

materials he had extracted from others'.<sup>13</sup> *Ordinatio* simply means 'arrangement'. A compiler, then, would take the material he wished to present and arrange it in a format to aid his reader or user. After quoting Bonaventure's definitions of *scriptor* ('scribe'), *compiler* ('compiler'), and *commentator* ('commentator'), Parkes writes,

The compiler adds no matter of his own by way of exposition (unlike the commentator) but compared with the scribe he is free to rearrange (*mutando*). What he imposed was a new *ordinatio* on the materials he extracted from others ... The *compilatio* derives its value from the authenticity of the *auctoritates* employed, but it derives its usefulness from the *ordo* in which the *auctoritates* were arranged.<sup>14</sup>

Parkes then goes on to describe how Vincent of Beauvais suggested that material should be arranged in a compilation:

In working out his scheme, with commendable humility, he followed the example of the Almighty '... ut iuxta ordinem sacrae scripturae, primo de creatore, postea de creaturis, postea quoque de lapsu et reparatione hominis, deinde vero de rebus gestis iuxta seriem temporum suorum, et tandem etiam de iis que in fine temporum futura sunt, ordinate disserem.' ('So that I may set [them] forth, then, in order, according to the order of holy scripture, first [matters] concerning the Creator, then the creatures, then also the fall and redemption of man, from there truly deeds done according to the order of their times, and finally also those things which are to be at the end of time.')

Vincent of Beauvais, then, is establishing the order of his compilation as chronological from the moment of the first act of the Creator to the end of time. I suggest that when the compiler of BL Cotton Vespasian D VIII was commissioned to create his *compilatio* of plays, he gathered his separate exemplars together and chose his Creation-to-Doom order to follow, with Vincent of Beauvais, 'the example of the Almighty' of strict chronological order. But the material he was working with — the plays as written — did not exactly conform to that strict chronology of episodes according to scripture and so he imposed a new order on the material to meet the requirements of the form he had chosen. There is no reason to assume that this professional scribe was trying to emulate the plays in York and Chester (where he may never have been). Early drama scholars have been misled by the rules of compilation.

There are many examples in the manuscript of the effect this strict adherence to chronology had on the order of the plays that he copied but the one most familiar is the interpolation of the unrelated 'Joseph's Doubts' pageant between the 'Annunciation' and the 'Visit to Elizabeth' episodes in the *Mary Play*. 'Joseph's Doubts' is a good play but its near fabliaux-like humour is entirely different in tone and approach from the gentle, meditative *Mary Play*. But for the compiler chronology was paramount. As the larger narrative unfolds 'according to the order of their time' Joseph must have accepted his role in the divine plan before he accompanies Mary on the visit to Elizabeth. Peter Meredith discusses this interpolation in his edition of the *Mary Play*.<sup>16</sup>

The two episodes Meredith removes from *Passion Play I* can also be explained by the scribe's attempt to fit all the exemplars before him into chronological order. The first one, discussed by Meredith in Appendix 1,<sup>17</sup> is in the hand of the main scribe but squeezed onto a single leaf (fol. 143) interpolated between leaves 7 and 8 of Quire N. The added episode dramatises the sequence in all three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 21: 1-7; Mark 11: 1-7 and Luke 19: 29-35) of Christ despatching two disciples to fetch the ass for him to ride at the Entry into Jerusalem. The addition adds a canonical detail to the story of the Entry and is inserted in the proper chronological place before the actual Entry, but in the context of the play as written it makes no dramatic sense. As Meredith remarks,

It introduces Christ early in the play and spoils the effect of the Entry into Jerusalem heralded by Peter's sermon and John's excited words of preparation (I 395-8). The vagueness of the stage direction at l. 43 suggests a practical uncertainty about the addition.<sup>18</sup>

The playwright of the original exemplar (copied at some earlier time by the same scribe)<sup>19</sup> ignored the story in the Synoptic Gospels and provided an exciting and quite unscriptural scene where Peter and John raise the expectations of the crowd urging them to welcome the arrival of the long hoped for Messiah. Without the pedestrian scene that has been interpolated, the anticipated entry of Christ will be the first appearance of the central figure in the unfolding story. Here we see the scribe unwittingly creating a weaker dramatic situation for the sake of detailed chronology.

The other passage Meredith removes in his edition of the *Passion Play* (fols 149-151) is the one containing two episodes apparently at the Last Supper — the repentance of Mary Magdalen and the foretelling of the