A fiery dragon in Menko's chronicle

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1.

Written records from medieval Western Europe frequently mention beliefs about the weather and efforts to control it. The reason for this is clear: in a society that was mostly agricultural and often teetering on the edge of famine, people felt deeply reliant on the forces of nature. This dependency sparked a strong desire either to influence nature or to read signs that might reveal what the future held in store for them. There was a wide range of beliefs about which powers were responsible for certain weather conditions, as well as a variety of rituals people thought could sway these forces. In the early Middle Ages, the Church's perspective was just one among many. In this realm – very much a matter of 'practical religion' – church and non-church traditions coexisted side by side for a long time.

A distinctly church-based belief was that God punished people through natural disasters, a view rooted in the Old Testament. The notion that the devil could cause such catastrophes also became part of church teaching after the early Church Fathers[1]. According to Cohn, in the later Middle Ages, demons, the servants of the devil, were increasingly seen as powerful beings, especially in their ability to unleash destructive forces of nature. Another church tradition held that certain saints possessed miraculous powers to intervene in nature[2]. In addition, the medieval Catholic Church had various practices aimed at protecting land, crops, and livestock, and warding off bad weather. These included making the sign of the cross, calling on saints, handing out amulets against thunder and lightning, and

[1] C. Orant Loomis, White Magic: An Introduction to the Folklore of Christian Legend. Cambridge (Mass.) 1948, pp. 45–46, 96.
[2] Norman Cohn, Europe's Inner Demons: An Inquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt. London 1 1975, pp. 60-74.

ringing consecrated bells during storms, – all of this was done by priests from the early Middle Ages onward.

These rituals continued to exist because they fulfilled a clear need among the faithful and kept them connected to the church. However, there was often criticism within the church, because of the magical qualities that were often attributed to these rituals and the objects used in them. K. Thomas aptly described this phenomenon as the magic of the Catholic Church[3]. Completely outside the church's traditions was the widespread belief in medieval Western Europe that certain individuals could influence the weather. The church strongly opposed this belief, but was not entirely successful: even in the modern era, accusations of weather-magic continued to surface[4].

A gray area between church and non-church traditions was the belief in omens. In many early medieval historical sources, signs in the sky are mentioned, especially solar and lunar eclipses and comets, which the writers saw as warnings of fateful events, wars, the death of a king or bishop, or natural disasters. It is reasonable to assume these writers believed in omens and thought the phenomena they described foretold the events that followed[5]. It is much less clear what meaning the thirteenth-century Premonstratensian abbot Menko and his contemporaries attached to a glow of light that appeared before a storm surge, which Menko describes in his chronicle. The passage reads as follows[6]:

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[3] Keith Thomas, Religion and the decline of magic. Studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth and seventeenth century England. London 1971. pp. 25–50.

[4] On weather magic in the early Middle Ages: Cohn, op. cit., pp. 147–163; accusations of weather magic in the modern era: J. E. Toussaint Raven, *Heksenvervolging*. Bussum 1972, p. 64.

[5] P. Rousset, *Le sens du merveilleux à l'époque féodale*. In: Le moyen âge 62 (1956) pp. 25-37.

[6] The chronicle was published by H.O. Feith and G. Acker Stratingh, Kronijken van Emo en Menko, abten van het klooster Wittewierum, met het vervolg van een ongenoemde. Utrecht 1866 (Werken van het Historisch Genootschap Nieuwe reeks 4) and by L. Weiland, MGH Scriptores 23. 1874. pp. 464-572. In the text, I cite the Dutch translation, Kronieken van de abdij Bloemhof te Wittewierum loopende over de dertiende eeuw, door de abten Emo, Menko en een ongenoemde. Translated by Willem Zuidema and J. Douma, with contributions by C.D.J. Brandt. Utrecht (1939). I have modernized the spelling and occasionally translated the text anew from the Latin. The edition by Feith and Acker Stratingh is cited here as the chronicle, the translation as trans.
Menko, whose writing style remained true to his nature, first copied the chronicle maintained by his predecessor until 1231, then continued recording events up to 1273. His work was created between 1249 and 1273.
The passage quoted here: chronicle pp. 196–197, trans. pp. 191–192. Menko dated events following the Christmas calendar, which is why the events he describes here are placed at the beginning of 1249.

> "At the start of 1249, the eighty-sixth year after the Juliana Flood, the fifty-fifth year after the St. Nicholas Flood, the thirty-first after the Marcellus Flood, and the third since the Flood of Luke the Evangelist, on the nineteenth day of the moon, during the feast of John the Evangelist, the west wind, which is usually gentle, roared like a northern gale through the night. Its force grew so fierce before dawn that no one could recall such a storm in living memory. Roofs were torn from many homes, some buildings - even new and sturdy ones - collapsed and only sorrow and misery could be heard everywhere. Around midnight, a strange light was seen flickering in the sky. Some thought it was lightning, but there was no thunder that followed; others believed it to be a dragon. Isidore, in his Book of Origins, wrote that dragons are typically fiery by nature and appear during storms. Still, since they are said to be born and live in the hottest regions of Ethiopia, we prefer to reserve judgment rather than make a bold claim about what that light truly was. However, we have learned that throughout all of Friesland, wherever it appeared, everyone saw it at the distance of a crossbow's shot, and there it vanished into the earth. At the first crow of the rooster, the west wind gave way to the north wind, which borders the northwest, and then the raging sea broke through the dikes. Water flooded the land, and everywhere there was grief and sighing, as the Lord intensified His chastisements. Yet the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort, who grows angry and takes pity, softened His wrath in the midst of punishment, for had the north wind replaced the west wind just moments earlier during the highest tide, and blown with equal strength, Friesland might scarcely have survived."[7]

This passage tells us that some people in Frisia, in 1248, believed they saw a dragon appear alongside severe weather, just before an even greater disaster struck. It is also clear that the chronicler, the abbot of the Wittewierum monastery in Fivelgo, was cautious about drawing conclusions. He compared his contemporaries' accounts to a work he considered to have authority, the Etymologiae by Isidore of

[7] Kroniek pp. 196–197: Circa medium autem noctis uisus est splendor in aere quodammodo scintillans, quem quiddam putabant esse fulgur, sed tonitruum non est subsecutus. Quidam autumabant esse draconem. De quo dicit Ysidorus ethimol., quod ignee sit nature, et in tempestatibus soleat eleuari. Sed cum in calidissimis ethiopie partibus soleat nasci ac habitare, de hoc splendore maluimus humiliter dubitare, quam temere diffinire. Illud tarnen intelleximus, quod ubicumquc uisus fuit per totam frisiam, cuilibet uidebatur, quasi se ad iactum baliste distaret, et ibi in terram descenderet.

Seville (ca. 570–656), and ultimately left the matter unresolved. Are we dealing here with a religious belief that – at least for Menko – did not belong to the church's beliefs and what we might call 'folk' traditions[8]? I approach this question in three ways. First, I look at Menko's chronicle as a whole to determine how removed - both in reality and in thought - he was from the world outside his monastery. Next, I compare the passage quoted here with other parts of Menko's chronicle where he mentions supernatural powers and interventions, to determine what Menko considered possible in this realm and what he did not, which phenomena he saw as religiously meaningful, and which he tried to explain using the scientific knowledge of his time. This helps to determine the weight the rumor Menko described in this passage may have held for him. Then, I compare the dragon mentioned in Menko's text to other dragons described in medieval writings that seem related, aiming to place the belief in these fiery, storm-bringing, or disaster-foretelling dragons within the wider context of both church and non-church traditions surrounding dragons in the Middle Ages. Finally, I try to uncover what emotional purpose the dragon in Menko's chronicle may have served for his contemporaries, and whether it reflects a way of coping with fear that differs from the church's teachings.

2.

To what extent was Menko's view of the world shaped by church traditions, and how much space did he leave for non-church matters - facts, but also values, judgments, and other thoughts or feelings - in his writing? On one hand, Menko's chronicle is full of information about collaboration and contact between monks and laypeople, and the part he himself played in that. On the other hand, there is evidence pointing to the unique position monks held in thirteenth-century society and their efforts to maintain a certain degree of separation. When we examine Menko's opinions about certain groups, individuals,

[8] The debate about the concept of 'the people' has also had a significant impact on research into folk culture and popular beliefs in the Middle Ages. See, for example, F. Graus, *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger im Reich der Merowinger. Studien zur Hagiographie der Merowingerzeit*. Prague 1965. p. 210-217 and J.-L. Schmitt, Religion populaire and culture folklorique. In: Annales E. S. C. 31 (1976) p. 941-953. I follow Graus' practical approach: in texts written by clergy, certain passages stand out that do not belong to church tradition. Graus thus uses a negative criterion. In addition, I believe that sometimes you can tell from a writer's reaction to what he reports whether it falls outside church tradition. If he rails against it, you might be dealing with a competing non-Christian religion. If he shows skepticism, then at the very least, what's described is not supported by church authority.

and events, we find two contrasting attitudes toward the world outside the monastery walls: at times, he seems fully integrated with it, at other times, he deliberately keeps his distance. Collaboration between the monks and the laity appears most often during times of crisis. For instance, Menko writes about floods and breaches in the dikes in 1262, as occurred at the Vismaar, where 'water poured in during the night and continued flooding nearly the entire next day, until the determined effort of all the brothers from Bloemhof, the parishioners [of Wittewierum], and the residents of Woltersum finally managed to seal the breach near the sluice with driven-in beams and straw mixed with earth'[9]. On another remarkable occasion, monks and laypeople worked side by side to build a new stone monastic church. Master Everard from Cologne led the project; he and his sons were professional builders. Alongside them, the monks, lay brothers, and parishioners from Wittewierum and neighboring Woltersum joined in to build the new church[10]. Menko's account offers a fascinating glimpse into his standing within the local community. He recounts how some monks went door-to-door in Wittewierum and Woltersum in the evenings to recruit volunteers for the church's construction, 'since their requests were especially effective in both parishes'[11]. One of these monks, who clearly had strong connections outside the monastery, was Menko himself ('Brother Menko, then master of the wardrobe and cellar, as well as teacher of the younger members, and later elevated to abbot of the monastery').

On one occasion, Menko stepped in to defend his 'countrymen'. After the siege of Aachen in 1248, in which Frisians had taken part, he managed to secure their release from further involvement in the 'crusade'[12]. Beyond this, the abbot of Bloemhof played an important and unique role among laypeople: that of fostering peace in his region. Menko tells how, during the flood of 1268, when dikes burst in several parts of Frisia, only Fivelgo was spared. He explained: 'Only Fivelgo escaped this calamity, perhaps because here, more than elsewhere in

[9] Chronicle p. 217-218, trans. p. 210.
[10] Chronicle pp. 175-177, trans. pp. 173-174.
[11] Hii, quia efficaciores in duabus parochiis poterant habere petitiones, homines ad laborandum convocabant, Chronicle p. 177, trans. p. 174. While it's not possible to trace Menko's family origins, it seems likely he came from a prominent local family. If that was indeed the case, it would have added to his standing.
[12] Chronicle p. 194, trans. p. 189. See also: Arn. W. Wybrands. *De abdij Bloemhof in Wittewierum in de dertiende eeuw*. Amsterdam 1883 (Verthandelingen der Kon. Akad. v. Wetenschap. Afd. Letterk. 15). pp. 145-146.

Frisia, the dikes had been raised; more likely, though, because those in need, coming from all over, were welcomed here with greater generosity and provided with alms and shelter. But above all, because the judges and other leaders in this region had upheld fair justice for twelve years and more, for both rich and poor alike.

This was made possible through the dedicated efforts and strong collaboration of the respected laymen Snelger van Scharner, Ripperd van Nothensum, and Tammo, the knight of Aldesum. Above all, it was the abbot of Bloemhof [Menko] who offered sound advice, which the aforementioned and other laymen of the region diligently followed'[13]. The abbot thus worked closely with the secular elite in Fivelgo to promote safety and justice in the area. His chronicle clearly shows how well-informed Menko was about local events; he shares extensive and reliable details on agriculture and livestock, crop failures, grain prices, dike construction, and the impact of floods.

Despite all these forms of cooperation and contact between clergy and laypeople, the monks aimed to preserve unity within their own group and were wary of getting too involved in worldly affairs. This was especially challenging for the so-called external pastors, monks responsible for the spiritual care in the few parish churches owned by this Premonstratensian abbey. Menko quotes at length the rules set for them by his predecessor Emo. The external pastors were required to visit the sick in pairs, were not allowed to attend lay gatherings, had to present themselves at the abbey on scheduled days, and could only visit relatives when strictly necessary[14]. These and other rules were designed to maintain discipline and regulate or limit contact with the outside world. Notably, in his praise of Emo, Menko approvingly notes that although Emo was highly skilled in both secular and church law, which made many seek his counsel, he refrained from 'worldly eloquence in the vernacular, which, out of zeal and love for spiritual life and religious texts, he neither valued nor practiced'[15]. In other words, he occasionally acted as an advisor, but never as an advocate in secular proceedings.

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[13] Chronicle pp. 220-221, transl. p. 212. In this regard, Menko behaved much like other abbots in the region. Abbots often acted as peacemakers or judges, influenced the codification of regional law, and played an active or coordinating role in water management; see H. P. Jansen, *Kerkgeschiedenis*. In: Historie van Groningen, Stad en Lande. Edited by W. J. Formsma et al. Groningen 1976. pp. 147-170, especially pp. 164-165.

[14] Chronicle pp. 170-171, trans. pp. 168-169.

[15] Chronicle p. 165, trans. p. 163.

In Menko's reflections on events, individuals, and groups, one sometimes sees his deep familiarity with the world beyond the monastery, and at other times a certain distance from it. He was deeply engaged with the agricultural ups and downs in his surroundings and never spoke negatively about farmers or agricultural labor[16]. Nothing in his writings suggests contempt for or disregard of farmers, something commonly found among many early medieval authors[17]. In fact, he embodies the church's changing attitude toward labour during the later Middle Ages; this included the value the Premonstratensians placed on manual work – even for monks[18]. Traces of this can be found in Menko's choice of words. *Labor* is the term he uses for work performed with effort, whether for religious purposes[19], for tilling the land[20], or even for the toil of the draft animals[21]. Menko is also aware that the monks depend on the surrounding agricultural activity. He notes that the new monastery church was completed in 1266, 'even though those times were extremely harsh due to repeated floods from the sea, loss of livestock, and the high cost of all basic necessities'[22]. Menko shows no distance from or disdain for rural people; but what about city dwellers? One statement he makes may hint at this: '[In the year 1250] when the Frisians had suffered greatly, the people of Groningen [that is, the citizens of the city of Groningen] insulted them and ruthlessly raised the price of grain, which they imported by ship from foreign lands.' A group of knights and 'most of the people of Groningen' also harmed 'the neighbouring Frisians' – the Ommelanders – in other ways. Menko goes on to describe how the residents of Fivelgo and Hunzingo ended a long-standing feud and united against the Groningers, 'so that it seemed as if God himself brought about the downfall of the Groningers'[23]. I don't

[16] Menko recounts how, after the storm surge at the end of 1248, sowing was done on salty soil, causing the seed grain to be wasted. He adds a moral reflection on human blindness, but even here, he passes no judgment on the farmers (Kroniek, pp. 198-199, trans. p. 193).

[17] On the changes in the church's attitude toward labor in the later Middle Ages: Jacques Le Goff, *Métier et profession d'après les manuels de confesseurs au Moyen Âge*. In: Beiträge zum Berufs-bewusstsein des mittelalterlichen Menschen. Berlin 1964 (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 3). pp. 44–60. Reprinted in Jacques Le Goff, Pour un autre moyen âge. Temps, travail et culture en Occident: 18 essais. 1977. pp. 162–180.

[18] François Petit, *La spiritualité des Prémontrés aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles*. Paris, 1947. (Etudes de théologie et d'histoire de la spiritualité 10). pp. 215-219.

[19] Chronicle pp. 154, 220, 238.

[20] Chronicle p. 189.

[21] Chronicle p. 198. The work carried out by Master Everard and his sons is referred to as *opus*, chronicle p. 175.

[22] Chronicle p. 220, trans. p. 212.

[23] Chronicle pp. 201-202, trans. p. 196.

think this provides evidence that Menko had an anti-urban attitude, or that he was negative towards merchants. In another place in his chronicle, he mentions grain imports in times of scarcity as a beneficial thing[24]. However, one can see in him feelings of connection with his own region that were accompanied by antipathy towards the neighboring city.

An interesting indication of the extent to which clergy do or do not distance themselves from the world around them is the attitude they adopt towards violence, because sometimes a non-religious attitude - that of the secular, military upper class - is reflected in their writings[25]. In Menko's chronicle, violence on a limited scale - directed against certain individuals, clans or inhabitants of a place or region - is common. In view of the goal I set myself, determining Menko's mental distance from the lay world, I distinguish three categories: violence of one clergyman against another clergyman, violence of the laity against a clergyman, and violence of the laity among themselves. The first category includes the imprisonment of the bishop of Paderborn by the bishop of Münster. Menko reports that the latter was not allowed to exercise his office for a while 'because anyone who commits sacrilege against a clergyman is excommunicated by the act itself [without the need for a sentence] and certainly if he commits it against bishops and priests'[26]. Also in a case of violence by laymen against a clergyman, Menko comments, albeit briefly: 'In the [...] year [1251] magister Gerbrand van Engelum, a man of great sagacity and literary education and of the greatest eloquence, was *miserably* strangled by Esculfus and his accomplices'[27]. His report of violence between lay people is very different in tone. Here he usually limits himself to a description of the events without passing judgment, e.g. 'In the [...] year [1248] knight Thizo van Groningen was killed by Rudolf van Peize and his accomplices around All Saints' Day'[28]. In one case, Menko even seems to appreciate the courage with which a robbery was committed: 'In the year of the Lord 1255. Conrad and his nephew came from Paddepoel at night with some brave companions, and with unheard-of audacity undertook a venture. With ladders they climbed St. Martin's Church [in Groningen],

[24] Chronicle pp. 242-243, transl. pp. 231-232.
[25] As noted by H. Löwe (Arbeo von Freising. *Eine Studie in Religiosität und Bildung im 8. Jahrhundert.* In: Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter 15-16 (1950-51), pp. 87-120).
[26] Chronicle p. 223, trans. p. 215.
[27] *Miserabiliter*, Chronicle p. 204, transl. p. 197. Menko's response could also have come from his personal sympathy for the victim.
[28] Chronicle p. 195, trans. p. 190, see also Chronicle pp. 181-182, trans. p 178.

descended at daybreak down the spiral staircase, attacked unexpectedly with drawn swords and killed nine men'[29]. Menko probably had an aversion to the people of Groningen, but the appreciation for this successful raid, and, in other cases, the refraining from commenting are intriguing because they contrast with his views on violence against clergy. Perhaps this difference can be explained by the fact that he judged violence against clergy by the standards of the milieu of which he had become a part by choice, the monastery, while he continued to judge violence among lay people from the values of his (secular) environment of origin, as something that simply happened and could sometimes even be desirable. However, his involvement in the rule of law in Fivelgo indicates that from the monastery he also tried to change the world around it.

With which groups and interests did Menko identify himself? With Western Christianity, as evidenced by his detailed and engaging account of the Crusades and the preparations for them in his day. With the clergy and their head, the pope; conflicts between the popes and the Hohenstaufen he recalls quite extensively. In cases of violence by lay people against clergy, he takes sides, as we have seen. He also identified with the Frisians, whose part in the Crusades he proudly mentions, and even more strongly with the inhabitants of his own region, Fivelgo; this is evident not only from the above-quoted passage about the favorable fate of Fivelgo during the floods of 1268, but also from a report about the Crusade of 1269 where he reports that fifty cogs left from all over Friesland, four of them from Fivelgo[30]. Finally, of course, he was above all involved in his own monastery.

What does all this say about Menko's reporting on the miraculous celestial phenomenon in 1248? Even before he became abbot, Menko had good contacts outside the monastery; as abbot, he was a central figure in Fivelgo's political and social life. No psychic barriers, contempt or fear, prevented him from perceiving what was going on among the peasants of his region. He was well aware of this. Menko's report gives the impression that he was not an eyewitness to the events in the Frisian provinces on 27 December; perhaps he had not yet returned from Aachen (see p. 101 above). When the rumour circulated in his region that a dragon had appeared in the sky, he heard it and learned, possibly through inquiry, that the light had been seen in the entire Frisian area. He recorded the rumour without any animosity, but rather with caution.

[29] Chronicle p. 206, trans. pp. 199-200.
[30] Chronicle p. 227, trans. p. 218.

To better understand this sense of restraint, it helps to look at how Menko approached supernatural phenomena elsewhere in his chronicle.

Menko often interpreted events as acts of God. He believed God punished people for their sins with famines and floods, though sometimes He showed mercy and lessened the disaster. The people of Fivelgo, as we have seen, were rewarded for their virtue. Menko rarely mentioned the devil. On two occasions, it was said that Emo's rivals acted under the devil's influence during conflicts[31]. Menko's chronicle also contains a few accounts about Emo that hint at early sainthood. Emo was gifted with prophecy[32], and once had a prophetic dream[33]. He passed away, as he wished, the night before the feast of Saint Lucia[34]. Some miraculous healings occurred at his grave[35]. Following church tradition, these miracles were considered to be works of God through a devout person.

For some events, Menko presented both natural and supernatural explanations, weighing them against each other. Three of these were major disasters: two epidemics and a storm surge. The fourth, a solar eclipse, must also have seemed terrifying to many of his contemporaries.

In 1237, various illnesses spread, including a fever that lasted three days. The monks were especially hard hit. Menko suggested this might have been due to their poor diet, but ultimately he believed it happened because God disciplines those He loves[36]. In this case, he clearly favored a supernatural explanation.

His explanation for the 1250 plague considers several possibilities: he thought it might have been caused by a poison in the air, referencing Galen, who wrote that spoiled air can be more harmful than spoiled food. Then he added, 'Whether this plague arose from the foul air of carcasses decaying in the woods under the sun, from eating tainted food, or, as seems more likely, was a divine punishment, let us leave to God, whose will is supreme.' Menko then goes on to quote at length the description of a plague outbreak in Virgil's Georgics: 'so that, should such a plague ever invade in future times - especially in summer - these

[31] Chronicle p. 155, trans. p. 153; chronicle p. 157, trans. p. 155.
[32] Chronicle pp. 167-168, trans. pp. 165-166; chronicle p. 173, trans. p. 171.
[33] Chronicle p. 153, trans. p. 151.
[34] Chronicle p. 172, trans. p. 170. Chronicle pp. 173–174, trans. pp. 171–172; chronicle pp. 237–239, trans. pp. 227–228.
[35] Chronicle p. 149, trans. pp. 147–148.
[36] Chronicle p. 149, trans. pp. 147-148.

bodies will be buried deep in the earth, keeping the air pure and preventing people and animals from catching the plague'[37]. Menko blends ancient medical knowledge with a belief in divine punishment. He favours the latter explanation, yet still offers practical advice. This mirrors his approach to the threat of floods: though he sees them as God's punishment, he nonetheless supports active water management policies.

Following the spring tide of 1268, Menko lists three possible explanations for the phenomenon. According to the 'elder laypeople,' the ocean rises higher than usual once every fifty years, and if delayed (as it was then, with 55 years between the Juliana and Marcellus floods), the storm surge is more intense and severe. Menko notes this theory somewhat matches that of the natural philosophers, who claim that the planets change their nature in the fiftieth year. 'That is why, it is said, Abraham, skilled in astronomy, made the fiftieth year a jubilee year [...] It is also believed that because the Frisians, unlike other Christian peoples, do not offer tithes or first fruits, the sea takes what is withheld from God,' upon which follows a lengthy moralizing passage on the importance of giving tithes[38]. Menko does not make a definitive statement here, but the fact that he lists the religious explanation last suggests he favored it.

For the year 1241, Menko reports a solar eclipse 'which, according to the arguments of the natural philosophers, was simply a natural phenomenon, as the moon stood between us and the sun'; he then gives a scientific explanation. Menko continues: 'Still, this eclipse may have been a sign, since around the same time Pope Gregory IX died.' Later, he revisits the eclipse: 'Whether this eclipse was natural or miraculous, let us leave that to the one who said: "It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father has kept in His own authority"'[39]. Evidently, in intellectual circles, belief that such celestial events precede or coincide with major disasters was fading, but Menko did not fully wish to dismiss a supernatural explanation, which is why he ultimately left the final say to God[40].

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[37] Chronicle pp. 199–201, transl. pp. 193–195.

[38] Chronicle pp. 221–223, transl. pp. 212–214. These tithes were not paid due to a prolonged conflict with the Bishop of Münster.

[39] Chronicle pp. 179-181, trans. pp. 176-178.

[40] A similar line of thought appears in the Annales Rodenses, written at the close of the twelfth century. There, for the year 1133, it is noted that a solar eclipse occurred, and people believed the Last Day had come. The chronicler explains that this eclipse was no coincidence, but rather, the moon, positioned between the sun and the earth, caused the sun to darken. He also reports that on

Looking at Menko's worldview, we can see he recognized a hierarchy of influences, shaped by the religious and intellectual authorities he respected. At the top is God, the source of everything and the one who can perform miracles; when Menko was unsure whether something was miraculous, he deferred to God's judgment. Sometimes, he offered not just a religious interpretation but also a scientific one, drawing on knowledge from ancient writers. This knowledge was part of what I would call the broader church tradition: not strictly part of Christian faith, but belonging to the intellectual baggage of the medieval clergy. Menko's chronicle also shows he often relied on his own observation and experience in a practical way. He leaned toward religious and moral interpretations, but he also, if perhaps to a lesser extent, gave weight to ancient scientific literature. Many times, he trusted his own judgment above all.

And now, once again, we come to the dragon passage. Menko was not sure the strange light was caused by lightning, since there was no thunder afterward. He did not reference the Bible or any religious authority at this point; that happens later, when he credits God's mercy for turning the wind north after the flood had started to recede. Menko also could not say for certain that the phenomenon was a dragon, since Isidore of Seville claimed dragons were only born in the Ethiopian desert where they lived. So Menko preferred to remain humbly uncertain rather than make a bold judgment. From this, I gather that this dragon was not covered by strict church tradition or accepted science in Menko's view. It belonged to a different kind of tradition.

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that same day, a battle took place in Palestine between Muslims and Christians, and the Christians would have lost 'had God not delivered His own through the onset of this darkness.'(*Annales Rodenses*. Ed. P. C. Boeren and G. W. A. Panhuysen. Assen 1968. p. 76).

3.

In his study *St. Marcel de Paris et le dragon*[41] Le Goff identifies two major traditions around dragons in the Middle Ages: one rooted in folk beliefs and the other in the Church. The folk tradition harks back to ancient times in which the dragon symbolizes nature's forces – capable of bringing both good fortune and disaster to humanity. The dominant ecclesiastical tradition of the medieval period branched off from this, portraying the dragon as the embodiment of evil and equating it with the devil. This dual perspective, applied by Le Goff in a rather loose and undogmatic way, serves as the central thread running through his elaborate study.

The medieval concept of the devil-dragon is mainly derived from Revelation 12:9, where the dragon attacks Mary and is defeated by Michaël and his angels. The passage states: 'And the great dragon was cast out [upon the earth], that ancient serpent called the devil and Satan, who leads the whole world astray.' This text, equating the dragon with the devil, left a significant mark on medieval literature. There are references to other biblical dragons in medieval writing as well. For example, Menko, discussing political events in the Muslim realms of the Near East, quotes Isaiah 13:21, which prophesies about Babylon: 'Replebuntur domus draconibus' (the houses will be inhabited by dragons)[42].

Another dragon tradition found in the writings of the medieval clergy, belonging to the broader ecclesiastical tradition (as described above, see p. 108), is the pseudo-scientific one. It starts with Isidore of Seville, the influential compiler of late antique knowledge[43]. Isidore describes the dragon as the largest of all creatures, dwelling in the air – a description that echoes Menko's earlier citation. According to Isidore, there are also sea dragons. He also recognizes the dragon as a guardian of treasures and as a military emblem, tracing the latter back to Apollo's victory over the serpent Python. Finally, he mentions the dragon biting its own tail, a symbol of eternity, which he attributes to Egyptian culture. Menko therefore only drew from Isidore what was relevant to the

[41] Jacques Le Goff, *Culture ecclésiastique et culture folklorique au Moyen Âge: saint Marcel de Paris et le Dragon.* In: Ricerche storiche e economiche in memoria di Corrado Barbagallo. Ed. L. de Rosa. Naples 1970. vol. 2, pp. 51–90. Reprinted in: Jacques Le Goff, Pour un autre moyen âge, pp. 236–279.

[42] The meaning of the original Hebrew text in this passage is uncertain (see 42 G.B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah*. 1. Edinburgh 1912, pp. 243–244), but this is not relevant here.

[43] Le Goff, cited article (see note 41), pp. 247–249.

dragon sighting of 1248. Below I will present another representative of the pseudo-scientific dragon tradition: Menko's contemporary, Albertus Magnus.

The dragon from 1248 and a few other medieval relatives that we are about to discuss do not belong to either the ecclesiastical tradition or the pseudo-scientific tradition[44]. First, however, a quick note: I am only using texts that are close in time and place to Menko's own writing. I am deliberately not drawing on sources like Thompson's Motif-Index, since it covers material from a wide range of cultures, and even the Western European traditions included there were often only recorded in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. I am following the cautious approach taken by Graus[45].

The so-called Finnsburg fragment, a piece from an Old English epic poem, opens like this: 'Then the king spoke, young and battle-ready: "This is not the dawn in the East, nor is a dragon flying here; the roof beam of this hall is not burning, but they are suddenly attacking us."' The king then calls his men to defend the hall, and a great and drawn-out battle ensues.[46] If we assume the unexpected attackers approached the

[44] One version of the church's dragon-devil is worth mentioning here, since at first glance it resembles the fiery dragon in Menko's chronicle: the devilish dragon who appears to people as a warning of their impending doom. In the Miracula sancti Eugenii, written in the tenth century at the Brogne monastery, a clergyman refuses to demolish his house to make way for an expansion of the church. That night, he dreams of a dragon crawling down from the church tower toward his home. Upon waking, he wonders whose destruction the dream foretells. Then his house catches fire. The author adds that this dragon is the ancient enemy(meaning, the devil) who seeks to drag humanity into death (Miracula Eugenii, vitutes c. 11. Ed. D. Misonne. In: Revue bénédictine 76 (1966), pp. 231–285, p. 265). This motif also appears in other examples: a monk who left his monastery had a vision of a dragon and was moved to repent (F. C. Tubach, *Index exemplorum. A handbook of medieval religious tales*, Helsinki 1969 (FFC 204), no. 1780). In another edifying tale, found as early as the Dialogues of Gregory (sixth century) and later collections, a dragon waits at the deathbed of a frivolous monk, who is saved by the prayers of his fellow brother (Tubach no. 1781). These dragons, firmly within church tradition, symbolize evil – the devil – into whose power one falls through sin. The fiery dragons of misfortune discussed here, however, do not carry that religious or moral meaning.

I will leave aside the text by Gregory of Tours, in which a dragon swims among snakes down the Tiber toward the sea, where they perish and wash up on the coast, followed by a plague outbreak, as it clearly fits within the typical Roman tradition of augury. (*Hist. Franc.* 1. Ed. R. Buchner. Berlin 1955. II pp. 320–324; Le Goff, cited art. p. 251 and sources referenced there).

[45] See note 8.

[46] *Beowulf with the Finnsburg Fragment*, ed. by A. J. Wyatt, edition revised with introduction and notes by R.W. Chambers. Cambridge 1920, pp. 158–162. Wild, *Drachen im Beowulf und andere Drachen* (see note 42), thanks to whom I found the Anglo-Saxon texts used here, cites on p. 24 several places in Beowulf where the dragon appears as a fiery streak in the sky, moving in flames or with lightning speed (v. 2313-14, 2308-9, 2319-20, 3044-45). While this is just one of the dragon's many attributes, it remains difficult to determine the precise meaning these images had in Beowulf (see Th. Finkenstaedt in Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde, article

hall bearing torches, all four phenomena mentioned by the king share the characteristic of being accompanied by light. The flying dragon is referenced in the context of both the rising sun and a fire within the hall. Appropriately, Wild classifies this dragon among the fiery dragons that appear in the sky[47]. It cannot be conclusively determined from this passage whether it was regarded as an omen of impending misfortune. Although one might infer this from the phrases relating to fire and approaching enemies, the preceding sunrise renders such a conclusion far from compelling.

We encounter dragons as harbingers of disaster in a passage found in two versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the historical record of the Anglo-Saxons, whose earliest components date back to the latter half of the ninth century: 'In this year [i.e., 793], terrible portents appeared over Northumbria and instilled great fear among the people. They consisted of tremendous whirlwinds[48] and flashes of lightning, and fiery dragons were seen flying through the air. Immediately after these signs, a severe famine ensued, and shortly thereafter, on 8 June of that same year, the pagans grievously destroyed the church of Lindisfarne. Sicga died on 22 February'[49]. Versions E and F of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, both containing this passage, were composed in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries in northern England. The authors evidently believed in fiery dragons foretelling calamity[50].

Chronologically, this is followed by Menko's account.

Approximately contemporaneous with Menko, Albertus Magnus addressed this phenomenon in his work De animalibus (ca. 1250–1270). His discourse concerning these fictitious creatures belongs to the pseudo-scientific tradition; however, he endeavours to critically distinguish between opinions transmitted through literature and

Beowulf, p. 241), so I will leave these passages aside.

[47] Wild, cited article, p. 24.

[48] This phrase appears only in E; please refer to the following note.

[49] Two of the Saxon chronicles parallel. Edited by Ch. Plummer and J. Earle. Oxford, 1965. pp. 54-57. This passage is not present in the so-called Parker manuscript and therefore does not belong to the oldest core of the chronicle, which dates from the latter half of the ninth century. For further information regarding the versions and manuscripts, see Dorothy Whitelock in The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A revised translation, edited by Dorothy Whitelock with David C. Douglas and Susie I. Tucker. London, 1961. Introduction, p. XI ff. A translation of this passage can be found there on pp. 36-37.

[50] In the northern versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, not only in E and F but also in D, there are notably more frequent references – significantly more than in the other versions – to comets, lunar eclipses, and similar phenomena.

categorically rejects certain elements of popular belief. For instance, from the scholarly tradition, he dismisses the notion that dragons could kill an elephant with their tail, as well as the existence of winged dragons.

The conclusion of his section on dragons concerns the belief in flying, fiery dragons: 'In my view, the tales of dragons soaring through the skies and breathing dazzling fire are impossible – unless, perhaps, we are really talking about certain vapours, described in the book On Meteors, which are referred to as dragons. It has been observed that these vapours can ignite and move through the air, giving off smoke, sometimes falling into bodies of water in piles, hissing like hot iron, and occasionally rising again when the wind blows and clouds appear. At that point, they shoot up rapidly, burning plants and anything else along their path. Because of this rising and falling motion, and the way the smoke drifts out on both sides like wings, the ignorant (*imperiti*) believe these are flying, fire-breathing creatures'[51]. The mental distance between this explanation and the ominous dragon sightings over Northumbria reported in the eleventh and twelfth centuries is truly vast!

That distance grows even more in a dialogue by Erasmus, Exorcismus sive spectrum, a satire on gullibility and superstition[51a]. Polus, traveling with a group to Richmond on a bright, cloudless day, suddenly looked up as if startled. When his companions asked what was wrong, he declared, 'May gracious God turn aside this omen (*ostentum*)! Don't you see that enormous dragon up there, armed with flaming horns and a coiled tail?' He stuck to his story until everyone in the group claimed to see the dragon too. Within three days, all of England was abuzz with talk of this gigantic portent (*portentum*).

In my opinion, the texts collected here suggest that in our country and some neighbouring regions, belief in fiery flying dragons persisted throughout the Middle Ages – at least up until the thirteenth century. In one instance, versions E and F of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the dragons are interpreted as omens. As for the meaning of the dragon sighted in 1248, Menko offers no explanation. I find it likely that they, too, saw the

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[51] Albertus Magnus, *De animalibus libri XXVI*. lib. 25, c 27, as edited by Hermann Stadler. 2 vols., Münster 1916–1920 (Beitr. z. Gesch. d. Philosophie des Mittelalters. Texte u. Unters. 16) II, pp. 1565–1567.

[51a] Erasmus, Colloquia. Ed. L.-E. Halkin, F. Bierlaire, and R. Hoven. (Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami. Recognita et adnotatione critica instructa notisque illustrata. Ordinis primi, tomus tertius.) Amsterdam 1972, p. 417 ff. This dialogue has been included in the Colloquia since the August-September 1524 edition; see introduction p. 11. The character Polus is a pseudonym for John Colt, Thomas More's father-in-law (p. 417 note).

dragon as a harbinger of coming disaster, rather than a simultaneous embodiment of it. After all, Menko notes that the radiance was observed around midnight, and that at the first crow of the rooster, the wind shifted from west to west-northwest, after which the dike breaches followed; just as in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle E and F, the phenomenon preceded the catastrophe.

Although the modest scope of this project calls for caution, when it comes to the depiction – the belief in fiery dragons, and, to a lesser extent, the attribution of the nature of omens to them – there is a sense of continuity. However, the authors of the cited works hold very different attitudes toward this belief. The Finnesburg Fragment is a piece of Anglo-Saxon poetry. A characteristic of this genre – at least in the surviving written form – is that it was intended for a Christianized audience with an active interest in their own pre-Christian past[52]. Christian influences are clearly present, but unlike early medieval church writings from the continent, there was no taboo against non-Christian elements. In this worldview, in which pagan and Christian elements were allowed to coexist, the fiery dragon apparently had its place. In the E and F versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, fiery dragons are among the omens that, according to the clergy who recorded these texts, could appear. This shows how flexible the idea of church tradition could be. If you take it to mean the full set of notions accepted by (a part of) the clergy at any given time, then dragons were part of it – for the authors of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle E and F and their audience. Here, we are in a transition zone between church doctrine and non-Christian beliefs, where the boundaries shift over time and by setting[53]. This is reflected in the reactions of Menko and Albertus Magnus. Menko cautiously distances himself from the fiery dragons. Albertus, on the other hand, bluntly rejects belief in them, saying only the uneducated believe such things. Thus, the fiery dragons that were once taken for granted in Old English poetry and eleventh- and twelfth-century chronicles were left at the door by Menko, and went up in smoke under Albertus Magnus's arguments.

The difference in tone between Menko and Albertus Magnus can be explained by the goals of their writings and the audiences they had in

[52] D. Whitelock. *The audience of Beowulf*. Oxford 1951.

[53] Just like with the rituals and objects mentioned earlier in this article for protecting crops and livestock. The *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* argues in the article Vorzeichen that the church actively opposed the belief in omens among the people and suggests there was a stark, persistent divide that didn't change over time. The history of 'parasitic forms of Christianity' (K. Thomas) in relation to belief in omens still needs to be researched.

mind. Menko wrote his chronicle for his fellow monks, casually referencing an event he could not explain against a scholarly work he knew. Albertus Magnus wrote a zoological treatise intended for an academic audience. Not only was he better informed than Menko; he was also more critical.

Erasmus takes it one step further still. In his dialogue, progressive intellectuals poke fun at their gullible, easily influenced peers. Their dragon is pure fiction. There is no longer any connection to storms or disaster – it is broad daylight. Yet perhaps this sixteenth-century prank still taps into lingering folk beliefs; the fact that the victims took the dragon as an omen might point to that.

There are two indications that the fiery dragon in Menko's era was not part of a unified, and therefore threatening, complex of non-Christian beliefs. First, Menko notes that only some of those who saw the brilliance thought it was a dragon – apparently belief was not widespread. Second, his reaction was quite measured. Albertus also does not attack a faith outside of Christianity, but rather something he considers foolish. Still, there was more to it than that: behind this image lies a way of coping with fear that is not rooted in church culture[54].

4.

In many psychological theories, fear is seen as a useful emotion: it helps people prepare themselves for danger. Fraiberg describes fear as a signal. By getting ready in advance, people are less likely to be caught off guard by overwhelming, paralyzing panic in risky situations. Lazarus calls fear a *coping process*, a process in which the person at risk assesses the threat, takes stock of the resources available for protection, and tries

[54] The storm dragons I collected at first seemed different from Le Goff's 'folk' dragons, since they only represent something negative: a destructive, devouring force of nature. This is not just true for these dragons from the North Sea region, but also for storm dragons in the Carpathians (Ute Dukova, *Das Bild des Drachen im bulgarischen Märchen*. In: Fabula 11 (1970), p. 207-252). By contrast, Le Goff's folk dragon embodies natural forces that can bring both good and bad to humans. More important than the differences, I think, is what they have in common: in both cases, the dragon stands for powerful, impressive forces of nature. Where people hope for a cyclical process to repeat in nature – like in ancient river cultures of the Near East, the flooding and receding of the rivers (Le Goff p. 253), and in some medieval processions, the return of spring and summer after the cold of autumn and winter (Le Goff p. 266 and following) – give the dragon an ambiguous meaning, and people try to keep it on their good side. In regions where fierce storms are common, however, the dragon is seen exclusively as a sign or embodiment of a destructive natural force – always negative, always fearsome.

to estimate the risks they might face because of their own possible reactions to danger[55]. These theories focus on anticipatory and mobilizing aspect of fear. When someone feels threatened, they draw on their experience and reasoning, but also on intuition and imagination to strengthen their resilience. Moreover, it is reasonable to assume that people only turn to the imaginary – magical rituals or fantasies – when practical defences fail or when they are unsure those defences will suffice.[56] Finally, in these attempts at defence through imagination, people will generally rely on images, codes, and interpretations rooted in the culture they belong to.

Let me address the second-to-last point first: on December 27, 1248, did it seem that practical defences would fail, leading people to embrace a collective fear-driven fantasy? That seems likely. Earlier that year, on November 20, the Frisian regions were struck by a severe storm surge[57]. Afterwards, the atmosphere must have been tense. On the evening of December 27, the west wind grew unusually strong, causing widespread destruction. When, around midnight, a glow appeared in the sky, it is perhaps unsurprising that people interpreted this as a monstrous, all-devouring creature. They reached for an image that was apparently close at hand. Those who thought they saw a dragon in 1248 must have truly believed it. The flashes in the sky were the essential spark for this fantasy, but cannot fully explain why this image seized some of Menko's contemporaries.[58]

It is tempting to draw a parallel here with a mechanism described by Ranke. In his article Sage und Erlebnis, he argued that some accounts of encounters with the wild hunt were, in reality, reports of epileptic seizures among people who were attacked whilst traveling alone in the dark. These experiences were interpreted using the framework of a pre-

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[55] Selma H. Fraiberg, *The magic years*. Dutch trans. Bussum 1970, pp. 20-25. R.S. Lazarus, *Psychological Stress and the Coping Process*. New York 1966, cited in *The Nature of emotion*. Ed. by Magda B. Arnold. Harmondsworth 1969², pp. 249-260. For an overview of theories on anxiety, see: George Mandler, *Mind and emotion*. New York et al. 1975, pp. 175-212. My understanding of the literature cited here, and some of the insights it provides, comes from conversations with Bertje Leuw and Freddy Begemann. Freddy Begemann also made a crucial contribution to the hypothesis that the decline of belief in dragons is linked to changing psychological needs. Of course, the conclusions are my own responsibility.

[56] The classic formulation of this view: B. Malinowski, *Magic, science and religion* (1925).

[57] M. K. E. Gottschalk, Storm Surges and River Floods in the Netherlands. / The Period before 1400. Assen 1971, pp. 174-186.

[58] Wild, *Drachen im Beowulf und andere Drachen* p. 24 describes the Anglo-Saxon dragons discussed here as 'eine expressionistische Veranschaulichung von Himmelserscheinungen,' in my view placing too much weight on the meteorological cause and not enough on human imagination.

existing legend[59]. In my view, four factors are essential for this: the legend or belief used to explain the event must be part of the culture of the person experiencing it; the person must be in the right mindset to interpret the event through the lens of that legend or belief; the event itself must allow for such an interpretation, and, complementing this, the legend or belief must offer an explanation that fits the event well enough – meaning that it more or less covers what actually happened. In the cases studied by Ranke, this meant that the victims were familiar with the legend of the wild hunt; they felt anxious because they were alone in a threatening environment; their epileptic episodes involved blackouts, during which they lost all sense of time, space, and even their own identity; and the legend of encountering the wild hunt appeared to make sense of what they had gone through. These four factors could also have been present in Frisia in 1248: some believed in fiery, storm-bringing dragons; people were likely tense due to the storm surge on November 20 and the severe weather on December 27; the natural events were dramatic and frightening, and apparently, the dragon presented a fitting symbol to for this.

Those who believed in these dragons likely had their reasons: this fantasy might have served as a response to danger in three ways, helping people prepare themselves for the threat of storms and floods.

For those who thought they saw the dragon, it was probably seen as a sign of impending disaster. Belief in omens arises from people's need to anticipate future events they cannot control but feel deeply affected by. That puts us close to the abovementioned theories about fear: omens acted like signals, meeting the need to anticipate danger.

Additionally, this kind of fantasy may have had a calming effect. For those feeling threatened by the storm and the sea, their power can seem limitless. But a dragon – no matter how enormous one might imagine it – has boundaries. In this way, the belief in dragons is similar to the ghosts in childhood stories: both are ways to give shape to fears and, by doing so, make them more manageable[60].

A third emotional benefit likely came from the sense of community among those who believed in this fantasy. The image was familiar to everyone who embraced it, which may have helped push back against

[59] Friedrich Ranke, *Sage und Erlebnis*. In: Friedrich Ranke. Volksagenforschung. Vorträge und Aufsätze. Breslau 1935. pp. 27-37. Reprinted in: Friedrich Ranke. Kleinere Schriften. Edited by Heinz Rupp and Eduard Stüder. Berlin and Münster 1971. pp. 245-254. There, on p. 253 he mentions falling stars as the reason behind the rise of fiery dragon legends.

[60] See, for example, Fraiberg, op. cit., pp. 26-32.

the feeling of being alone – a feeling that can cause overwhelming, paralyzing panic[61].

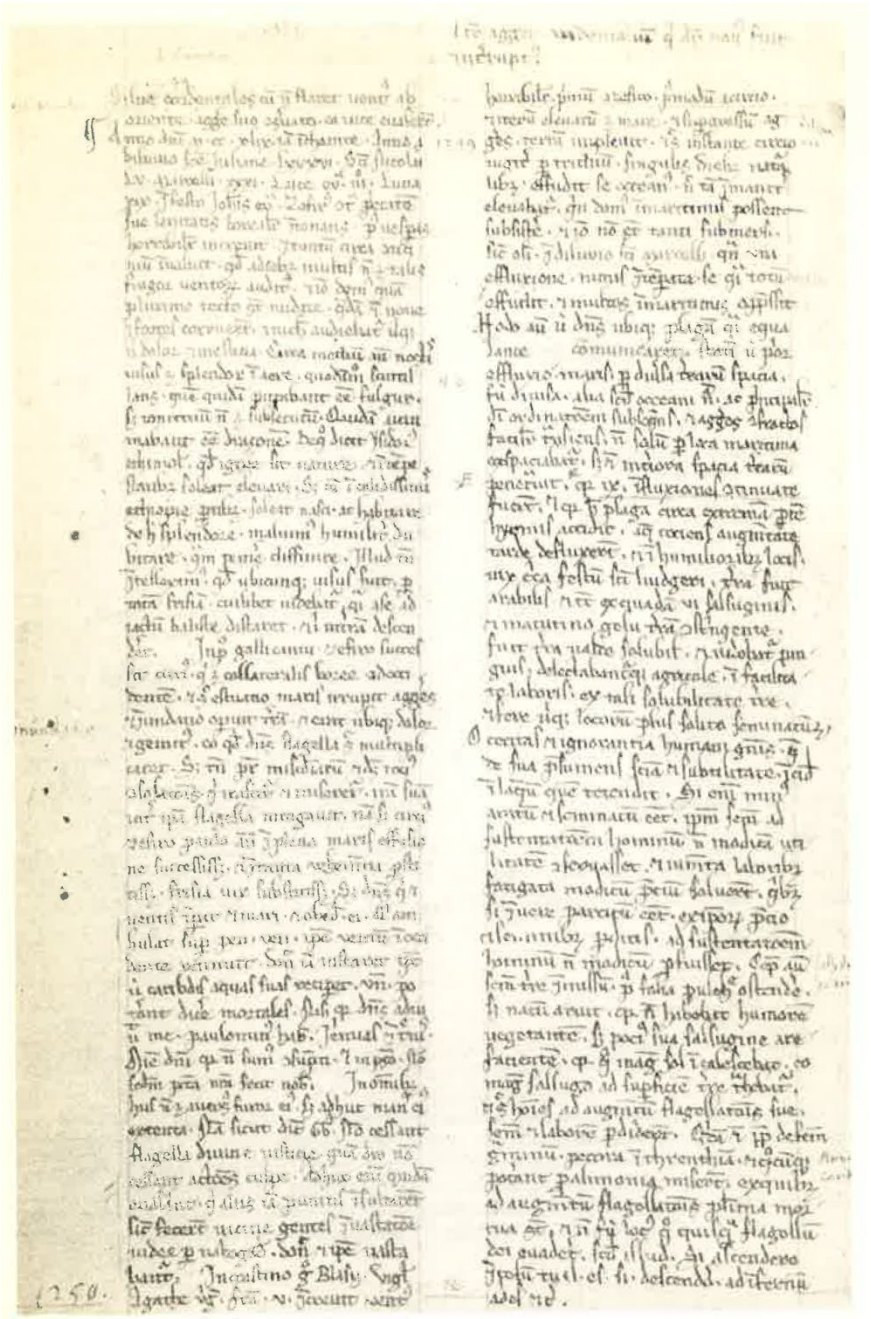
But the question remains if this image was also effective in other ways? Returning to the theory mentioned above by Lazarus: did it not only prepare and comfort people, but also motivate them or make them more resilient? I do not think so. Comparing this fearful fantasy to Lazarus's description of fear, it only includes one element: assessing the danger. The other element – looking for ways to defend oneself and weighing the risks – is missing. This belief mainly served to prepare people for enduring a disaster, nothing more. I suspect that it was this passiveness that led many to abandon the fantasy as early as the thirteenth century, and why it ultimately faded away. It no longer fit with the more proactive stance against the sea that was already emerging at that time.

The church's safety system, as described by Menko, had more to offer. Although Menko – following a long-standing Christian tradition – taught that humans are themselves to blame for natural disasters, as God punishes people for their sins, it might be too modern a notion to assume that his readers or listeners were overwhelmed by guilt. He also provided an alternative. In his view, Fivelgo survived the great flood of 1268 thanks to its elevated dikes, but even more so to acts of compassion and a more just legal order – i.e. social evidence of devotion. With these arguments, and through practical, coordinated efforts in water management and law, he contributed to a better-organized society, one more capable of defending itself from the sea. As a result, the idea that people are helpless before the forces of nature faded away – along with the belief in dragons – and the notion that God causes natural disasters also slipped into the background of our culture. Menko's practical work, as well as his historical writing, fit right into this development. Yet, as a conscientious historian who stayed close to the people outside his monastery, he recorded in his chronicle a trace of a faith that was not his own – a captivating glimpse into a different worldview.

[61] In this, I believe Heinrich Burkhardt (*Zur Psychologie der Erlebnissage.* Zurich 1951, pp. 78-83) is correct.

Summary

In his chronicle of the monastery of Bloemhof (at Wittewierum, Prov. Groningen) the thirteenth century historian Menko reports that in the winter of 1248, after an evening so stormy that inundations were feared, some of his contemporaries saw a fiery dragon in the sky. Menko's own reaction is one of moderate rejection. The purpose of this article is to determine whether this image belongs to a non-Christian, popular tradition. First the mental estrangement of the author of the chronicle, the abbot of Bloemhof, from the world outside the monastery is investigated in order to understand Menko's feelings about the rumour; Menko wrote within monastical-intellectual traditions, though he had a keen eye for the values, sentiments and actions of laity. In the second part of the article this kind of dragon is situated in the complex of Christian and popular traditions with reference to dragons in the Middle Ages. lt is argued that it belongs to a popular tradition which was accepted without objection in early mediaeval writings, but which was rejected by the clerics in the later Middle Ages when they became more critical. As is argued in the last section of this article, the image of the dragon as a portent of disaster and heavy weather reflects - in terms of current psychological theories about fear - not an attitude of coping with the threats of nature, but rather submissiveness towards them. Therefore it was bound to disappear when more effective protection against the dangers of the sea became possible.



1. The autograph of Menko, University Library Groningen ms. no. 116 fol. 38 verso (col. 151).