

My name and address was noted. As a result I received a letter asking me if I would preach on trial for Cooke. I replied stating what I had heard and asking if it was true, and saying that if it was I was not to be considered or heard unless my friend said that he had no further interest; that if my friend did so the Session and Committee, should I get and accept a Call, would approve my inviting him as a guest preacher after I had been there about three months and pay his supply in his own congregation to enable me to be free to welcome him. Otherwise, I was not to be heard or considered. About a week later, I received a letter agreeing to what I had said and inviting me to preach on trial. I wrote thanking them for the invitation, but saying that while I held the honourable thing when preaching on trial if one was not going to accept was to withdraw before a Call is made out, in the circumstances I would not hold myself bound by this. So I preached and heard nothing for several months.

Then I was predestined (I think that is the only accurate word), one Tuesday morning in November, to drive to Monaghan and take the train to Belfast arriving at 12.05. As I left the station in Great Victoria Street a stranger spoke to me.

"Are you Dr. Barkley of Ballybay?"

When I replied that I was, he asked:

"How did you enjoy your holiday in Greystones last year?"

"What?"

He repeated the question. I replied that I never was on holiday in Greystones in my life, that I never was in Greystones except one day as a student passing through it in the train going to take a supply. Looking at me sharply, he said:

"Is that true?"

I said it was. Then he shocked me.

"I am from the Cooke Church, would you come up to my house this evening and repeat to some friends what you have told me".

I said no but asked:

"Why all the interest in Greystones?"

It turned out that my name had been discussed by the hearing committee and, at its last meeting, a Mr. N— had told how I was on holiday in Greystones last summer in a house where they had prayers every morning after breakfast, but I never went to them but sat in the lounge reading the paper and smoking my pipe. That there was a

majority for calling me, but some were hesitant because of this. At this point, I said it was not proper that I should be carrying on this conversation with a member of the congregation and that I must go on to the meeting I had come to attend. However, on being asked for permission to tell members of the committee that I had said I was never in Greystones on holiday in my life I agreed that he could do so.

Later, I heard of the ingenious approach adopted. One of the hearing committee represented the youth of the congregation and at the next meeting said:

"I thought from his preaching Dr. Barkley was the right man for the youth of the congregation, but Mr N—'s comments raised certain doubts in my mind. So that there is no misunderstanding, would Mr N— repeat what he told us at the last meeting".

Mr N—, thinking he had a convert, repeated the whole thing, to be told that I had been spoken to and had said I was never on holiday in Greystones in my life. All, who were hesitant, felt that there was dirty work at the crossroads and agreed with the majority and my name was submitted to the congregation. I was called, but it was not unanimous and some eighty people walked out and held a prayer meeting during which God was specifically requested (if not ordered) to stop my coming.

The following day I received seven anonymous telegrams. "Stay where you are", "You are not a believer", "You are not saved", "Belfast doesn't need the likes of you", "You are not born again" and so on, and the following morning seventeen anonymous letters of the same ilk. I had been undecided whether or not to accept the Call, but when I got this bundle of reading I decided I must accept for if this was what passed for Christianity in Belfast they needed an evangelist there. So I accepted and was installed by the Presbytery of Belfast on 1 February 1949.

May I in passing say all anonymous letters I have ever received have been consigned to the flames except two. One was sent by an elder who continued to send one every fortnight until he died. He bought all sorts of religious papers and generally enclosed a copy of *The Revivalist* or *The British Israel Magazine* or such like. His eyesight was failing and sometimes the pamphlet had a dark purple cover and he did not see where Brown's, newsagent, Ormeau Road,