

The evidence for tawassul through the awliya' or saints is also abundant, and it suffices that Allah strictly warns all believers to keep company with them when He says: "O believers! Be wary of Allah, and keep company with the truthful!" (9:119) and He enjoins us to follow those who have turned to Him in true and complete repentance (31:15). The Prophet said to al-Firasi, concerning asking from people: "If you absolutely must ask from people, then ask from the righteous ones" (in kunta la budda sa'ilan fas'al al-salihin).[31] There is no doubt that the visit of pious persons is a Sunna in Islam for that very purpose, as shown by the chapters to that effect entitled Bab ziyarat al-salihin in the books of etiquette and invocations.

Some people think that if a du`a from a holy man is answered while he is alive then he cannot help you if he is dead, as if the holy man or shaykh or saint is the origin of the help, but it is always Allah who is the source of the baraka and never a human being; so to think that Allah can only give when that saint is alive, and that when he is dead, Allah does not give anymore, is to say that the source is the person and not Allah in the first place! But in reality it is Allah who is giving help in both cases: life or death.

As for the objections of some "Salafis" today that it is not permissible to seek the blessings of saints after their death, they are based on the false belief that Allah's influence through the saints is in need for the saints' biological life to be effective, and this is absurd! As we said before, Allah's gift to the saints is independent from their being alive or dead, since in either case the real power always belongs to Allah, and the saints are only a secondary cause with no effective power in themselves. Moreover, the views of the early and late Imams and scholars quoted below concerning the permissibility of tawassul through the pious, also confirm that the objections of "Salafis" to tawassul through the saints after their passing from this life do not stand up to scrutiny.

It is obligatory for Muslims to believe that the abdal or Substitute-saints exist -- so called because, as the Prophet said (see #3 below), "None of them dies except Allah substitutes another in his place" -- and that they are among the religious leaders of the Community concerning whom there is no doubt among Muslims. No less than Ibn Taymiyya writes at the end of his `Aqida wasitiyya:

The true adherents of Islam in its pristine purity are Ahl al-Sunnat wal-Jama`a. In their ranks the truthful saints (siddiqin), the martyrs, and the righteous are to be found. Among them are the great men of guidance and illumination, of recorded integrity and celebrated virtue. The Substitutes (abdal) and the Imams of religion are to be found among them and the Muslims are in full accord concerning their guidance. These are the Victorious Group about whom the Prophet said: "A group within my Community manifestly continues to be in the truth. Neither those who oppose them nor those who abandon them can do them harm, from now on until the Day of Resurrection." [32]

The Prophet emphasized in many authentic narrations the benefits brought to all creation through the intercession of Allah's saints and their standing with Him. Suyuti in his fatwa on the abdal in his *Hawi li al-fatawi* provided many examples of this type of universal intercession from which we quote the following:

1. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal says in his *Musnad* (1:112):

... The people of Syria were mentioned in front of `Ali ibn Abi Talib while he was in Iraq, and they said: "Curse them, O Commander of the Believers." He replied: "No, I heard the Messenger of Allah say: "The Substitutes (al-abdal) are in Syria and they are forty men, every time one of them dies, Allah substitutes another in his place. By means of them Allah brings down the rain, gives (Muslims) victory over their enemies, and averts punishment from the people of Syria."" al-Haythami said: "The men in its chains are all those of the sahih except for Sharih ibn `Ubayd, and he is trustworthy (thiqa)."[33]

2. al-Hakim narrated the following which he graded sound (sahih), and al-Dhahabi confirmed him:

`Ali said: "Do not curse the people of Syria, for among them are the Substitutes (al-abdal), but curse their injustice."

Note that any religious knowledge unattainable through *ijtihad* and authentically conveyed from one of the Companions is considered a hadith by the experts of that science.

3. Tabarani said in his *Mu`jam al-awsat*:

Anas said that the Prophet said: "The earth will never lack forty men similar to the Friend of the Merciful [Prophet Ibrahim], and through them people receive rain and are given help. None of them dies except Allah substitutes another in his place." Qatada said: "We do not doubt that al-Hasan [al-Basri] is one of them."

Ibn Hibban narrates it in *al-Tarikh* through Abu Hurayra as: "The earth will never lack forty men similar to Ibrahim the Friend of the Merciful, and through whom you are helped, receive your sustenance, and receive rain."

4. Imam Ahmad also narrated in the Musnad (5:322):

The Prophet said: "The Substitutes in this Community are thirty like Ibrahim the Friend of the Merciful. Every time one of them dies, Allah substitutes another one in his place."

Hakim Tirmidhi cites it in *Nawadir al-usul* and Ahmad's student al-Khallal in his *Karamat al-awliya'*. Haythami said its men are those of the *sahih* except `Abd al-Wahid who was declared trustworthy by al-`Ijli and Abu Zar`a (as well as Yahya ibn Ma`in).

5. Abu Dawud through three different good chains in his *Sunan* (English #4273), Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* (6:316), Ibn Abi Shayba in his *Musannaf*, Abu Ya`la, al-Hakim, and Bayhaqi narrated:

Umm Salama the wife of the Prophet said: "Disagreement will occur at the death of a Caliph and a man of the people of Madina will come forth flying to Mecca. Some of the people of Mecca will come to him, bring him out against his will and swear allegiance to him between the Corner and the Maqam. An expeditionary force will then be sent against him from Syria but will be swallowed up in the desert between Mecca and Madina, and when the people see that, the Substitutes (*abdal*) of Syria and the best people (*`asaba*) of Iraq will come to him and swear allegiance to him..."

6. Imam Ahmad cited in *Kitab al-zuhd*, also Ibn Abi al-Dunya, Abu Nu`aym, Bayhaqi, and Ibn `Asakir narrated from Julays:

Wahb ibn Munabbih said: I saw the Prophet in my sleep, so I said: "Ya Rasulallah, where are the Substitutes (*budala'*) of your Community?" So he gestured with his hand towards Syria. I said: "Ya Rasulallah, aren't there any in Iraq?" He said: "Yes, Muhammad ibn Wasi`, Hassan ibn Abi Sinan, and Malik ibn Dinar, who walks among the people similarly to Abu Dharr in his time."

Nawawi in *Bustan al-`arifin* (1985 ed. p. 31) mentions that the hadith master Hammad ibn Salama ibn Dinar (d. 167) was considered to be one of the *abdal*.

Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir Gilani said in the Third Discourse of his masterpiece *Futuh al-Ghayb*, as slightly adapted from the 1958 translation of M. Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad published in Lahore:

And he said (may Allah be pleased with him):

When the servant of Allah is in a trial, he first tries to escape from it with his own efforts, and when he fails, in this he seeks the help of others from among men such as the kings and men of authority, people of the world, men of wealth, and in the case of illness and physical suffering, from physicians and doctors; but if the escape is not secured by these he then turns towards his Creator and Lord the Great and Mighty and applies to Him with prayer and humility and praise.

So long as he finds the resources in his own self he does not turn towards the people and so long as he finds resources in the people he does not turn towards the Creator. Further, when he does not get any help from Allah he throws himself in His presence and continues in this state, begging and praying humbly entreating and praising and submitting his neediness in fear and hope. Allah, however, tires him out in his prayer and does not accept it until he is completely disappointed in all the means of the world. The decree of Allah and His work then manifest themselves through him and this servant of Allah passes away from all the worldly means and the activities and efforts of the world and retains just his soul.

At this stage he sees nothing but the work of Allah and becomes, of necessity, a believer in the unity of Allah (Tawhid) to the degree of certainty, that in reality there is no doer of anything excepting Allah and no mover and stopper excepting Him and no good and no evil and no loss and no gain and no benefit and no conferring and no withholding and no opening and no closing and no death and no life and no honor and no dishonor and no affluence and no poverty but in the hand of Allah.

He then becomes in the presence of Allah as a nursing baby in the hands of its nurse and a dead corpse in the hands of the person who gives it the funeral bath and a ball is before the stick of the polo-player, as it keeps revolving and rolling and changing position after position and condition after condition, and he feels no strength either in his own self or in others besides himself for any movement. He thus vanishes from his own self out into the work of his Master.

So he sees nothing but his Master and His work, and hears nothing and understands nothing excepting Him. If he sees anything it is His work and if he hears and knows anything, he hears His word and knows through His knowledge and he becomes gifted with His gifts and becomes lucky through His nearness and through his nearness he becomes decorated and honored and becomes pleased and comforted and satisfied with His promise and is drawn towards His word and he feels aversion for and is repelled from those besides Him and he desires and relies on His remembrance and he becomes established in Him, the Great and Mighty, and relies on Him and obtains guidance from, and clothes and dresses himself with, the light of His knowledge and is apprised of the rare

points of His knowledge and of the secrets of His power and he hears and remembers only from Him the Great, the Mighty, and then offers thanks and praise therefore and takes to prayer.

Imam Ibn Hajar al-Haytami said in his book al-Khayrat al-hisan fi manaqib al-imam Abu Hanifa al-Nu`man, chapter 35:

When Imam al-Shafi`i was in Baghdad, he would visit the grave of Imam Abu Hanifa, give him salam, and then ask Allah for the fulfillment of his need through his means (yatawassal ilallah ta`ala bihi fi qada' hajatihi).[34]

Imam Kawthari mentioned in his Maqalat (p. 412) that the hafiz al-Khatib al-Baghdadi mentions Shafi`i's tawassul through Abu Hanifa in the beginning of his Tarikh Baghdad (1:123) with a good chain.

Haytami also said in many places in his book al-Sawa`iq al-muhriqa li ahl al-dalal wa al-zandaqa (cf. p. 180) and al-Khayrat al-hisan (p. 69): "Imam Shafi`i made tawassul through the Family of the Prophet (Ahl al-Bayt) when he said:

Al al-nabi dhari`ati wa hum ilayhi wasilati  
arju bihim u`ta ghadan bi yadi al-yamini sahfati

The Family of the Prophet are my means and my  
intermediary to him. Through them I hope to be  
given my record with the right hand tomorrow.

This is found in Diwan al-Shafi`i as edited by `Umar Faruq al-Dabbagh (Beirut: Dar al-arqam, n.d.) p. 50.

· The hafiz al-`Iraqi relates with his chain in his Fath al-muta`al: "We narrated that the Imam Ahmad sought blessing from drinking the washing-water of Imam al-Shafi`i's shirt, and Ibn Taymiyya himself also related it."

\*\*\*\*\*[this appears to be an error, s/be Imam Shafi`l sought blessing by the washing-water of Imam Ahmad's shirt.]\*\*\*\*\*

al-Khatib relates that the hafiz Abu Nu`aym considered it incumbent upon all Muslims to invoke Allah for Abu Hanifa in their prayer due to his preservation of the Prophet's Sunan and fiqh for them.[35] This is explained by the fact that among Abu Hanifa's merits that are exclusively his is his standing as the first in Islam to have compiled a book of fiqh.[36]

al-hafiz Abu `Ali al-Ghassani relates in Ibn al-Subki's Tabaqat al-shafi`iyya 2:234: Abu al-Fath Nasr ibn al-Hasan al-Sakani al-Samarqandi came to us in 464 and said: "We had a drought in Samarqand some years ago. The people made the istisqa' (prayer for rain) prayer but they did not get rain. A saintly man named al-Salah came to the judge and said to him: I have an opinion I would like to show you. My opinion is that you come out followed by the people and that you all go to the grave of Imam Muhammad ibn Isma`il al-Bukhari and make istisqa' there. Perhaps Allah will give us rain. The judge said: What a good opinion you have. He came out and the people followed him, and he prayed for rain in front of them at the grave while people wept and sought the intercession of the one who was in it. Allah sent such heavy rain that those who were in Khartenk (where this took place, 3 miles away from Samarqand) could not reach Samarqand for seven days because of the rain's abundance."

The late mufti of Lebanon al-Shahid al-Shaykh Hasan Khalid said in his fatwa on tawassul on September 16, 1980 (reprinted in the Waqf Ikhlas offset reprint of Sayyid Ahmad ibn Zayni Dahlan's book Fitnat al-wahhabiyya 1992):

Tawassul was declared permissible in our own time by the mufti of the world, our shaykh the savant Abu al-Yusr `Abidin. We went with him to Nawa, a place in Hawran wherein is buried the Shaykh Muhyiddin al-Nawawi. When we arrived at his grave, our Shaykh Abu al-Yusr ordered us to ask Allah the Exalted for our need in front of him and said to us: "The du`a (invocation) at his grave is answered."

Ibn al-Jawzi in his biographies of the awliya entitled Sifat al-safwa lists many of those at whose graves tabarruk (seeking blessing) and tawassul is recommended. Among them:

Abu Ayyub al-Ansari: "al-Waqidi said: It has reached us that the Eastern Romans visit his grave and seek rain through his intercession when they suffer from droughts" (1:243). Mujahid said: "People would uncover the space above his grave and it would rain."

Ma`ruf al-Karkhi (d. 200H): "His grave can be seen in Baghdad, and one seeks blessings with it. al-Hafiz Ibrahim al-Harbi (d. 285H) -- Imam Ahmad's companion -- used to say: Ma`ruf's grave is proven medicine" (2:214) Ibn al-Jawzi adds: "We ourselves go to Ibrahim al-Harbi's grave and seek blessings with it" (2:410)

al-hafiz al-Dhahabi also relates Ibrahim al-Harbi's saying about Ma`ruf al-Karkhi: "Ma`ruf's grave is proven medicine." *Siyar a`lam al-nubala'* (9:343).

Abu al-Hasan al-Daraqutni said: "We used to seek blessings from Abu al-Fath al-Qawasi's grave" (2:471).

Abu al-Qasim al-Wa`iz: "His grave can be seen in Ahmad ibn Hanbal's cemetery and it is sought for blessings." Related in the notice on `Abd al-Samad ibn `Umar ibn Muhammad ibn Ishaq (2:482).

al-Hafiz Abu al-Qasim Ibn `Asakir says in *Musnad Abi `Uwana* (1:430): "Abu `Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn `Umar al-Saffar said to me that the grave of Abu `Uwana in Isfarayin [near Naysabur] is a place of visitation for the whole world (mazar al-`alam) and a place for obtaining blessing for the entire creation (mutabarrak al-khalq)."

al-Hafiz Diya' al-Din al-Maqdisi al-Hanbali said in his book *al-Hikayat al-manthura* (Zahiriyya ms. 98, an autograph) that he heard the hafiz `Abd al-Ghani al-Maqdisi al-Hanbali say that something like an abscess appeared on his upper arm for which there was found no medicine. He came to Ahmad ibn Hanbal's grave and applied his arm against it, after which he found himself healed. Imam Kawthari said that he read this account in Diya' al-Din's own handwriting. See *Maqalat al-Kawthari* (Riyadh and Beirut: Dar al-ahnaf, 1414/1993) p. 407, 412.

Do those who have left this life know about the affairs of the living?

Ibn Qayyim in *Kitab al-ruh* narrates with his chain from Ibn al-Mubarak on the authority of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari that the latter said: "The works of the living are clear to the dead. Whenever they see a good deed they rejoice and are pleased; but if they see evil they say: O Allah, return its equivalent in good."

Ibn Qayyim in the same book, and Ibn Abi al-Dunya in Kitab al-qubur narrated that `Abbad ibn `Abbad called upon Ibrahim ibn Salih while he was ruler of Palestine and said: "Exhort me." He said: "With what should I exhort you? May Allah set you right! I have heard that the works of the living are clear as day to their dead relatives. So consider what is laid open to the Messenger of Allah of your work." Ibrahim wept until his beard was wet.

Imam Suyuti in his book Sharh al-sudur (p. 263-266) has an entire chapter devoted to that topic entitled: "The Exhibition of the deeds of the living to the dead." In it he lists fifteen hadiths and sayings of the Companions to that effect:

1. Ahmad in his Musnad, al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi in Nawadir al-usul, and Ibn Mindah narrated from Anas that the Prophet said: "Your deeds are shown to your relatives and ancestors among the dead. If they consist in good they are happy with it, if otherwise, they say: O Allah! Don't let them die before you guide them as you have guided us."

2. al-Tayalisi in his Musnad narrated from Jabir ibn `Abd Allah that the Prophet said: " Your deeds are shown to your relatives and ancestors in their graves. If they consist in good they are happy with it, if otherwise, they say: O Allah! Inspire them to act in obedience to You."

3. Ibn al-Mubarak and Ibn Abi al-Dunya in Kitab al-qubur narrated from Abu Ayyub: "Your deeds are shown to the dead, who rejoice if they see any good in them, and if they see evil in them they say: O Allah, give them another opportunity."

4. Ibn Abi Shayba in his Musannaf, al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi, and Ibn Abi al-Dunya narrated from Ibrahim ibn Maysara that when Abu Ayyub campaigned to take Constantinople he passed by a story-teller who was saying: "What a servant does in the morning, before evening is shown to those in the hereafter who know him; and what he does at the end of the day is shown to them by the next morning." Abu Ayyub said: "Be careful what you say." He replied: "By Allah it is as I said." Abu Ayyub said: "O Allah, I seek refuge in You lest You reveal my shame to `Ubada ibn al-Samit and Sa`d ibn `Ubada concerning what I did after them."

5. al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi cited in Nawadir al-usul the hadith of `Abd al-Ghafur ibn `Abd al-`Aziz from his father, from his grandfather, whereby the Prophet said: "One's deeds are shown to Allah on Monday and Thursday, and they are shown to Prophets as

well as fathers and mothers on Fridays, at which time they rejoice for the good deeds, and the latter increase the brightness and light of their faces. Therefore be wary of Allah and do not harm your dead."

6. al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi also cited -- as well as Ibn Abi al-Dunya in his Book of Dreams (Kitab al-manamat) and Bayhaqi in Shu'ab al-iman from al-Nu'man ibn Bashir: I heard the Prophet say: "Allah, Allah! [Be wary of Him] concerning your brethren among the dwellers of graves, for your deeds are shown to them."

7. Ibn Abi al-Dunya and al-Asbahani in al-Tarhib cited from Abu Hurayra that the Prophet said: "Do not shame your dead with your evil deeds for your deeds are shown to your relatives among the dwellers of the graves."

8. Ibn Abi al-Dunya, Ibn Mindah, and Ibn `Asakir narrated from Ahmad ibn `Abd Allah ibn Abi al-Hawari: My brother Muhammad ibn `Abd Allah related to me: `Abbad al-Khawass walked in to see Ibrahim ibn Salih al-Hashimi when the latter was governor of Palestine. Ibrahim said: "Admonish me." He replied: "It has reached me that the deeds of the living are shown to their relatives among the deceased. Therefore beware what is shown to Allah's Messenger from your deeds."

9. Ibn Abi al-Dunya cited from Abu al-Darda' that he used to say: "O Allah, I seek refuge in You lest my maternal uncle `Abd Allah ibn Rawaha should loathe me when I meet him."

10. Ibn al-Mubarak and al-Asbahani cited from Abu al-Darda' that he said: "Your deeds are shown to the dead, whereupon they rejoice and they are saddened" and he would say: "O Allah, I seek refuge in You from committing a deed by which `Abd Allah ibn Rawaha should be dishonored."

This `Abd Allah ibn Rawaha al-Ansari was the great-grandson of the poet Imru' al-Qays and was himself a great poet among the Companions. He said of the Prophet:

law lam takun fihi ayatun mubina

lakana manzaruhu yunabbi'uka bi al-khabari

"Even if there were not, concerning him, clear and evident

signs, yet the sight of him would have told you the news."

Ibn Hajar narrated it in al-Isaba (2:299) and said: "This is the most beautiful verse of poetry by which the Prophet was ever praised."

Ibn Sayyid al-Nas said of Ibn Rawaha in Minah al-madh (p. 166):

He was killed as a martyr on the day of Mu'ta in Jumada 8 before the conquest of Mecca. On that day he was one of the commanders. He was one of the poets who did good and who used to fend off harm from Allah's Messenger. It was concerning him and his two friends Hassan (ibn Thabit) and Ka'b (ibn Zuhayr) that was revealed the verse: "Except those who believe and do good deeds and remember Allah abundantly." (The Poets 26:227).

Hisham ibn `Urwa narrated from his father that the latter said: I never saw anyone more aggressive or faster in his poetry than `Abd Allah ibn Rawaha. I heard Allah's Messenger say to him one day: "Recite some poetry appropriate to the moment, while I look at you." He rose up then and there and said:

inni tafarrastu fika al-khayra a`rifuhu

wallahu ya`lamu anna ma khanani al-basaru

anta al-nabiyyu wa man yuhramu shafa`atahu

yawma al-hisabi laqad azra bihi al-qadaru

fa thabbat allahu ma ataka min hasanin

tathbita musa wa nasran kalladhi nusiru

I foresee for you immense good, of this I am certain.

Allah knows that my sight never betrayed me.

You are the Prophet, and whoever is deprived of your intercession

On the Day of Reckoning, his destiny is disgrace.

May Allah make firm all the good that He gave you,

With a firmness like Musa's and the same victory.

Upon hearing this the Prophet said to him: "And you also, may Allah make you firm, O Ibn Rawaha." Hisham ibn `Urwa continued: Allah indeed made him firm with the staunchest firmness. He died as a martyr, and Paradise was opened for him and he entered it. End of Ibn Sayyid al-Nas's words. Blessings and peace on the Prophet, his Family, and his Companions!

11. Ibn al-Mubarak also cited from `Uthman ibn `Abd Allah ibn Aws that Sa`id ibn al-Jubayr said to him: "Give me permission to see my brother's daughter" -- `Uthman's wife and the daughter of `Amr ibn Aws -- so he permitted him. He went and asked her: "How is your husband treating you?" She said: "He does his utmost with me." Then Sa`id said: "O `Uthman! Treat her well, for there is nothing that you do with her except its news reaches `Amr ibn Aws." `Uthman said: "The news of the living reaches the dead?" He said: "Yes, there is no one with an intimate friend [among the deceased] except the news of his relatives reaches him. If it is good he rejoices and is cheered by it, and if it is bad he is saddened and distraught."

12. Ibn Abi al-Dunya cited the following report through Abu Bakr ibn `Iyash, from a grave-digger who was with the Banu Asad and who said: I was among the graves one night when I heard someone in a grave say: "O Abu `Abd Allah!" and another answered: "What, O Jabir?" He said: "Tomorrow our mother will be coming to us." The other replied: "Of what use will that be for her? Let her not come, for my father became angry with her and swore that he would not pray over her." The next day a man came to me and said: "Dig a grave for me between these two," indicating the graves from where I had heard the voices coming. Whereupon I said: "This one's name is Jabir, and that one is `Abd Allah?" He said: "Yes!" So I told him what I had heard. Then the man said: "Yes, I had sworn that I would not pray over her, but I shall break my oath and pray over her."

13. Abu Nu`aym cited from Ibn Mas`ud that the latter said: "Keep relations with those your father kept relations with, for that is the way relations are kept on behalf of the dead in their graves."

14. Ibn Hibban cited from Ibn `Umar that the Prophet said: "Whoever likes to keep relations with his father in his grave, let him keep relations with his father's brothers after him."

15. Abu Dawud and Ibn Hibban cited from Abu Usayd al-Sa`idi that a man came to the Prophet and asked: "O Messenger of Allah! Does anything remain of my responsibility to keep piety to my two parents after their death?" He said: "Yes, four aspects of filial piety remain: praying for them, keeping the promises they made, honoring their friends, and keeping relations with those whom you know only because of them."