118131 - Reconciling between the hadeeth on the strangeness of religion and the survival of the victorious group

the question

How can we reconcile between the hadeeth “Islam began as something strange” and the hadeeth “A group of my ummah will continue to prevail following the truth”?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

There is no contradiction between them. The first hadeeth is clear and is confirmed by historical reality. The rest of it says, “and it will go back to being something strange as it began, so glad tidings to the strangers.” According to a version that is not narrated by Muslim, “They will revive that which the people have killed off of my Sunnah.” According to another version: “Those who correct what the people corrupt.”

The second hadeeth indicates that reform, da’wah, knowledge and teaching will continue, and this is glad tidings that there will be a group which still prevails and adheres to the truth. The idea of being a stranger, is not contrary to the idea of the survival of that group, and it does not imply that it will be in one place. Truth must remain until the Dajjaal emerges, and until the wind comes [which will take the souls of the believers just before the Hour begins].

Moreover, this sense of being a stranger may increase in one area whilst decreasing in another, and it may mean many things, such as an increase in bid’ah (innovation), neglect of prayer in congregation, or not enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil. One of the most serious manifestations of it is the alienation of the people of Tawheed and the prevalence of shirk. We ask Allaah to keep us safe and sound.

Islam may prevail in some areas and become stronger than before, as we see in real life, and it may be stronger at some times than others.

With regard to the hadeeth: “There will come no time but the time after it will be worse than it”, this is to be interpreted as referring to what is usually the case. It does not mean that there will not some times that are than those that came before, as in the case of the era of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azeez: his time was better than the time of Sulaymaan and al-Waleed; and as in the case of the time of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah and his student Ibn al-Qayyim, when the Sunnah prevailed and innovation was refuted; and as happened in Arabia after the da’wah of Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab (may Allaah have mercy on him). End quote.