Parables In the Holy Quran:
An Evaluative Study of Some Renditions of Quranic Parables

By:

Huda Yaseen Ali Salem

Supervised by:
Professor Muhammad Raji. Al-Zughoul

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Examinig Committee
1. Prof. Muhammad R. Al-Zughoul..........................Chairman
2. Dr. Lutfi Abulhaija........................................Member
3. Dr. Ali Al-Hamad..........................................Member
4. Dr. Muhammad Saraireh.................................Member

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at evaluating renditions of some Quranic Parables made by the most known translators of the Holy Quran namely, A. Yusuf Ali, IRVING, Pickthall, Arberry and N.J. Dawood through a precise analysis and performing a comparison between their renditions to bring about shortcomings, in their renditions that lead to a falsification of the Quranic Parable as a result of neglecting (not explaining) the intended meaning of the Quranic Parable and to see whether they succeeded in conveying the hidden meanings that lie in the Quranic Parables or not.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that Quranic Parables shed light upon the metaphorical meaning of the Quranic Parable to reveal the intended meaning accurately; that is to say, they explain the metaphorical aspect of the Quranic Parable to demonstrate the real intended meaning. Different rhetorical images have not been used in Quranic Parables for the sake of the image itself but to show what they aim at and what profound meanings they connote. These deep meanings entail reflection and more practice to understand the the Arabic rhetorical image. No one can understand their meanings unless he/she examines them carefully and after reading the various commentary books of the Holy Quran. Understanding Quranic Parables is only restricted to those who are attributed in the following Ayah:

قال تعالى: (وَتَلَقَّاهُ الْأَمْلَالَ نَضْرِبُهُ إِلَّا إِلَى النَّاسِ وَمَا يُهْتَبِئُهُ إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ) (السكوت: 46)

Avery important issue has been discussed; that is how literal translation leads to the loss of meanings that lie in the Quranic Parables and thus to
distortion of the message of the Holy Quran. It leads to false, and thus, incorrect understanding of the Holy Quran Ayat.

Seventeen Quranic Parables are selected and are discussed on the basis of their rhetorical value, which are involved in Quranic Parables and which connote great and profound meanings. No one can understand them accurately except those who are well acquainted with secrets of the Arabic language.

The researcher’s, method in mastering the Quranic Parables depends on referring to ten different commentary books concerning the topic as well as different Arabic books. Then she makes an analysis for the Quranic Parable and compares it with the renditions presented by the aforementioned translators. After that she examines their renditions in accordance with the original meanings of the Quranic Parable as mentioned in commentary books. At last, the researcher presents an attempt to explain the real and correct meaning that is included in the Quranic Parable in a way that helps the reader to understand it accurately.

The study has established that the aforementioned translators explain only the rhetorical meaning of the Quranic Parable and do not explain neither its intended, deep meaning nor its aims; in other words, they neglected the important, hidden meaning, it remains vague and unclear. The study has shown that, at the time of translation, the translators’ pointed to two meanings for the term مثال i.e “the parable”, or “similitude” and they neglected other meanings like “attribute” or “state”.

It has been noted that they pay attention to the external shape of the linguistic items and their structures. The reason is very clear, they did not refer to different
commentary books, their readings were superficial so their renditions became superficial and insufficient.