

our people and our countries. What is at stake is our national and cultural identity, our Islamic doctrines and our Islamic Shariah.

A STUDY OF MUSLIM WOMEN'S RESPONSE TO BIBLE READINGS

by L. D.

Introduction:

This survey covers a three year period from 1988 through 1991, during which time Muslim women in a certain country in the Middle East had the Bible read or the gospel presented to them from one to three times. The majority were nationals of the country concerned, but there were also Muslim women from five other countries who were resident in the country.

Those to whom the Bible was read were newly delivered mothers in their private rooms in a maternity hospital. Usually, there was at least one other person present at the time, either a family member, or the maid, and on occasion the husband. Each woman's response was no doubt affected by various factors, such as the level of her discomfort or tiredness, who was doing the reading, her language, whether or not she was alone, and whether or not she had heard the gospel before. None of these factors have been taken into consideration here, as that would have been an impossible task.

The total number of readings involved is 706. All but 43 have been classed under one of 5 major categories: OLD TESTAMENT, MIRACLES, PARABLES, NARRATIVES, TEACHING (from the gospels or epistles), and PROJECT SUNRISE (also called SIRA, i.e. "THE LIFE OF THE MESSIAH IN CLASSICAL ARABIC").

The women have likewise been categorized according year of birth: from 1940-1950, from 1951-1960, from 1961-1965, from 1966-1970, and from 1971 onwards. The majority of the women, 51%, were born in the 1960s, with the 50s following next in line at 29%, and the 40s and 70s at 7% and 11% respectively.

Responses have been gauged on the following scale:

- INTEREST PLUS - interest seemed to go beyond the average.
- INTEREST - asked questions, requested Bible.
- MINIMAL INTEREST - no response, favourable or unfavourable.
- BASIC INTEREST - polite response, acknowledged they heard what you said, but wanted it to go no further.
- NEGATIVE INTEREST - engaged in argument rather than discussion, asked questions without caring to listen to answers.
- OPPOSED - open opposition to being read to

Undoubtedly, gauging someone's interest when one does not know the person, or all the factors that may influence her response, can be a hit and miss affair. The woman may not be revealing her true response to what she has heard, and so may be completely misunderstood. However, over all, the survey does show some generalizations which are only possible if the data is somewhat accurate and reliable.