

QUAKER HISTORY  
*and* PROVIDENTIAL  
- - GUIDANCE *of* - -

LINDLEY  
MURRAY  
HOAG



*In Norway*

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A Remarkable Chapter  
in Quaker History  
*and a*  
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Compiled by  
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## *A Remarkable Chapter in Quaker History*

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**I**N THE YEAR 1849 There lived a man in the valley, Rödald, in Norway, by the name of Knud. His father's name was also Knud, hence his official name was Knud Knudson. The name of the little village in which his home was, was Botnen. So the name by which he was known between man and man was Knud Botnen.

Knud was at that time quite a young man. He was married and had three children, two sons and one daughter. The parish in which he lived was beautifully situated near a lake, with high picturesque mountains in the background. The soil was poor and gave but scanty crops for hard and diligent toil. The inhabitants were poor. That is, they had to live in a very economical way. Their little crop of barley and oats was ground together, the flour was baked into big but thin cakes. After harvest the women would be at that work for about a fortnight, and then they would have a sufficient supply for the whole year. Part of the flour was used almost daily for porridge. They would raise a scanty crop of potatoes; the cows and sheep would give milk, butter and meat; from the lake they would now and then get a few fish, and by this

supply they would live just as happily as people in any part of the world.

Here was Knud Botnen's home. He was neither better nor worse off than the rest. If there was any difference, Knud was among the most contented. He had always enough, and a little to spare for those who needed it—just a happy man in his possession.

But then something strange began to work in his inner life. He did not know what it was. It seemed to him as if something was wanting. The people in Rödäl were religious people and very strict in their doctrines, and Knud had always been amongst the most pious. Now he said almost nothing. It seemed as if he lived a life by himself, of which nobody else knew anything. He was diligent in reading the Bible, but in that there was nothing strange; that was almost a universal habit in Rödäl. Still Knud's reading was different. It seemed as if something or somebody was teaching him during his quiet walking about, and this teaching was often different from the ordinary conception of truth, and when Knud was reading his Bible he found that the teaching, which was dimly breaking through within him, was also in the Bible. Sometimes Knud took that book and went out to his neighbors. He was that quiet that he would sit in a house for a length of time with his Bible under his arm, perfectly silent. In rising, he would simply point to the book, and without saying a word, he would leave the house. Sometimes he would read a small portion and then leave.

The people did not know what to think of Knud. Most of them thought he was crazy; but then he was always kind and willing to help, and in his home he was the kindest husband and father. Whatever could be the matter with him? It was clear that it had something to do with religion, and perhaps the priest would be able to find it out. So one or two went to the priest and told him that their good neighbor, Knud Botnen, had be-

come a little singular; that, although he was as good and kind as ever, or even better, there was something curious about him. It was of a religious character, for he sometimes would say what never before had been heard in Rödäl. It was strange, for although he did not say a single word against anybody, it seemed as if he had a source of teaching independent of the church and the priest, and, of course, that could not be right. The priest was very thankful to these men for telling him of such an unheard-of erroneous conduct. He would surely take it in hand before long.

Knud's father was not fully satisfied with the conduct of his son, and his wife's father saw in his son-in-law a developing lunatic, a stain of shame amongst the peaceful inhabitants of Rödäl—and in that his daughter and grandchildren should be entangled—that was awful. These two old men talked the matter over and came to the conclusion that it would be best if they could get Knud's wife and children to leave him. So, one day they both appeared at the house of Knud Botnen and laid the matter before him. Well, Knud was silent as always. After a while he said they had better lay their concern before his wife. If she felt it better to leave him and follow them, he would not hinder her in doing so. But then his wife did not feel that way at all. She had the very best of husbands, and although his way of thinking was a little from what was usual, she felt that wherever he was she ought to be, and if divergency from the usual mode of religion should bring him into trouble of any kind, it would be her duty to help him with anything she was able. Well, the two old men left Knud, his wife and children to struggle along as best they could.

Then came the priest. Of course, he was the shepherd of his flock, the father of his children. "And what is the matter with thee, my son, Knud? Is not the old Lutheran religion good and reliable any more? Hast

thou found anything better?" Knud was silent for a while. Then he tried to explain that he felt something working within himself. He did not know what it was or who it was, but sometimes he felt very much broken. Perhaps it was that he felt he was a sinner. Certainly he was not as good and kind and loving as he ought to be. But then again he felt that immeasurable love and goodness surrounded him everywhere, and he felt himself at times so filled that he found no words fit to explain it, and so he kept silent. When he read his Bible he found it in the most perfect harmony with what he felt in his own inner life. It had become quite a new book to him. The priest listened to him in amazement. Then he murmured: "A teaching within—a teaching direct to the soul—hm! But man, thou art a Quaker; how in the world have these notions been brought into thy head?"

Knud could not tell. He had not been outside of Rödäl, and the Bible was the only book he had read. As to the word "Quaker," he had never heard it before. Perhaps it was the first time it ever sounded in Rödäl. It was very strange. The priest did not know how to handle this matter; but, surely, it was necessary it should be stopped as soon as possible. It might spread and bring the good old church into danger. He explained the matter to the bishop, and he came. Knud Botnen was brought before the bishop, and after some time in silence, he gave about the same explanation to the bishop which he formerly had given to the priest. After having listened to all which Knud had to say, the bishop patted him on the shoulder and said: "Stick firmly to what thou hast got my son,"

The spiritual influence which Knud had felt seemed now to begin its work in others, also. The first man who openly acknowledged the teaching within was Jon Rinden. He and Knud had for several years quiet meetings together, in order to listen to the voice teaching them

within. Afterwards came Lars Botnen and a young woman, Knud's sister. Then a blind woman, Ellen. And as truth worked its way others joined the little flock, amongst them two brothers, Jon and Ole Oine, and Ellen's brother, Mons. As to the mystic word, "Quaker," which the priest had thrown out, it did not trouble them at all. Most likely it never afterwards entered their thoughts and was forgotten. In Stavanger and neighborhood there had been a small meeting of Friends ever since the beginning of the nineteenth century, but they knew nothing of the spiritual movement in Rödald, and the people of Rödald knew nothing of the Friends in Stavanger.

While this was going on in Norway, there was a man in America, Lindley Murray Hoag, who felt a strong drawing toward Norway. Several times he saw in dreams a lake and houses near it; the lake, houses and meadows being surrounded by high mountains, forming altogether a most splendid scenery; and it seemed to him that he was eating fishes caught in that lake. In him was worked out a concern for a visit in the love of the Gospel to Norway.

In the year 1853, Lindley Murray Hoag came by way of London to Stavanger, Norway, and laid his concern before the Friends there. Norwegian Friends received him most kindly, and several of them, among whom was the able interpreter, Endre Dahl, went with him to all places where Friends were found, and much blessing followed their labors. As they traveled along, Lindley Murray Hoag was looking for that valley and lake, which he so plainly had seen in his dreams in America, but, although he saw many mountains and many lakes, he did not see anything like that which he saw in his dreams.

One day Endre Dahl told him that they had now been to all the Friends that he knew of. Lindley Murray Hoag became uneasy, and after a time of quietness, said that he had not

yet been to the place which formed the real concern for his journey. A map of Norway was placed before him, but that did not give him any help. He became more uneasy and walked from one end of the room to the other for some time. All of a sudden he stopped and turned toward the mountains in the east. Pointing in that direction he said: "There, over there, is the place where I must go." They had already been to all places in that direction where Friends were located; but Endre Dahl and some other Friends readily consented to go with him once more.

A place called Sövde was chosen as the first stopping place. There was a meeting-house, and a meeting was appointed. A man by the name of Bjarne Aaby heard of it. He knew the people in Röldal and felt that he ought to go and tell them of the meeting. It was haying time. When Bjarne Aaby came to Röldal he found the people out haying. He told them his errand and said, "There is a man from America and some people from Stavanger going to have a meeting at Sövde tonight. They are Quakers."

Quakers! That was, most likely, only the second time this strange word was heard in Röldal. The people made haste and went to Sövde. When they came to the meeting Lindley Murray Hoag was preaching, Endre Dahl interpreting. The Röldal people listened with amazement. Was this a new revelation? Did the message come from another world? What had dimly worked for years in the depths of their souls was here put before them in plain language.

The meeting ended. Lindley Murray Hoag wanted to go with the Röldal people, but the road was too difficult for him over the high mountains. Another road was recommended, longer but easier. By this Lindley Murray Hoag and the Stavanger people went the next day. As they passed a low chain of mountains, the Röldal valley, with the Röldal vatn,

(lake), the small villages and the high mountains in the background, lay spread before them in the most brilliant illumination. Lindley Murray Hoag stood for a while like a marble statue. Then he exclaimed: "Oh this is what I saw in my dreams in America."

Some time before this the people in Röldal had had some difficulty about a marriage. They did not feel it right to enter into marriage before the priest. They thought that their own agreement before the Lord was just as valid as if they had gone through the ceremony of the church, and two young people had acted accordingly. But after a while they became uneasy about it. Knud took the matter in hand. He sat for a long time alone, and in perfect silence. When he spoke about it he explained that he saw dark clouds before him. After a while he saw rays of light coming right from heaven, breaking through the dark clouds and shining on the spot where he sat. When he again spoke to others he said that, about the marriage they ought to be perfectly easy. It would come right in due course of time. When Lindley Murray Hoag came they were married after the manner of Friends.

Tithes to the priest caused those people much trouble. They found that the established church, in its teachings and arrangement, was so different from what they read in the Bible about the early church that they found it incorrect to sustain that church and its servants; hence, they could not conscientiously pay the tithes. According to the law, the priest had a right to his tithes, and when the people did not pay it he had a right to distrain, and he did use his right. This was felt very much by the people in a place where the soil gave but scanty return for hard labor.

Knud had one year bought and brought home timber and lumber for a new house. The time came when his tithes had to be paid. The priest took all his timber and lumber, and

Knud lost what he, with much labor and through selfdenial, had gathered.

After the visit of Lindley Murray Hoag, the people in Rödald became connected with the Society of Friends in Stavanger; a meeting-house, and one of the Friends, Mons Winje, acted as teacher.

Through much tribulation, Friends plodded along for several years, and quite a number were added to the church. But it was so hard. Hard work to get the necessities of life, and this made still harder because of the strict laws about the tithes.

News came to Rödald about a country where people were free to act in accordance with true righteousness and to serve God in true love; but that country was far away. However, they talked the matter over, and undoubtedly tried it in prayer before the Lord. Friends were truly united together, and in 1869 nearly 50 persons left Stavanger in a sailing vessel bound for Quebec, Canada, and one day all these people came to LeGrand, Marshall county, Iowa. Never before had so many strangers been seen at this small station.

Land was cheap, and every one of these Norwegians was successful in temporal matters. An old school-house was used as a meeting-house for several years. Later on a meeting-house and a school-house were built between LeGrand and Dunbar, and was called "Stavanger."

In the course of a visit Johan Marcussen a Danish Friend from Denmark spent several days in the Stavanger neighborhood gathering statistics for the foregoing article in the winter of 1906-'07. Several of the older members of this group that came from Rödald were still living and gave Johan Marcussen valuable information. Will quote his last two paragraphs of his narrative.

"Of their further life and spiritual welfare, I had better not give any account. It would only be my personal impression. They might

be partly correct, but would be in danger of onesidedness. One thing I feel I must add—I have been told that when Knud was an old man he would sometimes rise in the gallery of the meeting-house and say with much emphasis: “We will have to get back to our old land-marks.” Did that old man feel that, as they prospered temporally, they were in danger of growing cold and indifferent to the teaching of the Spirit, the light within?

It has been a great joy to me to gather these facts. I think I will remember as long as I live the emotion and the tears in the eyes of those old men as they told me of their experience many years ago, when they first were gathered into the church of Christ. May the blessing of the Lord go with them and their children after them.





# *A Remembrance*

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I HAVE thought it right for me to write a few remembrances concerning how that the Lord's servant Lindley Murray Hoag came to our help in right time in his religious visit when we were in our land of birth, Norway, in the year 1853.

It was about the year 1849 that I and a few with me did not see it right for us longer to be united with the Lutheran Church.

We were not either acquainted with any other Society, but we felt it right for us to gather together on Firstsdays to read in the Holy Script and to spend sometime in silence to wait upon the Lord. In this we continued for a season of more than two years, and we realized therein a soul's peace and tranquillity of our inner mind. Although that talebearing and persecution of our Lutheran faith's brothers often was our part and felt there was come a particular and new trial over us in that two of our little company declared amongst us that they thought it right for them to unite in marriage with each other.

And the question arose amongst us how this should be accomplished. That we did not know of any other than the Lutheran priest that had right to perform the marriage ceremony and this would not do unless that they first be reinstated in the Lutheran Church. This felt contrary to our views and seemed a trial to us. But one day while my mind was deeply concerned over this question it came clear to me that I should say to them that they should wait, the Lord would in His time send them that should perform the marriage

ceremony and that in my own house. This I told them and thought this an assurance that this was from the Lord. They did as I told them and months went by with an assured dependence on God that He would do according to his promise and as we also did experience that our waiting was not in vain. But wonderful was the Lord's directing. He having sent so we surely must believe, his servant Lindley Murray Hoag from America, who was accompanied by James Backhouse of England to visit Friends in Norway. (Which at that time was unknown to us.) And to preach Christ's truths on different places in the land and surely we could say "had not the Lord been their leader they would have gone by us," for the Friends in Norway had directed them around in the land on all places they knew of to go with them and had come back to their home in the town Stavanger.

Then in the morning Lindley stood (as it was made known to us later) and said that he felt that his work in this land was not yet fulfilled. But there was a place he had not yet found and added "There is a valley in between the mountains where there are some people that I must visit and if not my journey from America will be in vain. That valley was shown me in a dream when I was in my home in America. There was a water (or lake) and it seemed that I ate fish that a man had caught there and gave me."

Where was this place that no one of the Friends could give him direction thereto? A map of Norway was given him and he pointed with the fingers on the place that was 85 miles away from Stavanger. Thereto set they the journey and came to the place, they met a man (Tormod Botnen) who came from the water (or lake) carrying a few fishes (trout) that he had caught, which was given them for their first meal in Røldal which was the name of that valley. These men, though strangers, soon became most beloved and dear to us.

They soon appointed a meeting and the truths that to us was interpreted was so harmonious to us that we as though were united with them in Spiritual knowledge and must say "yea and amen to all they declared amongst us." And likewise to what we read in the Friend's writings that for first time come to our hands and before they departed from us performed the aforesaid marriage in a meeting thereto appointed in my house which was attended by a large number of people. And thereafter even though persecution, imprisonment for not taking up arms, and the taking of property (tithes) for we would not pay the priest his dues, became our lot.

Added to our numbers and a regular meeting was held and with help of Friends Society was a meeting house built on the place and a Friend's school held until the year 1869 when we found it right for us to emigrate to this land America and united with some Friends that formerly had come who now together with more compose Stavanger Meeting near LeGrand in Marshall Co. Iowa.

Knud K. Botnen.

P. S.—Written by Helge Thompson, his sister's son as he gave the particulars in the year 1885.







