather as a personification of the internal ego dynamics (*kibr*) and social temptations that test human integrity. Thus, this demythologization aims to restore human moral autonomy and full responsibility before God, by reinterpreting the "mythical language" of revelation into an ethical message that is relevant and rational for every context of the times (Rahman, 1980: 121-125; Zayd, 2004: 83).

Al-Marāgī asserts that the Qur'an deliberately avoids lengthy discussions of the metaphysical origins of Satan because they are unproductive for the formation of moral character (Al-Marāgī, 1946), Darwazah sees that the question of "what the devil does" is more emphasized than "what is the devil" because the former is directly related to real-life practice and the formation of individual ethics (Darwazah, 2000: vol. 3, 275). Rahman views this shift as part of the Qur'an's grand project of cultivating an anthropological consciousness that places humans at the center of moral responsibility, rather than supernatural beings (Rahman, 1982: 88). Zayd reads this tendency as a form of special emphasis on the ethical-religious dimension that keeps sacred texts relevant beyond the context of a particular time and place (Zayd, 2004: 145). Asad added that this functional approach aligns with the rational spirit of Islam, which prioritizes



practical aspects accessible to the human mind in distinguishing between good and bad (Asad, 2003).

The pedagogical function of the concept of satanism in the Qur'an is evident in its emphasis on the aspects of warning and moral guidance. Al-Marāgī interprets various verses about Satan as an educational medium to build spiritual resilience through the introduction of various forms of temptation (**Al-Marāgī, 1946: vol. 30, 156**). Darwazah views the narrative of Satan as a conceptual framework for understanding the inner conflict in humans between the tendency toward good and the impulse toward evil. Rahman stated that this pedagogical function is an effective instrument in forming Muslim personalities that are critical of various forms of error, both within oneself and in the social environment (Rahman, 1980: 115). Zayd asserts that the Qur'an's pedagogical approach to the concept of Satan creates space for humanistic interpretations that free man from irrational fear and direct him to constructive moral struggle (Zayd, 2004: 168). Meanwhile, Asad concludes that the Qur'an's entire approach to Satan ultimately aims to form human beings who possess moral autonomy and the ability to distinguish between truth and error through the consideration of reason and conscience (Asad, 2003).

Discussion

The above verses show three main pieces of evidence that support the argument of demythologizing Satan in the Qur'an. This study highlights that the Qur'an naturally leads readers towards a more functional and ethical understanding of demons, rather than merely supernatural entities with superpowers. First, the Qur'an positions Satan as the personification of pride and rejection of truth, while Satan is the internal and external tempting force of jinn and humans. This is evidenced by the narrative of Satan in Q.S. Al-Baqarah (2:34) and the concept of "satanic whispers" in Q.S. An-Nās (114:1-6) (Rahman, 1982). Second, the Qur'an emphasizes man's full responsibility for his choices and actions, as confirmed by Satan's own admission in Q.S. Ibrāhīm (14:22) that he is only capable of persuading, not coercion (Asad, 2003). Third, the use of the phrase "real enemy" (*'aduwwun mubin*) in verses such as Q.S. Fathir (35:6) serves as a pragmatic ethical-theological warning, which directs people to be wary of all forms of moral temptation (Alfani et al., 2025; Rice, 2024). Overall, these results demonstrate the Qur'an's efforts to instill a responsible moral consciousness and liberate humanity from the destiny determined by external forces.

Reflection on the above findings has a significant impact on understanding crime and human moral autonomy within the context of Islam. The shift in focus from the devil as a coercive supernatural entity to a symbol of internal power and external invitation reinforces human free will and moral accountability (Bandura, 2002). This means that the struggle against evil is an *'an-nafs jihad'* or *internal struggle, which is a constant effort against the ego's impulses, lust, and negative* influences that surround us (Firestone, 1994; Zayd, 2004). For example, if someone makes a mistake, the Qur'an encourages them to introspect and take self-responsibility, rather than looking for scapegoats or blaming supernatural entities. This reflection contributes to a psychologically and ethically focused interpretation of the Qur'an, suggesting that individuals are encouraged to manage their choices and acknowledge the moral consequences of their actions. While this functional approach emphasizes the ethical-symbolic dimension, it is relevant to consider the traditional-literal perspective which maintains the ontological reality of Satan as a metaphysical entity. However, these two views may be viewed as complementary rather than contradictory; even within a literal framework, a primary Qur'anic objective appears to be the development of human moral agency and the limitation of fatalistic justifications for individual conduct.

The demythologizing of Satan in the Qur'an, as revealed by this analysis, does not entail a total rejection of Satan's supernatural existence, but rather an attempt to interpret its role functionally and pedagogically (Elmi, 2019; Kerwanto, 2023). The Qur'an uses the figure of



Satan and the concept of the devil as a tool to teach people about the dangers of pride, temptation, and the importance of moral resilience. For example, Satan's narrative of refusing to prostrate is a lesson in the dangers of arrogance, while Satan's whispers are a metaphor for negative impulses that test faith and character (Hubby Dzikrillah Alfani et al., 2024; Saeed, 2008). This means that the narrative about the devil serves as a practical guide to confronting ethical challenges in everyday life, and encourages vigilance against the often invisible or internal sources of evil. Thus, the Qur'an ensures that the understanding of the devil remains relevant for moral guidance, not just a mythical story separate from human reality.

When compared to other studies, such as the works of Muhammad Asad (1980) regarding the symbolic nature of jinns (Asad, 2003), or the psychological approach of Muhammad Iqbal (1934) who viewed Iblis as the dynamic resistance necessary for human moral growth (Iqbal, 1934), this study aligns with and, at the same time, deepens the thinking of modern scholars such as Fazlur Rahman and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd. Although they extensively discuss Qur'anic hermeneutics and theological issues, this study specifically applies their framework to systematically uncover the demythologizing of Satan through textual analysis of key verses. Rahman, for example, often emphasizes the moral purpose of the Qur'an and the need for a contextually relevant understanding, which aligns with the finding that Satan serves as an ethical warning ((Rahman, 1982). Similarly, Abu Zayd with his humanistic hermeneutics supports the idea of human moral autonomy ((Zayd, 2004). The uniqueness of this study lies in its detailed focus on how specific verses (e.g., Q.S. Ibrāhīm 14:22) textually support demythological readings, filling in gaps in the literature—represented by earlier scholars who discuss the concept of Satan in general or purely within cosmological frameworks—which often lack the specific textual depth regarding ethical-functional shifts.

The implications of these findings extend to the realms of da'wah and Islamic education, where the focus should be on rationality and personal accountability. This demythological understanding can counter the superstitious and fatalistic tendencies that are still inherent in some Muslim societies. For further research, it is recommended to examine how this concept of demythologization is interpreted and defended in the mystical tradition (Sufism), where demons are often internalized as a manifestation of lust that must be defeated. Additionally, comparative research can be conducted to compare the process of demythologizing Satan in the Qur'an with the concept of Satan/evil in Christian or Jewish theology, thereby producing interdisciplinary insights into the evolution of the concept of monotheistic evil.

Conclusion

This study conclusively demonstrates that the Qur'an demythologizes Satanism in three primary ways: shifting the focus from supernatural entities to internal moral forces, affirming full human responsibility, and presenting Satanism as an ethical-theological warning. The primary conclusion is that the Qur'an aims to empower human beings as moral agents, responsible for their choices, rather than victims of external forces. This means that evil is more the result of human choice and pride, rather than a destiny imposed by a mythological entity.

This research makes an important contribution to the development of the study of the Qur'an and modern Islamic theology. By systematically analyzing the demythologization of Satan through key verses, this study fills in a gap in the literature that often only addresses the concept of Satan in general. It enriches the understanding of the Qur'anic hermeneutics, particularly in interpreting potentially mythological elements functionally and ethically. His contribution lies in the detailed textual proof of how the Qur'an constructs a human-centered moral narrative. However, this study is primarily limited to a hermeneutical and textual analysis of the Qur'an and does not examine the empirical reception of these demythologized concepts among contemporary Muslim societies. Consequently, its findings remain within the



theoretical-theological framework and require further sociological research to understand how such interpretations influence actual religious behavior and communal beliefs.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that further studies be conducted on how the concept of demonic demythology is interpreted and internalized in various Islamic thought traditions, such as Sufism and philosophy, to explore the nuances of its application. Comparative research with other concepts of evil in the Abrahamic religion will also provide interdisciplinary insights. Examining the sociological impact of this demythological understanding on religious practice and character formation in contemporary society is also a promising area. Examining the sociological impact of this demythological understanding on religious practice and character formation in contemporary society is also a promising area because it would clarify whether shifting the perception of Satan from an external threat to an internal ethical challenge actually leads to increased personal accountability and a reduction in fatalistic attitudes within Muslim communities. Such research is essential to determine if this theological shift effectively translates into more proactive moral behavior and a more rational approach to social and spiritual problem-solving.

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