A Nineteenth-Century Doomsday Theatre

Eschatology, Time and Matter in the Scandinavian Countryside

Trym Sundby

Abstract
This article focuses on a report describing what appears to be an "eschatological theatre" that took place in Ål, Hallingdal in 1852, in the midst of a pietist revival. I suggest that the phenomenon expresses a specific understanding of providential history, and a specific understanding of the relationship between time, matter, and salvation. Based on Reinhart Koselleck's temporal-historical framework, the article views it as a shared enactment of the return of Christ. It serves as an example that showcases the complex landscape of temporalities that existed in Norway in the nineteenth century. In taking this perspective, the article suggests that radical religious behaviour in this period can be interpreted not only as negotiations with the secularization process, but as religious practices reflecting the continuity of a Christian providential-historical temporal experience.

Keywords: Eschatology, temporalities, historiography, radical pietism, secularization, visions, nineteenth-century Norway

> In the main parish, it was even worse in many places. There were more gatherings, and more of these people. They would show the people all kinds of things that could be done that they said were evil. Some started dancing, and then they rehearsed doing all kinds of things that characterize or are part of dancing. Some practised all kinds of games like musicians and so on. Others pretended to be drunk. They rehearsed ungodliness like drunkards, making noise and arguing. Others acted out with each other, both as married and unmarried people, in every way that could be imagined. And some were enemies, they fought and argued. In short, anything that could be done, they did it. And when the gatherings were held in the living rooms, then one would go down in the basement to present himself to them as the devil, while one went

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> up to the ceiling beams, presenting himself as our common Creator. This included both sexes. This name stayed with many of the persons some time thereafter, and they took on its appearance to display their vices.

The above excerpt comes from Erik Syvertsen Opheim's "book of events", which describes "memorable" events in Hallingdal, Norway. According to its front page, it was begun in 1862, and restored, on 25 June of the same year. Most of the events he describes are lightning strikes, murders, drownings, and so on. One of them, however, is afforded several pages, and that is the religious awaking that took place in Ål Parish in 1852. Opheim titles his description "A piece about a rage or confusion amongst the people of Ål Parish in the year 1852", which implies a negative bias. Tolleiv Skottebøl, the other main chronicler of the revival, is somewhat more positively inclined. He emphasizes that it provided an alternative to the "rationalist" preaching of the state and that it had a positive effect on drinking and violence. Even if the movement, especially during the summer and autumn of 1852, was "blurry and confused" (Skottebøl 1898:279), it led to an improvement of spiritual life in Ål. He took part in several meetings, providing first-hand accounts, but generally positions himself outside of the movement. He describes attending a meeting led by Heie where she would stay "unconscious" until all the attendees had touched her, but he does not participate, thus taking on the role of an observer (Skottebøl 1898:258, 262–263). Despite his negativity Opheim's descriptions largely align with Skottebøl's and other first-hand accounts, such as the ones provided by Reinton (1969:285–290).

Given his attitude to the revival in general, Opheim's description of the "theatre" should be considered polemical. Unfortunately, it is also the only one that exists of this particular event. There is the possibility that he has misunderstood or exaggerated his observations, but as I will show in the following, his description makes sense in light of the other behaviour displayed by the revivalists, and in particular, the influence of one of the leaders of the movement, Helge Erichsen Hagene. In this wider context the theatre can be seen as an attempt to grapple with issues that were of fundamental importance to them and other pietists: the eschatological consequences of sinful behaviour.

The article considers the theatre in terms of the temporal-historical framework of Reinhart Koselleck. It positions it in his broader framework which posits that a major shift in temporal perceptions occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century: from a providential-historical experience of time to a progressive, open-ended view of the future. (Koselleck 1985:277–288). While the revival in Ål sits at the tail end of this process, it does not express a "modern" or progressive view of the future. Instead, it frames historical developments typically associated with secu-

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larization or modernity in terms of providential history. They can therefore be understood as an example which nuances this periodization. While the participants in the revival did object to things they deemed sinful, I suggest that it is valuable to see their behaviour not only as "messaging" to other groups, or as reactions to secularization processes, but as expressions of a providential-historical experience of time. The aim of this article is not to describe the religious awakening in Ål in general terms but to discuss Opheim's description of a unique religious phenomenon as regards what it reveals about the landscape of temporal perceptions that existed in Norway in the nineteenth century. I am as much interested in what the theatre reveals about historical perceptions of time as the opposite. My intent with this article is thus to make a contribution to the understanding of the experiences of ordinary Christian Scandinavians in this period.

The revival in Ål was not entirely out of the ordinary in the religious life in Norway in the mid-nineteenth century. It was a time where short-lived pietist revivalist movements flourished and died out all over Scandinavia. They shared some similarities: they could be more or less antinomian, believing themselves unable to sin as a result of their conversion (Gundersen 2022:76–95; Wejryd 2002; 2017). They sometimes existed in a state of tension with the Lutheran church which they viewed as "rationalistic". In some shape or form, and to some degree, they all challenged its authority, claiming their own right to interpret and profess the holy scriptures. Many wanted a return to a more apostolic, less formalistic Christianity based on scripture (Amundsen 2005:308). In form they often harkened back to – or went beyond – the last great revival instigated by Hans Nielsen Hauge at the turn of the century.

In Ål, it began when a young woman called Kari Pedersdatter Heie (1825–1913) claimed to have been visited by an angel and shown images of the afterlife. She started preaching, sparking a wave of piety within the community. This was a common pattern that instigated many similar revivals in the period (Amundsen 1995; Seland 2011). Heie claimed to have been lifeless for a few hours before suddenly waking up with a calling to spread the gospel. During her "sleep" she saw two groups of people: one following the narrow road to heaven, the other joyfully and proudly walking towards damnation. In her visions of hell, she saw particular punishments corresponding to particular behaviours. Witches, for example, would have their hair and fingernails cut off, before having "the flesh scraped off their entire bodies" and thrown into the fiery pits. Their flesh would then grow out again, continuing an endless cycle of torture (Heie 1898:7). Heie's visions and religious admonishments were published in four editions, the last one as late as 1898. The eschatological overtones of her message are clear from the preface to the book, quoting Acts 2:17: "your young men shall

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see visions, your old men shall dream dreams". The version of this quotation in Heie's book is gender-neutral, stating plainly that "Your elders shall have dreams and your young will see visions" (Heie 1898:1) The quotation serves a dual purpose: it establishes to the reader that we are in the last days, and justifies why an angel would appear to Heie. While her visions were striking in their vivid description of the torments of hell, her religious message was not overtly radical in the sense of straying from the teachings of the Lutheran church. She admonished her followers to go to church, to stop drinking, to stop dancing and playing music, to listen to the priest, and to observe the sabbath from 6 p.m. on Saturday (Heie 1898; Sundby 2022).

During the spring and summer of 1852, people in Ål started to faint, shake, cut off their hair, and toss away their jewellery. The revival soon deviated from Heie's traditional, Lutheran admonishments. Some started acting aggressively, demanding that other people throw away anything shiny, even buttons. This change, described by Skottebøl as the revival taking on the character of "fanaticism" (Skottebøl 1898:279), seems to be related to the arrival of a lay preacher from Valdres, Helge Erichsen Hagene. He came to Ål in the summer of 1852, continuing preaching when Heie stopped that same year. Otherwise, little is known about the connection between Heie and Hagene. Skottebøl describes the movement as being at its peak in the summer of 1852, coinciding with his arrival (Opheim 1862:29; Skottebøl 1892:262, 278). In his own description, Hagene describes the summer of 1852 in glowing terms, as a time of "many distressed hearts and tear-filled eyes under the proclamation of the word of God" (Hagene 1854:1) In Opheim's account, the "uproar" died out when Hagene left the area but flared up again when he came back some time later (Opheim 1862:31). He is also quoted as describing those fainting as being "reborn" (Opheim 1862:29).

Hagene was sometimes joined by another lay preacher, Eivind or Even Størkestad, an elderly man who already lived in the area. Seized by the revival, he also started fainting and having visions. He has not left any written material behind. Skottebøl describes Hagene as the "real leader" of the group and Størkestad as his follower, incapable of saying anything that Hagene had not already "whispered in his ear" (Skottebøl 1892:281, 282; Reinton 1969:287).

Fainting Out of Time

Skottebøl argues that the revival in Ål was wholly unique in his time: "in my view, it has no connection to the Lammers revival, even if it arose at the same time; it is quite local, and curiously, almost completely limited to Aal parish. In my understanding, it has no connection to the earlier Haugian

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movement" (Skottebøl 1892:258). The thing that sets it apart, according to Skottebøl, is how Heie's fainting started spreading to other other parishioners: "they fell down as if unconscious [and] lay quite stiff and outstretched on the floor; if you tried to raise them, it was like raising a man frozen stiff. You could pick them up and carry them wherever you wanted" (Skottebøl 1892:263).

For many of the "awakened" people in Ål, fainting or general loss of bodily functions came to represent having undergone a conversion, a fundamental change representing the presence of God in the heart of the believer (Seland 2016:177). One member of the revival described fainting and losing bodily control as "kicking out their sin", a prerequisite for the arrival of the Holy Spirit (quoted in Reinton 1969:287). In another instance, recounted by an eye-witness, a family member who was not a part of the revival was stopped from intervening in a conversion. An unknown figure described as a "leader" is reported to have stopped the family member, saying: "Do not touch him! […] he is almost saved" (quoted in Reinton 1969:288). This behaviour reflects a general pattern shared by Heie and other visionaries in nineteenth-century Norway, where access to the "spiritual" demands a separation from the "material". As with Heie, this understanding also has a temporal dimension, where matter is related to "history", and the immaterial is related to things that lie outside of "history". Reflecting the etymology of *apocalypse* (to unveil), disconnecting from matter through fainting was seen as giving access to the eschatological insights that could not be attained in the material realm (Nielsen 2009:449).

The end of time, which separates history from the events after the return of Christ, thus separating the eschatological implications of actions in history, *from* history, is what the historian Reinhart Koselleck calls the *eschatological horizon.* According to Koselleck, the expectation of a sudden end to history could have profound effects on what could be expected to happen *within* history (Koselleck 1985:3–39, 99–100, 267–289). Christian providential history considered the past and future in chronological terms. Beginning with creation, it then advanced in a sequence of events with little room for "progress" or "change" in between. Without progress, Koselleck claims, expectations of improvement or change were relegated "to the Hereafter", beyond the eschatological horizon (Koselleck 1985:277–278). Depending on other historical factors and developments, this could lead to an experience of time that was "frozen" or static. Without geology or biology for example, the face of the earth and the shape of the animals were also not expected to change (Toulmin 1967:56, 75; Claydon 2020:6–16).

Norwegians in the nineteenth century must be assumed to have had conflicting experiences of time with varying degrees of belief in the end-

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times, and varying access to knowledge that could break the totalizing experience of providential history (Amundsen & Laugerud 2001:277–321). The revival in Ål, however, was predicated on end-time expectations. In Heie's case, fainting gave her access to a vision of the pits of hell. Some parishioners claimed similar insights, claiming to see who would be damned and who would be saved. For others, it appears to be a prerequisite for going through a conversion. Both cases express the understanding that eschatological consequences of present actions (in history), are fundamentally hidden behind the eschatological horizon (outside of history) and that you had to escape history, to see what lies outside of it. The theatre, I suggest, is connected to this eschatological, future expectation, and the uncertainty that it represents.

Of the performance itself, we know only a few details. We do not know whether attendees had a script, or how the scene played out. We only have the stage setup and a description of some key roles. One played God and another the Devil, others functioned as personifications of sins, their actions presumably leading upwards to salvation or downwards to damnation. It could have functioned as a critique of those outside the movement who did not adhere to its norms, but in Opheim's description it appears to be a communal practice engaged in by those who were already a part of the revival. I suggest that its primary function was to work as a shared enactment of Revelation: the performers communally participated in an eschatological meditation on their own lives and the expected eschatological moral implications of present actions. Even if such theatres were rare – perhaps this was even the only one in Scandinavia – it was not impossible as a form of religious practice relating to current theological debates: the path to and meaning of the conversion. Apart from what is expressed through their bodily behaviour, there are few sources detailing how participants in the revival and theatre thought about these topics. Helge Erichsen Hagene, however, wrote and preached about sin, matter, and eschatology to the "awakened" in Ål,

Travelling Preachers and Pietist Eschatologies

Hagene was born on 2 May 1817, on the farm of Hagene in Valdres, Norway. He was known as an autodidact of many talents, possessing notable rhetorical skills. He could to some degree speak English, German, Dutch, and French, and he had travelled widely (Heggtveit 1905:384). Opheim (1862:28) describes him as "very learned, and possessing great wisdom", but always using "strange words". Skottebøl provides the following description:

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> [He was] knowledgeable and talented […] his speech was formally clear and in this respect he excelled compared to many others of his time: but there was always something somewhat veiled and mystical in his speeches that was hard to grasp. As we now know, he was at that time [during the revival] already familiar with most sects such the Quakers, Baptists, and Methodists (Skottebøl 1892:280).

Spending much of his life as a travelling preacher, he also wrote extensively. In *Bidrag til Hans Nielsen Hauges Minde* (1872), he wrote about the life of that famous preacher, the religious landscape of his time, and his own reactions to Haugian understandings of scripture. He invented his own system for "quick writing", using symbols of his own imagination in *Underretning om Hurtigskrift, eller hvorledes man paa en fort og let Maade kan lære, at skrive med Tegn, istedetfor Ord*. He sometimes functioned as a reporter writing about church meetings, and he wrote several hymns. The scope of his audience is uncertain, but it is interesting to note that some of his hymns were published in South Dakota as late as 1896. He also wrote a short description of the revival in Ål titled *Beretning om en mærkelig Oppvækkelse i en af Norges Fjeldegne* (1854). Most of what is known about Hagene comes from interviews conducted by the late nineteenth-century church historians Anton Christian Bang and H. G Heggtveit, and from his short autobiography, *Kort uddrag af min Levnets Historie* (1845).

"The thoughts of the human heart are evil from youth onwards," writes Hagene, remembering his youth. Despite firm admonishments from God, he "thought too much about the [corporeal] world, and [his] heart pounded for its love". It was not until the age of fourteen that he opened his heart to the Lord and decided to serve him. He notes that already at that point he could feel some of "Christ's love, which in later days had given him the courage to leave behind all that he held dear in this world, so that [he] could do our Fathers will, and save some souls for the Lord" (Hagene 1845:2). He goes on to say that in spite of this, the following twenty years were characterized by a struggle between inner and the outer influences, the temporal and the immaterial, a struggle that could only be resolved through conversion:

> I fought against myself and against sin, but because I did not understand that I had to go into my own heart and provide the space for the Lord to do his work in me, I had no power to move forward, I was often overwhelmed by Sin and forgot the eternal for the sake of the temporal. But the Lord did not forget me but waited patiently for me to go through a complete conversion towards him, letting me stand as an infertile tree in these years, hoping I would eventually bear his fruit (Hagene 1845:2).

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The tensions between these dimensions, the role of the will in moving towards conversion, what makes a conversion "complete", and what is attained through conversion, are the fundamental issues he attempts to resolve through his mystical-tropological theology. These were questions that were also at play in the wider cultural context of his time and are posed again and again in various forms throughout his thinking, writing, and religious practices. He appears to be well read, citing, among others, Jonas Ramus and Johannes Tauler (Hagene 1845:12–16). Despite this, the most important contribution to his theological understanding was most likely *Hans Christophersen Feigum* (1797–1873).

Feigum was a self-proclaimed mystic who ran a theological school from his home in Valdres. His pupils stayed at his house, or reportedly even in nearby caves. He is perhaps best known for having experienced a vision where he saw God in the form of a whale and with the teats of a pig, coming up a nearby waterfall towards Feigum's house. In his vision, The God-Whale provided the Feigianists with spiritual nourishment through his milk, while the Haugians whom Feigum despised were denied access. Soon God had filled up a nearby lake, and eventually he would cover several towns with his presence. Hagene was known as one of Feigum's most active disciples in terms of spreading Feigianism (Bang 1910:472). Feigum's theology was markedly tropological in nature, describing a process whereby the individual could only reach conversion through denial of the physical realm over prolonged periods of time, a process symbolized as the exodus. They did not like the Haugians, who they believed did not place a large enough emphasis on the conversion and salvation, and too much on the value of good works, leading them to practise an externalist form of Christianity. Feigium is quoted in Heggtveit (1912:367–368), describing Haugianism as "loose chalk on the wall". The disagreement with the Haugians stemmed primarily from their differing views about the conversion: how to reach it, and what it meant. This difference ultimately has to do with the debate about the *Order of Salvation*, or *Ordo Saluti.* As pointed out by Gilje (2023:53), Hauge believed that inner piety had to be reflected in human action and placed much importance on the moral responsibility of Christians to do good deeds. Salvation was thus not exclusively the work of God but required action from the individual (Gilje 2023:60). In Koselleckian terms, we could describe this position as one where God works through the will of man to effect some progress or change in the material realm. The Feigianists reversed this order, believing that there was nothing one could do in the physical world, within *history,* to be saved. Unlike Hauge, who understood the material accumulation of wealth as a sign of God's intervention and blessing in the present (Dørum & Sødal 2023), the Feigianists believed any good actions had to

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come as a *result* of a conversion, which required separating oneself from all material values. Interestingly, Hagene's later biography of Hauge is hagiographic in tone. He could have changed his stance on him later in life, but at the time of the revival he preached a Feigianist view where, in the *Ordo Salutis,* salvation came first (Skottebøl 1892:281). Some Feigianists delved into religious perfectionism, claiming they could no longer sin after a thorough conversion. Ole Sørflåten, for example, proclaimed that "I am now so free of sin that for a long time I have not felt the slightest sense of it in my heart, and never again will a bad thought arise there" (quoted in Bang 1912:256). Hagene diverges on this point, emphasizing the road to salvation as a continuous struggle, promoting a life of detachment from society and the world. In his autobiography he also writes he did not experience visions in the way Sørflåten did, as they were too "lofty" (Hagene 1845:16).

At an unknown point in his career, Hagene wrote what A. C. Bang called an "allegorical short story" by the name of *En Fortælling om den Store Fyrste Diabolus, Hvorledes han Udgiftede sine Døtre*, or "A Story about the Great Duke Diabolus, and How he Married away his Daughters" (n.d,). On the surface it appears to be an allegorical moral story guiding the reader in the ways of love and marriage, but it also reveals much about Hagene and his view of the world. Its main character has been given the name "Frivillighed" (Free Will), symbolizing the free will man has in relation to sin. Looking for love, he is approached by Diabolus, who offers his daughters to him for marriage. They are given the names "Vanity-Honour", "Eye-Lust", "Flesh-Lust", Worldly-Concern, and "Greed". Later on, the character "Conscience-Pain" is introduced. The moral of the story is that when "Frivillighed" goes through these different spouses, they all lead him to unhappiness because they symbolize temporal qualities: only when he is finally able to deny completely all that ties him to the temporal realm is he able to seek the right spouse: "God's-Love". The story bears some resemblance to John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress. The entirety of the plot can be viewed as an allegory for the process of conversion. In A Pilgrim's Progress, the end stage is symbolized as the Eternal City, while in Diabolus Døtre, the end stage is represented by marriage to "God's-Love". Happiness in this view cannot be attained through love of anything temporal; in fact, he emphasizes that ostracization is the fate of any proper Christian. While happiness is out of reach, this stigma is a sign that you are on the path of righteousness achieved through refutation of the world. Even human thought itself should always be directed towards immateriality and atemporality by adopting a negative position towards the world, allowing God to "act" through the individual will (Hagene 1845:16).

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Because of his strict dichotomy between the material and the immaterial, and the way this relates to history and afterlife, Hagene relates matter more generally to the influence of the devil. This is apparent in the way he thought about temporal measurement. In the nineteenth century, measurements of time in Norway gradually went through a mechanization process (Frykman 1994). This development is often seen as the introduction of "secular time", gradually pushing out "sacred time", thus contributing to secularization itself. But as the historian Margaret Jacob points out, as this process unfolded, "contradictory perceptions of time, secular and religious, existed simultaneously; different times existed in the human mind 'at the same time'" (Jacob 2019:48–49). In contrast to a "pre-modern" conception of time, where the only measurement of its passing was the religiously imbued church bell, the mechanization of time enabled one to believe in the imminent end of days, thus living in one way in providential, biblical time, but at the same time measure the "in between" via the clock. Jacob quotes from the diary of Mary Evelyn (1665–1684). She suffered from what Jacobs describes as a "temporal anxiety", where much time and thinking were devoted to how to best spend one's time, now that it could be measured. Mary wrote rules for "spending [her] pretious tyme well" (Jacobs 2019:53). She would not miss an opportunity for pious life, and so found her good works to be regulated by "secular time", what she calls a "Methodical course of Holy Living. As she writes in her diary, she will "rise by 6 of ye Clock to go to prayers yet I may not miss both ye morning hours for I will not go at ten of ye Clock Prayer because of Crowding through Westminster Hall among ye Lawyers & other Inconveniences. I must pray longer now than when I was at home" (Jacob 2019:54–55).

I quote from Jacob's exposition of this transitory phase here at length because the contrasts and similarities with Hagene's concerns about time are striking. In both cases, one may ask to what degree we are talking about "secular time", or if it might be clearer to think of mechanized or material time understood in terms of particular Christian frameworks. In a curious passage, Hagene considers the passage of time:

> There are 3,600 seconds contained within an hour, if I calculate from 4 hours sleep, that still are far from free from sin, there remains 2700; at least as many sins as this are committed in a day, so that anyone can see that I have the possibility to say, as it is written in the psalm: My sins are like grains of sand on a beach, many-faceted as sunlight reflected in a stream (quoted in Heggtveit 1905:382).

In contrast to Evelyn, Hagene apparently does not see time as a measurement of temporal space allotted to the possibility of doing good works

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contributing towards salvation. Time, once it has been mechanized, is only a measurement of how many sins one can commit. It appears to have become in some sense *material,* just like sand on a beach, but this does not mean that it had become *secular.* For Hagene, the materiality of time appears to be imbued with the influence of the devil, and it is for this reason inherently sinful. In both cases, religious beliefs imbue the now mechanized time with different theological content. The passage underlines one of his fundamental theological beliefs: that good works, being directed towards temporal, worldly things can do nothing to contribute to salvation, and hence, anything that can be measured in mechanical time can only be of a sinful nature. Accordingly, an active approach to conversion, in the degree that it is possible, requires escaping materiality and also material time. This dichotomy between the material and the spiritual, the now and then, is reflected in a general distrust of the senses. The path to the conversion lay in a process of negation from all influence which could be open to the influence of the devil. Hagene would attempt to negate the world through a practice he describes as a literal closing of the physical sensory apparatus, enabling the opening of a spiritual one:

> When I seriously tried to gain access to that place, whose shape and character is built like the heart of man, and many times closed both the eye-gate, the ear-gate, and the speech-exit in the most careful manner, then the fire of the Lord rained down once again; I mean the same fire that Jesus said he had come to throw upon the earth, wishing it was already on fire (quoted in Heggtveit 1905:382).

This passage describes a way of praying that closes off the individual from the corporeal world, in this way it also envelops it in an eschatological timeframe. Closed off from all entry-points to materiality, biblical time emerges: fire strikes in the heart of man reflecting past, present and future, enacting the burning in the present that Jesus will bring at the end of time. This change in the heart of man, at other times called the burning of the "sin root", alluded to here by the reference to Luke 14:29, is the central image of the conversion in Feigianism, where the Holy Spirit battles with the devil in the heart of man (Heggtveit 1912:381).

Returning finally to the case of the "theatre", a central question arises: Why would they perform this elaborate theatrical behaviour if they did not believe anything could be done in the material realm to affect the possibility of salvation? The answer to this question is twofold. It could be that they wanted to set individuals on a path to conversion through a demonstration of man's sinful nature. However, it might also be the case that attracting followers was not the main point of the behaviour. Hagene's preaching on one hand does *warn* against sin, but more than that, it prescribes that people *ru-*

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minate on it. Doing this, through more or less elaborate processes, is key to salvation. Skottebøl summarizes his preaching as dealing with "battle and combat against sin, which had to be hard and long, [one] should gaze into ones own heart and immerse oneself in the visualization of it" (Skottebøl 1898:281). The theatre could well be a communal version of such a practice. Opheim describes one such setting, where they would passionately proclaim their sins to one another: "they yelled at each other to ask for forgiveness and to confess their sins" (Opheim 1862:30). While there is a clear moral element to the theatre, the tropological element is downplayed in relation to the eschatological. It emphasizes that material time is soon coming to an end, and in contrast to the individual experience of conversion the trope here is not exodus, but revelation. The theatre is not meant to convert through tropology, but to reveal in the eschatological sense: the uncovering of a truth brought by the return of Christ.

We cannot know whether Hagene was part of the theatre, but we can say that it reflects the eschatology he preached to the revivalists. It emphasizes the turning away from the world that is required of man lest he be found wanting on the Day of Judgement. In this sense the theatre echoes the eschatology in Hagene's preaching: "it was easy to speak with the people about the heavenly wedding to which they were invited, and about how they in time would clothe themselves in the proper wedding clothes, so they would be found worthy to enter" (Hagene 1854:1). In both form and content, the doomsday theatre reflects ideas already laid out by Hagene in *A Story about the Great Duke Diabolus and How He Married Away His Daughters*. It utilizes the same symbolizing technique of fixing individuals with sinful characteristics. The story elaborates on the eschatological trope of the heavenly wedding. "God's-Love" figures here as a version of the heavenly bride, a representation of Christ, while the marriage between them becomes a figure of the union between Christ and mankind on the Day of Judgement. But in accordance with Hagene's theology, "Frivillighed" never does get to marry "God's-Love", even if he forsakes all the flesh-and-blood wives offered to him by Diabolus. He instead ends up in a trial where Diabolus and his many earthly henchmen condemn him as a heretic (Hagene n.d:28–30). The theatre can be imagined as a rendition of the wedding he does not get to experience, but being a performance in time and space it necessarily cannot show what it aims to portray. It therefore displays only negative behaviours, leading away from salvation. It is not surprising that there are no mentions of anyone representing or performing good deeds, as the movement did not place any theological value on them. Factors moving the individual towards conversion were of a psychological, and immaterial character, taking place in a metaphorical space in which linear time dissolves. Like the confessional gatherings and the introspective

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practices of Hagene, the theatre ultimately grapples with what, in providential history, is an unknown. It nevertheless reflects their position in the wider debate surrounding sin, conversion, and morality.

Conclusion: Nineteenth-century Futures

The behaviour and beliefs discussed in this text illustrate the diversity of temporal experiences that co-existed in Scandinavia in the nineteenth century. It indicates the unevenness with which "modernity" and "secularism" were disseminated across nations, classes, geography, and religious divides. Through this it contributes to nuancing the story of secularism that tends to be told in terms of those that were at the forefront of philosophical development, assuming a trickle-down to ordinary men and women in whose minds different ways of thinking may have persisted much longer. Neglecting their perspective may cause us to misunderstand struggles in communication between intellectual elites and the lower stratum of society in this period, as they may have experienced the world in different ways.

In conclusion, it could be useful to situate Hagene in relation to some other providential historical understandings that existed simultaneously, and mutations in perceptions of time related to secularization processes: progress, acceleration, and the fragmentation of the hegemonic eschatological timeframe. We will begin by returning briefly to the way in which Hagene and his followers saw the relation between the passage of time and the natural world, and how the arrival of mechanical time fits into this picture.

It is debatable whether he considered the world to be "natural" in the modern sense of the word, that is, a realm of matter governed by its own secular-temporal dynamic. If we are to take him at his word, the corporeal world was for him not progressive but saturated with divinely instituted characteristics that are not subject to change until the end of time. It differs from the "medieval world-allegory" that saw God as sustaining nature by constant intervention or as nature actively bringing itself into existence. As pointed out by the historian Katharine Park, the late Renaissance and early modern periods saw a gradual disconnection of agency and morality from nature. Formerly seen as a part of the natural world, they were increasingly shifted onto mankind, and nature thus become more static (Park 2004:54, 64, 68). This did not conflict with the providential narrative, however. According to Stephen Toulmin, well into the late eighteenth century most scholars subscribed to the view of a world set the world in motion with certain (divinely instituted) features. This "Enlightenment" view of the world was equally as static, if not more so, as the medieval world allegorical view. Resting firmly on the six-thousand-year biblical timescale, it does not allow

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for mutability or progress in nature (Toulmin 1965:65–70, 74). The philosophical and technological advances that would make it likely for Hagene to infer mutability in nature or that are commonly associated with historical acceleration had not yet taken place. For example, Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* would not be translated into Danish until 1871, though his theory had been popularized in newspapers before this (snl.no/Artenes_opprinnelse). The first train, which also could have provided a feeling of acceleration, did not depart until 1854 (Bjerke 1987:9). Considering this, he is not an anachronistic individual, but representative of a diversity of possible temporalities in his period.

The introduction of clocks does not appear to have impacted Hagene's feelings of temporal staticity. Mechanical time does not necessarily by itself invoke notions of progress, acceleration, or the mutability of nature. As is pointed out by Koselleck, the clock is a "pre-progressive metaphor: it evoked regularity, the stable household of God, nature, or humans that had been set up and ran steadily, but not their acceleration" (Koselleck 2018:85). For the clock to imply acceleration and thus a speeding up of historical perception it must measure something outside of itself that appears to be accelerating. Nothing about Hagene's descriptions, allegory, or theology implies that he registered this type of temporal acceleration. When Hagene says "det haster med tiden" (Opheim 1862:28), he does not necessarily imply a quickening of history in the way that would be caused by a reduction in the period between the introduction of new unrepeated events, but as an expectation that the eschatological horizon is approaching. The world was, as he described it, past summer, and entering autumn (Helge 1854:1). He thus adheres to a non-progressive eschatology which sees the future as predetermined by extra-historical forces, in other words, an experience of acceleration that is based on expectation, rather than the quickening of contemporaneously occurring historical events (Koselleck 2018:95, 98). As Koselleck (2018:94) writes, such an expectation has its "guiding points entirely outside of time". It could convey a sense of the need to hurry, as it appears to do in the case of Evelyn, but this is dependent on her particular theology that places value on "good deeds". Hagene's perception also contrasts with other nineteenth-century religious movements, such as the Latter-Day Saints, who believed that certain actions had to be done *within* history, to bring about its end (Blythe 2021:4).

Through the example of the "doomsday theatre", I have tried to show one example of the diverse landscapes of temporalities that existed in the nineteenth century, and how different understandings of the providential-historical narrative could lead to different symbolic or semantic understandings of the environment. The theatre expresses a pre-progressive providential-historical temporality that sees the external world as immutable but al-

ISSN: 2002-4185 | DOI: https://doi.org/10.61897/arv.81.51292

lowing for the individual to change its relation to it. While the theatre could also be understood as a form of social commentary or critique, I suggest that explaining it by recourse to its temporal logic reveals aspects of the behaviour that do not primarily revolve around the movement's relationship to other segments of society. Instead of a justification for belief, it becomes an enactment of belief. This perspective avoids making the presupposition that the participants had a reflexive understanding of their own temporal perception. It explains the theatre instead as a shared experimental Christian practice reflecting a particular eschatology made possible by the continued existence of the Christian providential-historical timeframe in which its participants understood their past, present, and future.

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[1] "Men i hovedsognet var det paa mange steder enda verre. Der holdtes oftere forsamlinger, og var mere af disse folk. Der toge de seg til i forsamlingene at vise folket alleslags ting som kunde gjøres, som de sagde var ondt. Nogle begyndte at danse, og da øvede de sig i alleslags ting der carakteriserer eller pragtiserer dansen. Nogle øvede seg i alleslags spill som spillemænd osv. Andre vare som de vare drukkne. De øvede sig i all ugudelighed som drankeren gjør med støi og uenighed. Andre lagde sig med hverandre, baade som gifte og ugifte folk i alle slags maader som tenkes kan. Og nogle var uvenner. De sloges og trætede. Kort sagt, alt hvad som tænkes kan at gjøres, saa gjorde de det. Og naar forsamlingerne holdtes inde i stuerne, da reiste en ned i kjælderen for at forestille sig for dem som djævelen, og en opp på slinderne for at forestille sig som vaar fælles skaber. Dette var alt af begge kjønn. Dette navn fikk mange af dem bære en tid efter, som de da toge sig skikkelse til at vise sine streger." All translations in this article are done by the author if not otherwise stated.

[2] For an overview of the revival in Ål, see Sundby 2021.

[3] Research funded by the Research Council of Norway, grant number 334603: Religious and secular worldmaking: Narrative cultures of utopian emigration and the formation of modern regimes of attention (NC-RoA).

[4] There are two digitized versions of the book avaiable at Nasjonalbiblioteket.no. The oldest one (n.d), lacks the title of the 1899 version, *Syner af Himmerig og Helvede.* This might be due to the missing front page. Both versions share the longer subtitle: *Abenbarelse, som viser os Mennesker, hvor nødvendigt det er at gjøre sand Omvendelse og søge en levende og saliggjørende Tro og Forening med vor Herre Jesum Christium, om vi skulle blive delagtige i himmelske Herlighed og undgaa Guds Retfærdige Fordømmelse, Dom og Helvedes Ild og gruelige Smerter, som alle uomvendte syndere evig maa erfare I den brændende Sø foruden Ende.* For more on the book itself, see Sundby 2021.

[5] I base my definition of secularism and its relation to the experience of historical time in this period in the following pages on Koselleck, *Futures Past*: *On the Semantics of Historical Time* and his essay "Does History Accelerate?" in *Sediments of Time: On Possible Histories*, Cultural Memory in the Present (2018).

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