



The Embryo and the Expert:

Medicine, Religion and the Struggle for Authority

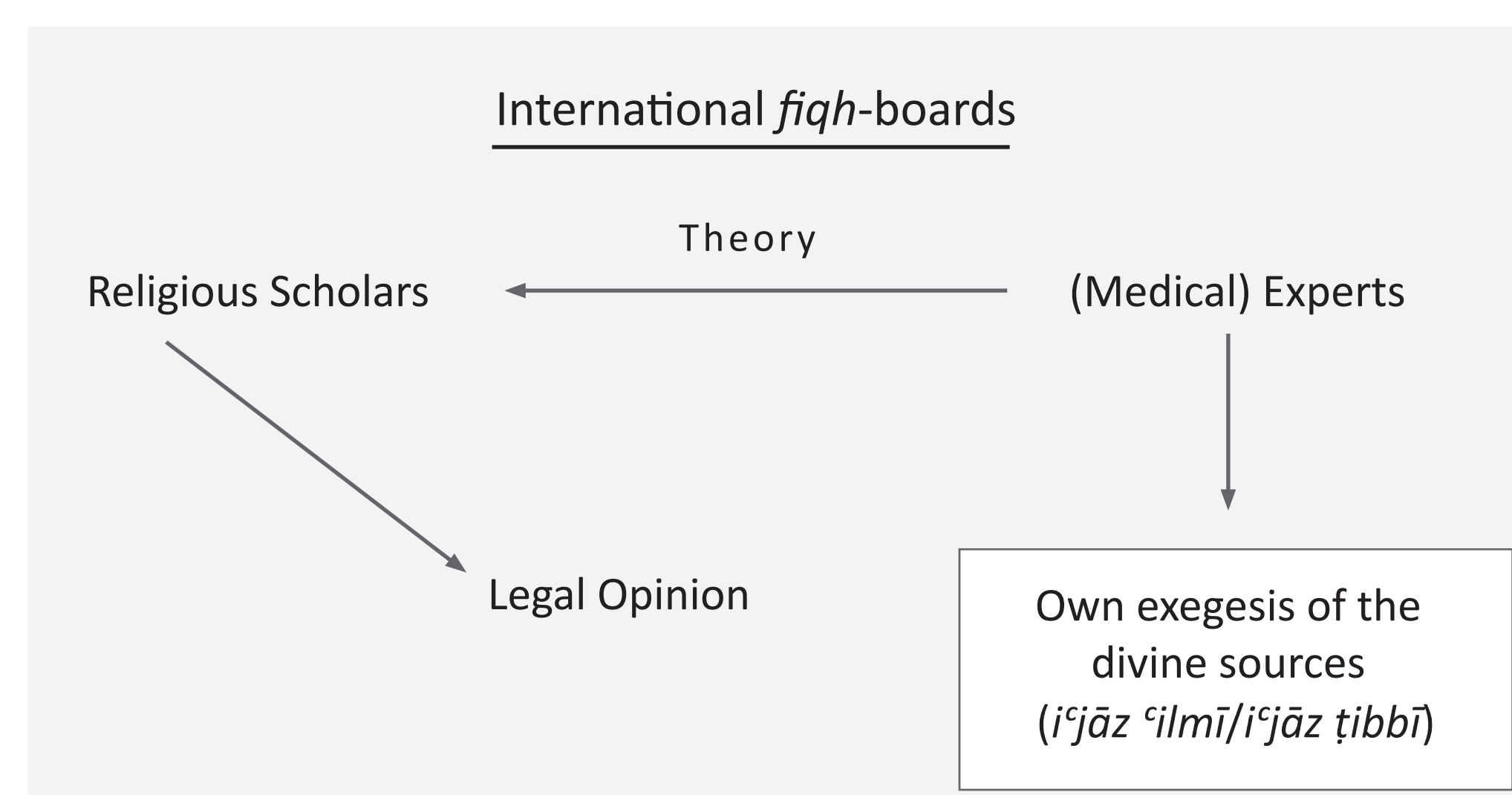
Melanie Guénon M.A.

Experts play a significant role in defining Islamic legal opinions regarding the unborn

Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Bār



Picture: googlegroups.com



- Physician
- Participated frequently in bioethical debates within the contemporary *fiqh*-boards as medical consultant
- Numerous publications, especially on embryology
- Central argument: Human life begins on the 120th day

‘Abd al-Majid al-Zindānī



Picture: aljazeera.com

- Preacher, politician, activist
- Founder of the „Commission on Scientific Miracles in the Qur’ān and Sunna“ (CSMQS)
- Part of an international *i’jāz ‘ilmī*-network affiliated to the Muslim World League
- Central argument: Human life begins on the 40th day

The prophetic tradition reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Ibn Mas‘ūd [one of differing versions]:

"إن أحكم جمع خلقه في بطن أمه أربعين يوماً نطفة ، ثم يكون علقة مثل ذلك ، ثم يكون مضغة مثل ذلك ، ثم يرسل الله إليه الملك ، فينفخ فيه الروح ويؤمر بأربع كلمات : بكتب رزقه وعمله وأجله وشقي أو سعيد [...]"

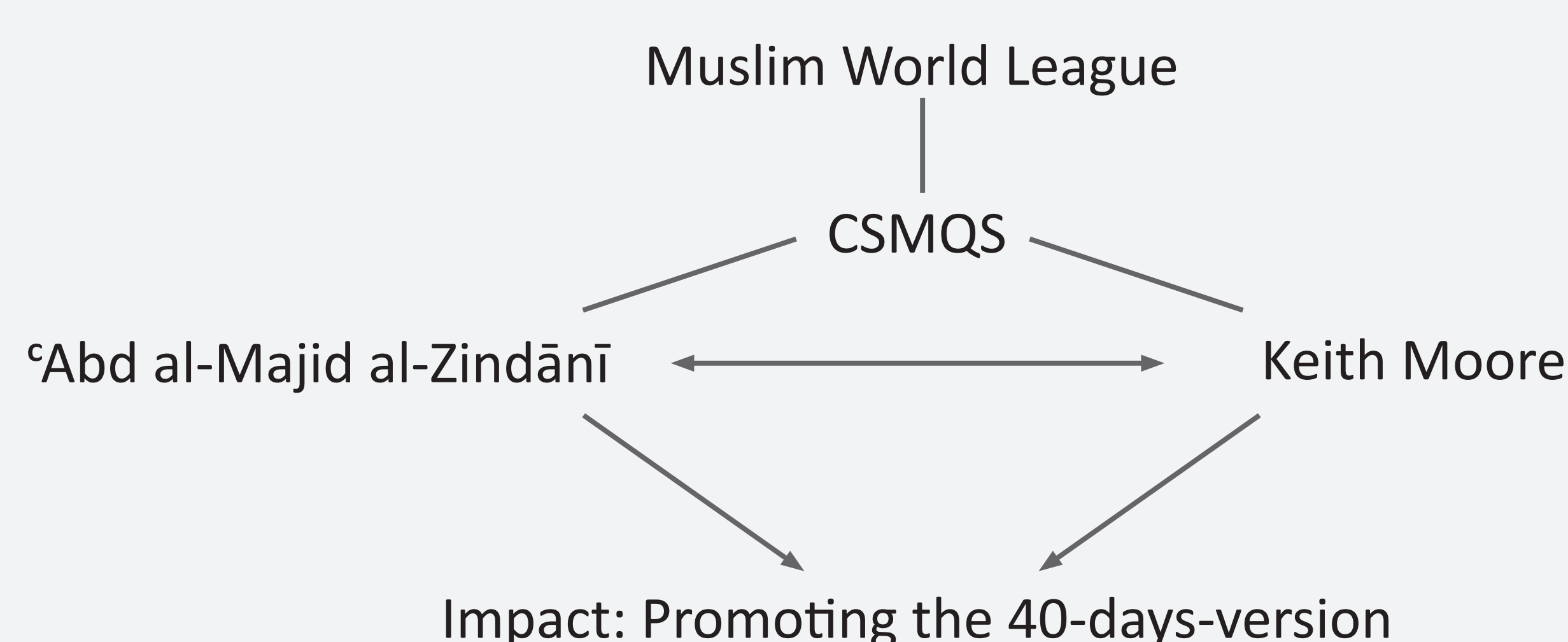
"The creation of one of you is assembled in his mother’s belly in forty days, then he also becomes an *‘alaqa*, then also a *mudgha*. Then God sends an angel who infuses his soul and is ordered to determine four things: He writes down his [i.e. the new creature’s] deeds, his livelihood, his date of death, and whether he will be blessed or wretched."

The prophetic tradition reported by Muslim on the authority of Ḥudhaifa b. Usayd:

"مر بالنطفة ثنتان وأربعون ليلة بعث الله إليها ملكاً، فصورها، وخلق سمعها وبصرها، وجلدها ولحمها وعظامها، ثم قال: يا رب! أذكر أم أنثى؟ فيقضي ربك ما شاء، ويكتب الملك، ثم يقول: يا رب! أجله؟ فيقول ربك ما شاء، ويكتب الملك، ثم يقول: يا رب! رزقه؟ فيقضي ربك ما شاء ويكتب الملك، ثم يخرج الملك بالصحيفة في يده فلا يزيد على ما أمر ولا ينقص."

"When forty-two nights have passed for the *nutfā*, God sends an angel to it who forms it and creates its hearing, its sight, its skin, its flesh and its bones. Then he says ‘O Lord, is it a male or female?’ And your Lord decrees what He wills and the angel writes it down. Then he says, ‘O Lord, what is its [i.e. the new creature’s] date of death?’ And your Lord says what He wills and the angel writes it down. Then the angel says, ‘O Lord, what is its livelihood?’ Your Lord decrees what He wills and the angel writes it down. Then the angel leaves with the document in his hand, without having either added anything to what he was commanded or omitted anything."

Commission on Scientific Miracles in the Qur’ān and Sunnah (CSMQS)



Human Development As Described in the Qur’an and Sunnah Correlation with Modern Embryology



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