Something about Mary?
Remarks about the Five Women in the
Matthean Genealogy

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**The occurrence and significance of the five women in Jesus' genealogy in the
Gospel of Matthew has been a source of continuous scholarly debate. Taking a
gender-sensitive approach, this contribution argues for looking at the five
women as one group, viewing them as simultaneously accentuating the messia-
nic line that Jesus is part of and vindicating his somewhat irregular birth, as well
as substantiating the openness of Israel for Gentiles by adducing precedents from
Israel's history.**

Keywords: Matthew, gender, Mary, genealogy, Israel, Gentiles

1. Introduction

Mary's appearance in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus (Matt 1.1–17), together
with four other women (Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba [ἡ τοῦ Οὐρίου], and Ruth; Matt
1.3, 5–6), is striking.[1] Even someone operating with the most limited knowledge of

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1 They are not the only striking aspects in the otherwise very monotonous genealogy. Further
'irregularities' are: in Matt 1.2: καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ; 1.3: καὶ τὸν Ζάρα ἐκ τῆς
Θαμάρ; in 1:6: τὸν βασιλέα; in 1.11: καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς μετοικεσίας
Βαβυλῶνος; in 1.12: μετὰ δὲ τὴν μετοικεσίαν Βαβυλῶνος; in 1.16: τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας,
ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος χριστός. Cf. e.g. Moises Mayordomo–Marin, *Den
Anfang hören. Leserorientierte Evangelienexegese am Beispiel von Matthäus 1–2* (FRLANT
180; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998) 221–2, esp. 221 n. 102. These irregularities
attract the attention of the audience and push the interpretation of the genealogy in a particu-
lar direction; only the irregularities associated with the women will be considered here. Some
of the relevant literature includes: Nancy de Chazal, 'The Women in Jesus' Family Tree',
Theology 97 (1994) 413–19; Edwin. D. Freed, 'The Women in Matthew's Genealogy', *JSNT*
29 (1987) 3–19; John Paul Heil, 'The Narrative Roles of the Women in Matthew's
Genealogy', *Biblica* 72 (1991) 538–45; John Nolland, 'The Four (Five) Women and other
Annotations in Matthew's Genealogy', *NTS* 43 (1997) 527–39; Franz Schnider and Werner

191

ancient genealogies—for example from the genealogy in Luke 3.23-38—will have to agree with that: Luke does not mention any women at all.[2] This has been noticed by a long tradition of scholarship that has produced a number of interpretative strategies, explaining both the occurrence of Mary and the occurrence of the four other women.[3] In recent scholarship, the most popular interpretative strategy has been to view the four women in the genealogy as one group, representing non-Jews who are incorporated into Israel,[4] thus simultaneously foreshadowing and substantiating historically the opening up of Israel for Gentiles which would take place through the ministry of Jesus (cf. most prominently Matt

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Stenger, 'Die Frauen im Stammbaum Jesu nach Mt: Strukturale Beobachtungen zu Mt 1,1–17', *BZ* NF 23 (1979) 187–96; Hartmut Stegemann, ' "Die des Uria": Zur Bedeutung der Frauennamen in der Genealogie von Mt 1,1–17', *Tradition und Glaube* (FS K. G. Kuhn; ed. Gert Jeremias, Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, and Hartmut Stegemann; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971) 246–76; Anton Vögtle, 'Die Genealogie Mt 1,2–16 und die matthäische Kindheitsgeschichte', *Evangelium und die Evangelien* (KBANT; Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1971) 57–102, esp. 92–5; W. J. C. Weren, 'The Five Women in Matthew's Genealogy', *CBQ* 59 (1997) 288–305.

2 Further striking aspects of the women in the Matthean genealogy include: their unusual character (they are not the 'matriarchs' of Israel, but rather women who have known doubtful relationships in their lives), as well as their formulaic introduction with ἐγέννησεν...ἐκ τῆς...; for Mary a different formula is used, on which, see below, section 4. Cf. e.g. Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* I (EKK 1/1; Zürich: Benzinger, 5th ed. 2002) 135; Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Kirche und die Völker im Matthäusevangelium* (WUNT I/215; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007) 289 n. 17.

3 The following ways of grouping the women together (more often than not excluding Mary from the list) have been proposed: as sinners (first four only); as an expression of Matthew's Pharisaic agenda (first four only); as Gentiles, that is, proselytes (first four only); and as women involved in (slightly) irregular relationships (which would include Mary): a variant on this last interpretative strategy is to see in all five women examples of God's unusual/miraculous *modus operandi* in salvation history. Cf. e.g. William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* I (ICC; London: T. & T. Clark, 1988) 170–2; Marshall D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies with Special Reference to the Setting of the Genealogies of Jesus* (MSSNTS 8; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1969) 154–9; Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 243–8. Not all modern scholarship follows such an interpretative strategy; e.g. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 248–50, is very hesitant with respect to viewing the (four or five) women as a group, both in view of the precise character of the four (or five) women and because of his suspicion of tendencies to group the women together *coûte que coûte*. See also the considerations of Heil, 'Roles', who doubts the unified character of the women as Gentiles (540–1), and of Nolland, 'Women', 539, who does not see a unified role for all four (or five) women either. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 38–9, sees the first four women in the genealogy both as Gentiles and as women who have been involved in embarrassing relationships.

4 This interpretative strategy became popular following Luther's preference for it. Cf. e.g. Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (New York: Doubleday, 2nd ed. 1999) 72.

28.18–20).[5] By contrast, here the thesis will be advanced that it is better to view all five women primarily as a group of *women*, and to consider the gender aspects of their occurrence in the genealogy first, before looking for agreement as to their ethnicity. The three main reasons for this exegetical preference are the following. First, it allows the incorporation of Mary into this group of women (given that she is obviously not a Gentile, this would not be possible otherwise). As will be substantiated in the course of this paper, the (unexpected) presence of women in the genealogy is much more striking than their ethnicity. Second, an interpretation along these lines does not depend on uncertain interpretations of Tamar and Bathsheba as non-Israelites. Third, and, most importantly, it takes seriously the

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5 On which, see in general esp. Konradt, *Israel*, e.g. 350–4. The notion that the four women are indicative of Matthean theology is supported by the probability that they have been added redactionally by Matthew; cf. Luz, *Matthäus* I, 131. For this interpretative strategy vis-à-vis the women, see, with Konradt, *Israel*, 289 n. 18; Eduard Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (NTD 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986) 9; Meinrad Limbeck, *Matthäus-Evangelium* (SKKNT 1; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991) 23; Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew* (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching; Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1993) 6; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on his Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 14–15; Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1999) 78–81; Luz, *Matthäus* I, 135–6 (acknowledging the difficulties of this interpretation); Wilhelm Rothfuchs, *Die Erfüllungszitate des Matthäus-Evangeliums. Eine biblisch-theologische Untersuchung* (BWANT 88; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1989) 100; Stegemann, ' "Uria" ', 260–6, Brian M. Nolan, *The Royal Son of God: The Christology of Mt 1–2 in the Setting of the Gospel* (OBO 23; Fribourg/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979) 62–3; Guido Tisera, *Universalism according to the Gospel of Matthew* (EHS 16482; Frankfurt a.M.: P. Lang, 1993) 44–6; David R. Bauer, 'The Literary and Theological Function of the Genealogy in Matthew's Gospel', *Treasures New and Old: Recent Contributions to Matthean Studies* (ed. David R. Bauer and M. A. Powell; SBLSS 1; Atlanta: Scholars, 1996) 129–59, at 148–9; Hans-Joachim Eckstein, 'Die Weisung Jesu Christi und die Tora des Mose nach dem Matthäusevangelium', *Jesus Christus als die Mitte der Schrift. Studien zur Hermeneutik des Evangeliums* (ed. Christoph Landmesser, Hans-Joachim Eckstein, and Hans Lichtenberger; BZNW 86; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997) 379–403, at 385; Karl-Heinrich Ostmeyer 'Der Stammbaum des Verheißenen: Theologische Implikationen der Namen und Zahlen in Mt. 1.1–17', *NTS* 46 (2000) 180–1; Glenna S. Jackson, *'Have Mercy on Me': The Story of the Canaanite Woman in Matthew 15.21–28* (JSNTSup 228; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002) 28, 93–9; Wesley G. Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy of Parables: The Nation, the Nations and the Reader in Matthew 21.28–22.14* (MSSNTS 127; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2003) 74; Michelle Slee, *The Church in Antioch in the First Century CE: Communion and Conflict* (JSNTSup 244; London/New York: T. & T. Clark, 2003) 129; Peter Wick, 'Matthäus und die Mission', *Zeitschrift für Mission* 29 (2003) 77–90, at 78; Knut Backhaus, 'Entgrenzte Himmelsherrschaft: Zur Entdeckung der paganen Welt im Matthäusevangelium', *'Dies ist das Buch' Das Matthäusevangelium. Interpretation—Rezeption—Rezeptionsgeschichte* (FS H. Frankemölle; ed. R. Kampling; Paderborn: Schöningh, 2004) 75–103, at 89–90; Richard B. Hays, 'The Gospel of Matthew: Reconfigured Torah', *HTS* 61 (2005) 165–90, at 172–3, cf. also Davies and Allison, *Matthew* I, 171.

gender aspects of this text. The result of this interpretation is that the four women in the genealogy appear as a preparation for the somewhat awkward circumstances of Jesus' birth, which are both prepared for and vindicated, and as a historical preparation and substantiation for Matthew's missionary outlook.

2. Advantages of a Gender-Sensitive Approach to the Matthean Genealogy

Assuming the literary function of genealogies,[6] especially to express (political) relationships, to narrate history in a condensed form and/or as a tool for historical speculation,[7] to legitimate political and religious key players (e.g. kings, priests), and to demonstrate the ethnic character of a people,[8] and assuming the heuristic value of a gender-sensitive approach to biblical texts in general and to Matthew in particular,[9] we may state here (briefly) what the particular advantages of a gender-sensitive approach to the Matthean genealogy *qua* genealogy would be.[10] These advantages are threefold. First, in view of the patriarchally

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6 Cf. e.g. Robert R. Wilson, 'Genealogy, Genealogies', *ADB* 2.929–32; Oppel, 'Stammbaum Jesu', 684–5; Peter Weimar, 'Toledot', *NBL* 3 (2001) 896–7; Rainer Neu, 'Genealogie', ⁴*RGG* 3 (2000) 658–60; and further Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 218, who refers to L. Freund, 'Über Genealogien und Familienreinheit in biblischer und talmudischer Zeit', *Festschrift Adolf Schwarz zum siebzigsten Geburtstage 15. Juli 1916 gewidmet von Freunden und Schülern* (ed. S. Krauss; Berlin/ Wien: Löwit, 1917) 163–92; K. Friss Plum, 'Genealogy as Theology', *SJOT* 3 (1989) 66–92; Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962) 308– 31; Johnson, *Purpose*, 77–82; Manfred Oeming, *Das wahre Israel: Die 'genealogische Vorhalle' 1 Chronik 1–9* (BWANT 128; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1990) 9–36; Mauro Orsatti, *Un saggio di teologia della storia: Esegesi di Mt 1,1–17* (Studia Biblica Paideia; Brescia: Paideia, 1980) 15–31; R. B. Robinson, 'Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis', *CBQ* 48 (1986) 595–608; W. Speyer, 'Genealogie', *RAC* 9 (1976) 1145–268; Robert R. Wilson, 'The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research', *JBL* 94 (1975) 169–89; Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven: Yale University, 1977).

7 Cf. also France, *Matthew*, 29.

8 So e.g. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 217–18 with Johnson, *Purpose*, 3–82 and Speyer, 'Genealogie', 1149–201; for references to classical and Hellenistic literature, cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 219 n. 93 and esp. Gerard Mussies, 'Parallels to Matthew's Version of the Pedigree of Jesus', *NT* 28 (1986) 32–47.

9 Cf. in general Irmtraud Fischer, *Gender-faire Exegese* (Exegese in unserer Zeit 14; Münster: LIT, 2004). Specific contributions to this aspect of reading Matthew can be found in Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff, eds., *A Feminist Companion to Matthew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), in which volume see especially the programmatic essay by Janice Capel Anderson, 'Matthew: Gender and Reading', 25–51.

10 As Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 220, rightly notes, the Matthean genealogy is emphatically introduced as standing in the tradition of earlier Jewish genealogies. Specifically the Old Testament 'Toledot'-formula in Matt 1.1 achieves this literary contextualization of the genealogy (compare Zeph 1.1, Bar 1.1, Tob 1.1; see further Gen 5.1–32; 6.9–10; 10.8, 20–27; 25.3; Num 26.33, 58. The specific form used in Matt 1.1–16 to indicate the 'begetting', i.e. ἐγέννησεν,

structured genealogy, the occurrence of five women—and unexpected ones at that[11]—is simply striking and in need of an explanation precisely in terms of gender. Second, focusing on gender makes it possible to look for an interpretation of the most striking phenomenon of the genealogy, namely the five women, without placing one of them (Mary) in a separate category from the start. Third, a focus on gender also draws attention to the fact that all five women share what can (and should) be called, in neutral terms,[12] 'irregular relationships'.[13]

occurs over 80 times in 1 Chron 1–9 (Hellenistic texts prefer a different verb, namely, γίνεται or ἐγένετο); Matt 1.2–6 agrees with 1 Chron 1.34—2.15 and Ruth 4.18–22, and Matt 1.6–12 agrees with 1 Chron 3.1–19. Therefore, one may agree with Mayordomo when he states that 'Durch die genealogische Zusammenfassung der Geschichte Israels, wie sie sich auf Jesus zubewegt, wird eine christologische Aussage gemacht' (Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 221). For the relation between Genesis and Matt 1.1, see esp. Thomas Hieke, 'BIBLOS GENESEOS: Matthäus 1,1 vom Buch Genesis her gelesen', *The Biblical Canons* (ed. Henk Jan de Jonge and Jean-Marie Auwers; BEThL 163; Leuven: Peeters, 2003) 635–49. France, *Matthew*, 28, observes rightly that 'the effect on a Jewish reader (of Βίβλος γενέσεως in Matt 1.1) is comparable to that of John's opening phrase, "in the beginning..." '

11 Cf. below, section 3. With respect to the genre and literary function of genealogies it should be maintained here that the 'encomiastic' character of genealogies makes the occurrence of precisely these women all the more striking; in particular, the episodes from Israel's history concerning Judah and Tamar, David and Bathsheba, as well as the somewhat awkward episodes about Rahab and Ruth, are not the ones that would be typically highlighted in any genealogy. See Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 222, referring to John Chrysostom's reaction to the occurrence of Tamar and Bathsheba (*In Matth.* 3.2); Mayordomo notes only Chrysostom's reaction to the occurrence of Tamar, but Chrysostom notes Bathsheba as well in a similar manner. The embarrassing character of the Judah–Tamar episode becomes clear also from the fact that Josephus skips over Gen 38 in his *Antiquitates*.

12 Neutral in the sense that the interpretative trajectory that is followed here is not the one popular in the early Church, which viewed the four women as sinners, cf. e.g. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 245 n. 239 for references, and see Konradt, *Israel*, 289 n. 18.

13 The thesis advanced here differs from that advanced in earlier scholarship that the 'irregular relationships' of the five women in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus witness to God's extraordinary way of achieving his goals in the world. Even if such an observation might be helpful theologically, from a literary point of view such a notion is not emphasized by the genealogy in Matt 1.1–16. See for this interpretation, e.g., Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Matthäusevangelium* (I NEB 1/1; Würzburg: Echter, 1985) 18; Joachim Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (HThKNT 1/1; Freiburg i.B.: Herder, 1986) 9; Donald Hagner, *Matthew*, I (WBC 33; Dallas: Word, 1993) 10; Hubert Frankemölle, *Matthäus: Kommentar* I (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1997) 142; Krister Stendahl, 'Quis et Unde? An Analysis of Mt 1–2', *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche* (FS J. Jeremias; ed. W. Eltester; BZNW 26; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964) 94–105, at 101; Vögtle, 'Genealogie', 94–5; Yair Zakowitch, 'Rahab als Mutter des Boas in der Jesus-Genealogie (Mt 1,5)', *NT* 17 (1975) 1–5, at 1; H. C. Waetjen, 'The Genealogy as the Key to the Gospel according to Matthew', *JBL* 95 (1976) 205–30, at 215–16, 218; Brown, *Birth*, 73–4; cf. further Alexander Sand, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (RNT 1; Regensburg: Pustet, 1986) 44; Davies and Allison, *Matthew* I, 171–2.

3. Women in Genealogies

Women do occur in other genealogies than the Matthean one. Their occurrence is always worth careful consideration, given the patriarchal structure of both the genealogies and the societies that produced them (and are reflected in them).[14] Sometimes, women are mentioned because of their prominence and importance for the person whose genealogy is being presented, e.g., 'matriarchs' of the people to which someone belongs (e.g. Sarah, Rebecca, Lea, Rachel),[15] or because it can be shown that someone has a particularly virtuous mother. Incidentally, women also appear because of their association with a prominent person (who is given more 'relief' in this way),[16] or, especially in later Jewish genealogies, most prominently Pseudo-Philo *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, out of a certain 'midrashic' interest in giving unknown names to protagonists.[17] Furthermore, mentioning someone's mother in a genealogy or narrative (or in poetic texts for that matter) can, but need not be, a sign of this person's special character, especially when it is connected with a difficult or miraculous birth. Just as often, however, women are 'nichts weiter als ein notwendiges formales Ordnungsprinzip, um die Söhne entsprechend "verteilen" zu können'.[18] What is

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14 Cf. e.g. Konradt, *Israel*, 288; Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 244; compare Mussies, 'Parallels', 38–9. For genealogies with and without women, cf. Gen 4.1–2, 17, 22, 25–26; 5.1–32; 6.9–10; 10.1–32; 11.10–32; 19.37–38; 22.20–24; 25.1–6, 12–26; 35.21–26; 36.1–43; 46.8–27; Exod 6.14–25; Ruth 4.18–22; Zeph 1.1; 1 Chron 1–9; Ezra 7.1–5; Est 2, 5. See also various registers: Levitical: Num 3.14–39; 1 Chron 9.19–34; 15.4–24; 2 Chron 17.8; 29.12–14; 31.12–17; 34.12–13; 35.8–9; Neh 10.2–13; 12.1–26; political/military: 2 Sam 23.8–39; 1 Chron 11.11–47; 12.3–23; 27.1–34; and general registers of families and inhabitants: Num 26.1–65; 1 Chron 9.3–17; Ezra 2.1–63; 8.1–14; 10.18–44; Neh 7.4–65; 10.1–28; 11.1–19; see further Tob 1.1; Jdt 8.1; 9.2; Bar 1.1; 1 Macc 2.1; *Jub.* 4.1–33; 7.18–19; 8.1–8; 33.21–24; 44.11–34; Josephus *Ap.* 1.7; *Vit.* 1; Ps.-Philo *Lib. Ant.* 1–2; 4–5; 8; 42.1.

15 Cf. e.g. Konradt, *Israel*, 288.

16 Cf. e.g. Gen 11.29–31 (Sarai); Exod 6.20 (Jochebed, the mother of Moses); 6.23 (Elisheba, the wife of Aaron); cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 244.

17 Cf. e.g. Ps.-Philo *Lib. Ant.* 1.4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 17, 19; 2.4; 4.12–14; 8.8; further 2.1–2 (the wife of Cain); 4.11 (the wife of Melcha); 8.5 (the wives of Esau). Cf. R. A. Freund, 'Naming Names: Some Observations on "Nameless Women" Traditions in the MT, LXX and Hellenistic Literature', *SJOT* 6 (1992) 213–32.

18 Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 244. Examples include Gen 4.19–22; 22.20–24; 25.1–2, 12; 35.22c–26; 36.1–5, 9–19; 46.15, 18, 22, 25; 1 Chron 1.32–33; 2.3–4, 18–27, 46, 48–49; 3.1–9; 4.4–7, 17–20; 7.13–19; 8.8–11. Kings can be introduced with reference to their mothers in a similar way, cf. e.g., 1 Kings 14.21; 15.2, 10; 22.42; 2 Kings 8.26; 12.2; 14.2; 15.2, 33; 18.2; 21.1, 19; 22.1; 23.31, 36; 24.8, 18). Christoph Levin, *Der Jahwist* (FRLANT 157; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993) 181, states: 'Im allgemeinen sind für die Genealogien die Mütter eher unwesentlich'. See however the critique of similar positions by Irmtraud Fischer, *Die Erzeltern Israels: Feministisch-theologische Studien zu Genesis 12–36* (BZAW 222; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994) 71–2, who shows that in the genealogies in Genesis ('Toledot') mothers play an important role (unlike daughters).

uncommon, however, is precisely what one finds in Matthew: (apparently) irregularly distributed women of an unusual 'brand' in a genealogy that consists predominantly of men,[19] without fulfilling any immediately obvious function.

4. Gender as Common Denominator? Mary, the Others and a *Passivum Divinum* in Matthew 1.16?

Having established the gender of the five women in Matthew's genealogy as their common denominator, on the basis of their irregular and surprising appearance, further analysis of their literary (and hence theological) function can be made. However, before doing this, the shift in syntax and grammar that can be observed in Matt 1.16 when compared with Matt 1.3, 5–6—all the more striking considering the general 'monotony' of the genealogy[20]—should be considered, as this shift can be (and is) interpreted as setting Mary apart quite distinctly from Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba.[21] When the situation is observed more closely, however, one sees that the shift that takes place is theological, and that the grammatical and syntactical means that Matthew uses emphasize continuity much more than discontinuity with the preceding genealogy, as far as the women are concerned. The theological reason for the use of the clause ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη at this place would be[22] certainly a reluctance to refer to God directly; instead, a passive form, the *passivum divinum* is used, which makes it possible not to name directly the agent of the action indicated by the verb.[23]

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19 The unusual character of the first four women makes it highly unlikely that their inclusion intends to draw attention to all other women that are presupposed but not named by the Matthean genealogy. This approach is followed by Irene Nowell, 'Jesus' Great-grandmothers: Matthew's Four and More', *CBQ* 70 (2008) 1–15, esp. 2 for methodological considerations; this modern 'midrashic' approach certainly yields interesting results, but few that are plausible.

20 Cf. e.g. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 236–7; Hagner, *Matthew* I, 12.

21 Cf. e.g. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 249; Stegemann, 'Die des Uria', 255; Konradt, *Israel*, 289; Luz, *Matthäus* I, 134–5.

22 Cf. e.g. Hagner, *Matthew* I, 4.12; Rudolf Pesch, ' "He will be Called a Nazorean": Messianic Exegesis in Matthew 1–2', *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. Craig A. Evans and W. Richard Stegner; JSNTSup 104; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994) 129–78, at 148; Wolfgang Schenk, *Die Sprache des Matthäus: Die Text-Konstituenten in ihren makro- und mikrostrukturellen Relationen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987) 301.

23 In this case, however, this is not the only possible or necessary interpretation. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 238, argues rightly that the passive tense does not have to be a *passivum divinum*; however, he also notes that the syntax of Matt 1.16 prepares for the removal of Joseph from the actual genealogy of Jesus. Given the latter, at least at a second reading of Matt 1.16 in its narrative context, a first-century reader may well have seen the passive tense in Matt 1.16 as indicating divine intervention. At the same time, the impersonal nature of the passive tense in this context heightens the suspense of the narrative at a first reading. See also Luz, *Matthäus* I, 136, and Konradt, *Israel*, 29, both with a certain reluctance and not using the term *passivum divinum*.

The use of this stylistic feature, therefore, says something about the one who performs the action, and less about others involved. As Matt 1.18–25 shows, in Matt 1.16 the issue at stake is the unclear parentage of Jesus, which is only subsequently unveiled. At the same time, however, the use of the verb (γεννάω) and the preposition (ἐκ) to describe the birth of Jesus from Mary is consistent with the expression used (only!) in 1.3, 5–6 of the genealogy. Thus, the grammar and syntax of Matt 1.16 show not so much discontinuity or distinction between the five women of Matthew's genealogy, but rather a change as far as reference to the *fathers* of the children mentioned in the genealogy is concerned. The specific father involved in the case of Jesus leads to the special grammatical form used in Matt 1.16—a *passivum divinum*—without, it seems, questioning the legitimacy of Jesus as Mary's child or the legitimacy of Joseph's and Mary's marriage.[24] By contrast, Matthew's careful use of the same verb and preposition as he had used earlier shows that he aims at retaining the five women as a unit, which exists from a literary perspective because of their gender and curious inclusion in the genealogy.

When turning to the literary context in which Matt 1.16 stands, one may observe a further function of the verse and its striking formulations. Whereas, as was just argued, there is much continuity between Matt 1.16 and the preceding verses of the genealogy, the 'twist' that Matt 1.16 contains also prepares the reader for what will come next. The variation in formulation with the divine passive heightens the suspense somewhat for what will come in Matt 1.18–25 and thus prepares for it.[25] In other words, by already alluding to divine intervention in Jesus' birth, the verse and its constructions constitute a bridge to the next episode in Matthew, in which the problematic parentage of Jesus, especially Joseph's reaction to it, is unpacked more fully.[26]

5. Irregular Relationships: A Further Common Denominator?

One of the possible common denominators of the five women in Matt 1.1–16 that has been favoured by a substantial number of scholars—the fact that they are all involved in somewhat awkward relationships— has received substantial critique from Luz,[27] while it has received only qualified support from Davies

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24 Cf. e.g. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 237.

25 Even if the original audience of Matthew was familiar with the motif of the virginal conception of Jesus, the motif is still special enough to suspect that a reader may have wondered what Matthew would have to say about it: narrative suspense and curiosity concerning what will come next are not alternatives, it seems. Cf. Nolland, 'Women', 537–8; slightly differently, Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 237.

26 With Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 238.

27 Luz, *Matthäus* I, 133–34.

and Allison in their commentary on Matthew.[28] Luz's main point is that the irregularities involved in the five women's relationships are too diverse to turn this into a common denominator. Indeed, it must be granted that there are significant differences between Tamar's relational 'politics' in Genesis 38, the notice that is taken of Rahab's profession in Joshua 2 and 6,[29] Ruth's (and Naomi's) relational 'politics' in Ruth 2–4 (esp. ch. 3), Bathsheba's initial affair and subsequent marriage with King David (i.e. David's affair with her: David is the initiator! 2 Sam 11–12), and Mary's unexpected pregnancy (Matt 1.16–25). The question remains, however, whether these differences are substantial enough to 'undo' the agreement in gender that binds the five women together, which is the context within which the agreement between their biographies should be seen. In fact, this does not seem to be the case. The (striking) agreement in gender holds the five women together as a group and invites the reader to think of further commonalities between them. Upon such further reflection the first thing that strikes one is that they are all rather untypical women to be included in a genealogy, given that all of them have experienced an 'irregular relationship' (or in the case of Rahab, a whole score of them) in their lives.[30] However, it seems that the sort of 'irregularities' can be further subdivided as well, leading to the observation that in some cases the 'irregularity' is of greater importance than in others.

Bearing in mind Mayordomo's warning against over-hastily pressing all (four or five) women into the same mould, it should be observed that the group of women in the Matthean genealogy consists of those who are part of a (potential) scandal (Tamar, 'Uriah's one'—this formula points directly to the problematic, i.e., adulterous, character of David and Bathsheba's relationship—and Mary, Matt 1.18–25) and those who are not (Rahab and Ruth). The three women that are involved in (potential) scandals also share two further common traits: they are all closely connected to the most messianic figures in the genealogy (as partners or mother) and they are all exculpated in the history of interpretation, i.e. neither Tamar nor Bathsheba nor Mary are blamed for their 'role' in the irregular relationships that they are part of. In the case of Tamar, Judah is blamed,[31] and

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28 Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew* I, 171–2; see further also Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 245–6 (he regards this option as unlikely), and Konradt, *Israel*, 289 n. 18, who also doubts the irregularity, i.e., sinfulness of the relationships of the women as a common denominator.

29 Arguments that, on account of a different spelling of her name, not Rahab of Jericho but some other unknown Rahab is in view in Matt 1.5 are highly unlikely; cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 229.

30 In this way, the 'unusual relationships' of the five women also explain why women like Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel are missing (otherwise, Konradt, *Israel*, 289 n. 18).

31 As far as Tamar is concerned, cf. Gen 38.26, where Judah acknowledges his guilt and Tamar's innocence; the theme of Judah's guilt occurs time and again in early Jewish tradition (e.g. *Jub.* 41; *Test. Jud.* 12.1–12), even if sometimes another woman, Judah's Canaanite wife, is the source of all his troubles, cf. e.g. *Jub.* 41.2–7; *Test. Jud.* 10.6: Judah thus becomes a victim,

her own reputation becomes particularly virtuous in the subsequent history of interpretation.[32] In the case of Bathsheba, something similar can be observed. The history of reception of 2 Samuel 11–12 does not go so far as to present Bathsheba as a model of virtue—there is little basis for this, given that she is, unlike Tamar, not a particularly active actor in the story—but what becomes very clear is that David is to blame and that the focus is on his role in the adultery.[33] Bathsheba is not blamed; at most, later texts attempt either to justify David's offence or to exculpate him otherwise.[34] The characterization of these women as generally innocent delegitimizes the interpretation of the four women as sinners, as was preferred in the early church, which is already rendered highly problematic because of the presence of Mary as the fifth woman.[35] Also, an interpretation along the lines of God's use of irregularities in human history to further his economy of salvation becomes unlikely for largely the same reason.[36] These considerations also reveal a particularly close agreement between Tamar, Bathsheba and Mary: in all three cases an (unexpected)

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especially of his own weaknesses and passions, as is expounded throughout *Test. Jud.*, esp. in 8.2; 11.1–4; 12.3–6; 13.3–8; 14.4–6; 15.5–6. On Judah's role as a 'tragic hero', cf. esp. Esther Marie Menn, *Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) in Ancient Jewish Exegesis* (JSJSup 51; Leiden: Brill, 1997) 107–213. On the history of interpretation of Judah and Tamar, esp. with reference to the Matthean genealogy, cf. (with Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 226 n. 119) Richard Bauckham, 'Tamar's Ancestry and Rahab's Marriage', *NT* 38 (1995) 314–20; Renée Bloch, ' "Judah engendra Phares et Zara, de Tamar" (Mt 1,3)', *Mélanges bibliques* (FS André Robert; Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1957) 381–9; Christine E. Hayes, 'The Midrashic Career of the Confession of Judah (Genesis 38,26)', *VT* 45 (1995) 62–81, 174–87; Johnson, *Purpose*, 280–2; Menn, *Judah*, *passim*; Cecilia Wassén, 'The Story of Judah and Tamar in the Eyes of the Earliest Interpreters', *Literature and Theology* 8 (1994) 354–66.

32 Cf. Ruth 4.11–12 (in close association with Rachel and Leah—one more reason to wonder why these two women do not appear in Matthew's genealogy!), Ps.-Philo *Lib. Ant.* 9.5–6 (in analogy to Abraham; cf. Sarah's function as 'mother' of Israel) and see for references to Tamar with various positive connotations: Philo *Virt.* 219–222; *Imm.* 137; *Congr.* 124–126; *All.* 3.74; *Fug.* 149–150, 154; *Mut.* 132–136. Cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 228.

33 Such tendencies begin early, cf. the title given to Ps 51 (a penitential psalm). Josephus extols David's deeds with the explicit exception of the 'wife of Uriah' (*Ant.* 7.390–91); a similar sentiment can be found in CD 5.5; see further Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 232; L. William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and their Implications for Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 91; Heil, 'Narrative Roles', 541; Nolland, 'Women', 537.

34 For references, cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 232–3.

35 Cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 246; it seems problematic, however, to use this argument and not continue to consider the five women as a group of some sort.

36 On this, cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 247, referring to A. T. Hanson, 'Rahab the Harlot in Early Christian Tradition', *JSNT* 1 (1978) 53–60, at 53: 'Perhaps we might say that irregularity of some sort characterized all four, and in that respect they foreshadowed Mary's case'. Cf. e.g. Warren Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996) 122–3; Brown, *Birth*, 73–4; Marie-Louise Gabler, 'Die Mutter Jesu im Zeugnis der

pregnancy[37] leads to a difficult and (potentially) scandalous situation in a relation-
ship, which is eventually resolved without blaming the woman involved (twice,
however, the men involved are blamed). As will be argued more extensively
below, this might be a qualification of the 'messianic' line of Jesus at two of its
core junctures. Thus, the 'irregular' relationship is only in a qualified sense a
common denominator: only in the cases of Tamar, Bathsheba and Mary is this
really an issue; in Ruth's case it is not, nor is it—strikingly—the case with
Rahab, at least not with regard to her offspring.

6. Messianic Women: On the Distribution of the Women in the Genealogy

One of the further curious aspects of the occurrence of the women in
the Matthean genealogy is their irregular distribution.[38] One woman, Tamar, is
directly associated with Judah, whereas the other three are directly (Bathsheba)
or indirectly (Rahab, Ruth) associated with David. When wondering what this
distribution might entail, the following appears as a possible answer: Judah
and David are the two persons with the strongest messianic connotations in
Matthew's genealogy.[39] Precisely these two are associated with irregular relation-
ships with women (Judah and David), or with descent from such relationships
(David). On the basis of this observation, it might be argued that precisely the
messianic forebears of Jesus are qualified in terms of relationships (with conse-
quences for the acceptability of Mary's pregnancy and Jesus' birth), and that
David is qualified in terms of ethnicity as well (on ethnicity, cf. below, section
7). From the particular perspective of this study, this observation should,
in fact, be reversed: that there is a(n irregular) pattern of messianic figures
within the otherwise very regularly structured genealogy (cf. the comment on
this in Matt 1.17) only becomes apparent because the irregularly distributed
women draw attention to this, precisely because of their (irregular) gender.

These observations about the qualification of the most messianic figures in the
genealogy would suit some other characteristics of the Matthean genealogy excel-
lently. As has been noticed, the (extremely long)[40] genealogy of Jesus has as one of

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Evangelien', *ThBer* 21 (1995) 11–42, at 16; Hagner, *Matthew*, I, 10; Stendahl, 'Quis', 101, all
    supporting this view.

37 Cf. Gen 38.24 (Tamar); 2 Sam 11.5 (Bathsheba); Matt 1.18 (Mary). Compare also Konradt,
    Israel, 289 n. 18; this does not seem to apply to Rahab, however, whose profession might
    be problematic, but whose (assumed) pregnancies were not.

38 Cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 244.

39 Cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 248–9.

40 Cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 222–3; compare Wilson, 'Genealogies', 179.

its purposes to relate Jesus the son of Abraham (and the promises associated with this, cf. Gen 12.3; 18.8; 22.18)[41] to Jesus the son of David, a notion typically associated with a 'nationalistic' (or 'exclusivistic') view of Israel;[42] one of Matthew's concerns is to work out the relationship between these two.[43] By qualifying David's own genealogy with Rahab and Ruth, two obvious non-Israelites, Matthew moves a step closer towards his goal: faithfulness to Israel and David, but only to Israel and David that are properly understood. Matthew achieves such a proper understanding through his genealogy, which, as a (curious) combination of an ascending genealogy with a descending one,[44] views Israel's history both in the light of Jesus and Jesus in the light of the history of Israel (thus understood).[45]

Still, there is more, as not only the question of exclusive and inclusive identity seems to play a role here, but also a certain qualitative difference between Judah and David, on the one hand, and Jesus, on the other. Mayordomo brings this out well in part of his conclusions:

> Im Blick auf die Schwerpunkte der wachgerufenen alttestamentlichen Geschichten scheint es mir, daß sich hier zwei grundsätzliche Ereignisse gegenüberstehen: Während die Geschichten von Rahab und Rut paradigmatisch die Teilnahme von Heidinnen am universalen "Segen Abrahams" erzählen, erscheinen die zwei wichtigsten Messiasvorläufer, Juda und David, in einem geradezu peinlichen Kontrast dazu als Ehebrecher.[46]

7. Further Observations on the Women in Matthew 1.1–17: Ethnicity

As has frequently been noticed, one further curious aspect of the four women who are mentioned before Mary in the genealogy (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and 'Uriah's one', i.e. Bathsheba) is that two of them, with names that constitute an alliteration, come quickly one after the other: Rahab and Ruth. A further reason to associate these two women closely with each other is that both are obviously foreigners (cf. Josh 2.1–21; 6.22–25; Ruth 1.4, and the entire book of Ruth). Tamar *might* also be a foreigner depending on which

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41 The Abrahamic sonship in Matt 1.1 is explicated in terms of a physical sonship in Matt 1.2 and thus forms the (normative) starting point of the descending genealogy of Jesus.

42 Cf. Konradt, *Israel*, 17–94, esp. 93–4, and in a similar vein Joel Willitts, *Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King: In Search of the 'Lost Sheep of the House of Israel'* (BZNW 147; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007) 51–92. Judah might not need such a qualification and might be more closely related to 'Abrahamic' messianic expectations, i.e. views of the composition of the (eschatological) Israel; cf. Gen 49.10, the point of departure for messianic texts associated with Judah.

43 Cf. Konradt, *Israel*, 24–5.

44 Cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 223.

45 Cf. the remark by Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 223: 'Die Genealogie setzt nicht nur Jesus in Verhältnis zur Geschichte Israels, sondern auch die Geschichte Israels in Verhältnis zu Jesus'.

46 Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 249.

tradition about her one follows, but it is not necessary at all to consider her a non-Israelite,[47] while Bathsheba, 'Uriah's one', can be seen as a foreigner by taking the clause about her not only as a reference to David's 'stealing of Uriah's property', but also as associating Bathsheba's ethnic identity with that of her husband, i.e. Hittite. The latter interpretation not only requires emphasizing an uncertain interpretation of a clause that neither necessarily nor obviously carries this meaning, but also assuming that Matthew takes a unique position on Bathsheba's ethnicity (no parallels in early Jewish literature are extant),[48] which he must have expected his audience to understand.[49] Allowing Bathsheba and Tamar to be either Jewish or of undetermined ethnicity frees one from a host of additional hypotheses, while the 'expansive' line of (soteriological and ecclesiological)[50] thought in terms of ethnicity is still there, given the fact that two obviously foreign women appear in Matt 1.5, qualifying

47 In the case of Tamar, the biblical text is silent on her provenance (Gen 38). According to *Jub.* 41.1 and *Test. Jud.* 10.1, 6, she is a daughter of Aram from the family of Terach. The Aram in question here is not the son of Shem (who occurs in Gen 10.22), but the son of Kemuel (Gen 22.21), a grandson of Nahor, Abraham's brother and hence Jewish. Cf. *Jub.* 34.20, on which see Bauckham, 'Ancestry', 314–18; Konradt, *Israel*, 290. According to Philo *Virt.* 220–222, Tamar is a Gentile from Syria Palestine (221), who converted to Judaism. However, Ps.-Philo *Lib. Ant.* 9.5 (a text in which Tamar expresses her abhorrence at the prospect of having to marry a Gentile) identifies her as a Jew. In order to see Tamar as a Gentile and, beyond that, as a proselyte, it is necessary to assume Matthew's knowledge of and preference for the tradition also represented by Philo, not by *Jubilees*, *Testament of Judah*, or *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*. Here the justified skepticism of Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 229, with regard to the ethnic identity of Tamar is followed.

48 Following Konradt, *Israel*, 290; Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 233. Bathsheba appears as a daughter of Eliam (2 Sam 11.3), i.e., Ammiel (1 Chron 3.5), names that are not clearly 'Gentile' (cf. also 2 Sam 23.34; rabbinic traditions identify Bathsheba's father with the Eliam mentioned here, the son of one Ahithophel from Gilo in Judea, cf. Josh 15.51).

49 So e.g. Konradt, *Israel*, 290–1: Konradt uses the ethnicity of Rahab and Ruth and what he assumes must have been the (Matthean view of the) ethnicity of Tamar for Matthew as an interpretative framework in order to view Bathsheba as a Gentile too.

50 The inclusion of the four women into the genealogy would underscore the soteriological importance of what is said in Matt 1.1 about Jesus being the son of Abraham (who stands in relation to all peoples): Israel has always been open for 'outsiders' (cf. Konradt, *Israel*, 291; Limbeck, *Matthäus-Evangelium*, 23). In this context, one may observe that three of the four women in the genealogy can be seen as proselytes; for Ruth, cf. e.g. Ruth 1.16; Ps.-Philo *Lib. Ant.* 61.6; for Rahab: Heb 11.31; 1 Clem 12.1, 7–8; Jas 2.25 (assuming her faith, cf. Konradt, *Existenz*, 246); compare Josh 2.10–11; 6.25; for Tamar, cf. Philo *Virt.* 221 (cf. Konradt, *Israel*, 291 n. 26: Konradt overstates his case, however, by claiming that all four women can 'ohne weiteres' be seen as proselytes: for Bathsheba there are no extant early Jewish traditions about her conversion, for Tamar the evidence is inconclusive, i.e. some traditions do see her as a Gentile and proselyte, others do not. See further, e.g., David Sim, 'The Gospel of Matthew and the Gentiles', *JSNT* 57 (1975) 19–48, at 22; Jackson, *Mercy*, 94–9).

precisely *David* in terms of ethnic openness, while Judah can be imagined to stand in the 'Abrahamic' tradition from the start.[51]

As an aside, but noting that it knits the four women even more closely together as a group, it may be noted here that the two women who *are* clearly Gentiles, and prototypical proselytes at that,[52] Rahab and Ruth, both have a specific connection with the woman mentioned before them, Tamar, given that the former is a prostitute—as Tamar was briefly—and that Ruth is, like Tamar, a (young) widow in search of an arrangement for her right to offspring (cf. Ruth 4.12). This connection is also known from rabbinic literature.[53] In the context of her description as a proselyte, the extent of Rahab's 'business' was magnified in early Christian and Jewish tradition in order to underline the biographical change involved in her conversion,[54] while in the case of Ruth her righteousness often makes her a prototypical convert.[55] Furthermore, Bathsheba and Tamar also share something, depending on one's way of phrasing it: either the scandalous nature of their relationship with David/Judah, or its adulterous character.

From the observations made in this section, we may conclude that, from Matthew's point of view, not only has Israel 'always' been open to foreigners,[56] but even its bearers of messianic expectation, mostly clearly precisely David, were directly associated with them.[57] Beyond this, because of the agreement in

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51 Even if this is not necessary for the interpretation of the first four women in the Matthean genealogy, the messianic promises associated with Judah can be interpreted along 'Abrahamic' lines. One reason for this is his proximity to Abraham in the genealogy, but also the history of interpretation of Gen 49.10 (cf. the LXX). Furthermore, whereas Matt 1.2 can be seen as a reference to the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. Konradt, *Israel*, 26) and their future restoration, this can be understood to take place in an 'inclusive' way, i.e. the restoration of the tribes includes the incorporation of the Gentiles.

52 Cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 230–1.

53 Cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 230, following Zakowitch, 'Rahab', 2–4.

54 Cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 230–1; see further Hanson, 'Rahab'. That the role of Rahab was somewhat embarrassing can also be learned—even if it is an argument *e silentio*—from the fact that Philo and *Jubilees* do not mention her, and that Ps.-Philo *Lib. Ant.* 20.6–7 recounts the story of Joshua's spies without mentioning her.

55 Cf. e.g. Ps.-Philo *Lib. Ant.* 61.1; for a different interpretation, cf. Josephus *Ant.* 5.318–337, who uses the story of Ruth to show how God has the power to elevate the lowliest of human beings to the highest of honours (by becoming an ancestor to David). Cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 231.

56 This suits well the genealogy's function to get a grip on history; cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 220, referring to Margaret Davies, *Matthew* (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993) 30; Johnson, *Purpose*, 254; Frankemölle, *Matthäus*, 138; David D. Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel* (MSSNTS 90; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996) 53; Ernst Lerle, 'Die Ahnenverzeichnisse Jesu: Versuch einer christologischen Interpretation', *ZNW* 72 (1981) 112–17, at 115; Limbeck, *Matthäus-Evangelium*, 25; John Nolland, 'Genealogical Annotation in Genesis as Background for the Matthean Genealogy of Jesus', *TynB* 47 (1996) 115–22; Nolland, 'Women', 529; Pesch, 'Exegesis', 139; Waetjen, 'Genealogy', 209.

57 Cf. Konradt, *Israel*, 292.

gender between them (and other agreements between Mary and other women in the genealogy), one could also suggest that the fact that Jesus was born of a mother, i.e. that he is explicitly associated with a woman, already associates him with the 'ethnically inclusive' line of thought indicated by Rahab and Ruth. When returning the focus to the entire group of five women in Matthew 1, it may be observed that ethnicity is a subordinate aspect of the women in the Matthean genealogy (i.e. it appears to be significant for the interpretation of only two of them), but simultaneously one that is significant. It suits the Matthean theological program at large, as well as the program of the genealogy, by relating aspects of Jesus' Abrahamic descent to his Davidic descent, but it is neither the primary point of agreement between all women, nor does it point towards an 'open ecclesiology' being the primary function of the five women in the genealogy. This state of affairs also renders implausible a popular interpretative strategy that groups four of the five women together as proselytes (already implausible because of its exclusion of Mary), even if some of the women are clearly Gentiles (and proselytes).[58]

8. What about Mary (and Jesus)?

Before turning to the question of the fifth woman, Mary, and her offspring, Jesus, the following may be concluded about the four earlier women in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus. First, given the likely non-Jewish provenance of two of the women, one may conclude that some of the women also introduce an ethnic aspect into the genealogy: these women qualify one of the two messianic characters in the genealogy, David, in terms of an 'inclusive ecclesiology'. This is accomplished by the explicit inclusion of Rahab and Ruth into the genealogy as the grandmother and great-grandmother of David. Second, another aspect—and with regard to this, it is not insignificant that a link between David and Judah is forged also through the multiple similarities between Rahab, Ruth and Tamar in terms of social roles and objectives (cf. above, section 7)—is that the continuation of the messianic line through Judah and David is in both cases irregular, but divinely vindicated nevertheless. In this context, one might also consider the possibility of the construction of a qualitative difference between the two messianic prototypes, Judah and David, on the one hand, and Jesus on the other (i.e. the first two were involved in scandals, the latter one is not).

For the 'receiving end' of this genealogy, i.e. Mary and Jesus, these observations have two main consequences. First, the genealogy prepares in a condensed form—as genealogies are prone to do—the circumstances of Mary's pregnancy and Jesus' birth by mentioning two women in Jesus' genealogy who to a certain extent share Mary's fate—an unexpected pregnancy and its

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58 Cf. Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 247.

vindication: Tamar and Bathsheba. Paying attention to the placement of these women, it strikes one that they are both closely associated with two of the most messianic figures in the genealogy: Judah[59] and David, albeit that in these cases the messianic figures appear as partners, not children, in these unions. These aspects of the Messiah's (obviously divinely approved) genealogy not only prepare for, but also vindicate in advance the circumstances of Mary's somewhat awkward pregnancy (Matt 1.19) and Jesus' birth.[60] Second, when turning to the ethnic aspects of the genealogy that were also noticed, it should be observed that the two women that are certainly Gentile are positioned just before the birth of the 'prototype' of the sort of Messiah that would be most closely associated with an 'exclusivistic' view of Israel: David. This could be seen as an 'advance warning' by Matthew in his genealogy that even the Davidic Messiah, i.e. Jesus, operates with a highly qualified view of ethnicity and membership of the people of God.[61] This can well be seen as part of Matthew's strategy to show that the inclusion of Gentiles into Israel is indeed part of God's purpose.

9. Conclusions

First, it may be concluded that the agreement in gender between the five women in Jesus' genealogy in Matt 1.1–16 provides an interpretative tool. From a gender-sensitive perspective the occurrence of the five women strikes one

59 The 'biblical basis' for viewing Judah as a messianic figure is Gen 49.10. The following early Jewish texts take this text as a point of departure for the formulation of messianic expectations: Gen 49.10 LXX (esp. καὶ αὐτὸς προσδοκία ἐθνῶν at the end of the verse); 4Q252, 5.1–7; *Test. Jud.* 1.6; 17.6; 21.2; 22.1–3; Rev 5:5 See in general Mayordomo, *Anfang,* 225 n. 114, 232, and, following Mayordomo, P. Feghali, 'Le messie de Juda: Gn 49,8–10 dans saint Éphrem et les traditions judaïques', *La vie de la parole* (FS P. Grelot; Paris: Desclée, 1987) 165–72; and on Qumran and the Targumim, F. García Martínez, 'Messianische Erwartungen in den Qumranschriften', *JBTh* 8 (1993) 171–208, at 174–7; Miguel Pérez Fernández, *Tradiciones mesiánicas en el Targum Palestinense* (Valencia: Artes Gráficas Soler, 1981) 123–44; Roger Syrén, *The Blessings in the Targums* (AAAH 64/1; Abo: Åbo Akademi, 1986) 101–19.

60 Cf. also Ansgar Wucherpfenning, *Josef der Gerechte. Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu Mt 1–2* (HBS 55; Freiburg i.B.: Herder, 2008) 120–3: the earlier women in the genealogy make it plausible for Joseph to accept Jesus. Wucherpfenning overstates his case, however, when he also wishes to see Rahab's children as conceived out of wedlock; even if Rahab was a prostitute, this is not suggested about her and Salmon's children (!). A similar mistake is made by Richard Carlson, 'Reading and Interpreting Matthew from the Beginning', *Currents in Theology and Mission* 34 (2007) 434–43, at 436, who rightly emphasizes the preparatory function of the first four women with regard to Mary's pregnancy. Cf. in general the observations made by Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 25.

61 With e.g. Heil, 'Role', 543: as a Davidide, Jesus continues the Abrahamic promises, as indicated by Rahab and Ruth in his ancestry; this is a modified version of the view that the first four women all indicate the openness of Israel for Gentiles.

immediately as unusual because of their gender—which agrees with their unusual character in other respects—and they must be seen in relation to one another because of it; the changed syntax in Matt 1.16 is not a problem in this respect. Second, a gender-sensitive approach also points to another gender-related commonality that some of them share: irregular relationships of a variety of sorts that they are not blamed for and that are divinely vindicated. Third, the distribution of the women in the genealogy also draws attention to agreements between the three men, i.e. Judah, David and Jesus, to whom the women are most conspicuously related. These men appear as the three most clearly messianic figures in the genealogy and they are both related to one another and qualified by the women with whom they are associated. In two cases (Judah and Tamar, David and Bathsheba; this aspect does not play a role in the cases of Rahab and Ruth), the relationship is that of (sexual) partner leading to problematic pregnancy; in one case this relationship is one of mother and son (Mary and Jesus), resulting from an awkward pregnancy. The latter situation is prepared and proleptically vindicated by the first two, given that they are presented as part of the divinely legitimized messianic line. Fourth, a further aspect related to some of the women in the genealogy is the ethnic qualification that is brought about by associating Rahab and Ruth with David. This qualifies David as an 'ethnically inclusive' messianic ancestor of Jesus and one might consider the possibility that Jesus, whose mother is also mentioned, is associated with this 'inclusive' messianic line, precisely because of his explicit association with a woman too. Both of these aspects can be related to early Christian, and also specifically Matthean, concerns: the interpretation of the precise provenance of Jesus and the inclusion of Gentiles into the Jewish Jesus-movement (especially Matthew's concern). In various ways, therefore, the five *women* in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus interpret the ministry of Jesus from its very start (his birth). They do this through their identity and specifically through the way in which they interact intra- and intertextually because of their agreement in gender, without, however, all being the same kind of woman or fulfilling the exact same function; Matthew is more subtle than that.