

Chapter 16

Sarai geueth her handmaid Agar as a wife to Abram: 4. who conceiuing despifeth her myftrefse, is therefore afflicted, & flyeth away. 7. But is warned by an Angel to returne and humble herselfe, 15. which she doth and beareth Ifmael.

Sarai therefore, the wife of Abram, had brought forth no children: but hauing an handmaid an Ægyptian named Agar, ² she said to her husband: Behold, our Lord hath closed me, that I might not beare: Goe in vnto my handmaid, if happely of her at the least I may haue children. And when he agreed to her in this request, ³ she toke Agar the Ægyptian her handmaid tenne yeares after that they first dwelled in the land of Chanaan: and gaue her vnto her husband ⁴to wife. ⁴ Who did companie with her, but she ^a)perceauing that she was with childe, despised her mistresse. ⁵ And Sarai said to Abram: Thou doest vniustly against me: I gaue my handmaid into thy bosome, who perceauing herself to be with child, despiseth me. Our Lord iudge between me and thee. ⁶ To whom Abram making answere: Behold, faith he, thy handmaid is in thine owne hand, vse her as it pleaseth thee. When Sarai therefore did afflict her, she ranne away. ⁷ And an Angel of our Lord hauing found her, beside a fountaine of water in the wildernesse, which is in the way to Sur in the desert, ⁸ he said to her: Agar, the handmaid of Sarai, whence comest thou? and whither goest thou? who answered: From the face of Sarai my mistresse doe I flye. ⁹ And the Angel of our Lord said to her: Returne to thy mistresse, and humble thy selfe vnder her hand. ¹⁰ And again: Multiplying, sayth he, wil I multiplie thy feed, and it shal not be numbred for the multitude therof. ¹¹ And againe after that: Behold, faith he, thou art with child, and thou

^a Some obey whilest they are rude, or in low state, but hauing got a litle knowlege or aduancement diddaine their aduancers. *S. Gregorie. li. 21. in 1. Reg. 3.*

shalt bring forth a fonne: and thou shalt cal his name Ifmael, becaufe the Lord hath heard thin affliction. ¹² He shal be a wild man: his hand shal be againft al men, and al mens hands againft him: and ouer againft al his bretheren shal he pitch his tents. ¹³ And she called the name of our Lord that fpake vnto her: Thou the God which haft fene me. For she faid: verily here haue I fene the backe partes of him that hath fene me. ¹⁴ Therefore she called that wel, the wel of him that liueth and feeth me. The fame is betwen Cadeffe, and Barad. ¹⁵ And Agar brought forth a fonne to Abram: who called his name Ifmael. ¹⁶ Eightie and fixe yeares old was Abram when Agar brought him forth Ifmael.

ANNOTATIONS

S. Aug. li. 22.
c. 47. cont. Fauft.

Luther propfit.
62. 65. & 66.

3 To vvife.) The Manichees did calumniat holie Abraham, and other Patriarches for hauing manie wiues, condemning them of incontinencie and adulterie for the fame. Luther in the contrarie extreme held it not vnlawful, but indifferent, now in the law of grace, for a man to haue more wiues then one at once. And fome Englifh Proteftants hold, that for adulterie, the innocent partie may marie an other, the firft liuing. But the Catholique doctryn diftinguifhing times and caufes, fheweth how pluralitie of wiues was lawful fometimes, and at other times, efpecially fince Chrift, altogether vnlawful, and vndifpensable. The fumme of which veritie is this. By the firft intititution of Mariage in the ftate of innocencie, and law of nature, and by the law of Chrift, it is vnlawful for a man to haue more wiues, and for anie woman to haue more hufbands, then one. In the one part of which Law notwithstanding God fometimes difpenfed. For there be two kindes of preceptes pertaining to the law of nature. One forte are as firft principles of the law of nature, in which God neuer difpēfeth, much leffe anie man. As that one woman may not haue more hufbands then one, becaufe the fame would rather hinder procreation, and fo were directly againft the fruit of mariage. The other forte are as conclufions drowne from the firft principles, in which God fometimes difpenfeth, but neuer anie man. As in this prefent example: feeing it is againft natural procreation that one woman fhould haue manie hufbands, it is conuenient alfo, there being ordinarily as manie men as wemen in the world, that euerie man likwife fhould be refrained to one wife, for fo procreation may rather be increafed, then if fome men haue manie wiues, and others by that occafion haue none at al, except in fome

Manichees, condemned pluralitie of wiues in the Patriarches. Luther alloweth it in Chriftians. Other Proteftants in fome cafe.

S. Aug. de bono
coniugali. ca. 17.

Two fortes of precepts in the law of nature.

- special case. As after the flood, when there was scarcetie of people, God dispensed with such men as in deed were like to make greater procreation by pluralitie of wiues. VVhich appeareth sufficiently by that Sarai perswaded her owne husband, to marie an other wife, and he a true seruant of God agreed therto, not as a new thing but as a lawful practise of those times. And Moyse here and in other places still speaketh of it, as of a custome knowne to the people for lawful. *If a man (saith he) haue two wiues, one beloued and the other hated, and they haue children by him, and the sonne of the hated be first borne, he can not preferre the sonne of the beloued.* Wherby is clere that two wiues were then lawful, and the children of both legitimate, and that the first borne must be preferred, without respect of first or last marriage. Yet this dispensation either ceased before Christs time, the cause ceasing, when the world was replenished; or at least our Sauour tooke it away, restoring Matrimonie to the first institution of two in one flesh. Who pleaseth to see the Doctors that vnderstand, and expound the Scriptures to this effect, may read *S. Augustin li. 22. c. 30. & 47. con. Faust. Manich. li. 16. c. 25. & 38. ciuit. & li. 1. de adulter. coniugijs. S. Chriftom ho. 56. in Gen. S. Amb. li. de Abraham. c. 4.* Also S. Chriftom. S. Hierom. and S. Bede in 19. Mathei.
- Deut. 21. Pluralitie of wiues
sometimes allowed.
- Math. 19. By the law of
Christ in no case
lawful.
- Gen. 2.