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What?

P One way in which religion can be seen to be patriarchal is that in many religions, women have fewer rights than men. Religious laws and customs often benefit men at the expense of women, creating an obstacle to gender equality which can have an impact on women in wider society. For example, women have fewer rights with regards to access to divorce and how many marriage partners they can have. This is illustrated in Islam, where a man is permitted under some conditions to have more than wife, but a woman is forbidden from having more than one husband, clearly enabling male domination of the family. Limited access to divorce for women further compounds this and ensures that women have less power than men. This is further supported by Woodhead, who argues that the Catholic Church demonstrates its opposition to women's rights through its ban on contraception and abortion, ensuring that women have significantly less power over their sexuality and reproduction than men. Radical feminists, such as El Saadawi, suggest that this inequality in rights ensures that religion continues to exist for the benefit of men at the expense of women. Therefore, religious ideology is used to maintain male power in all aspects of social life, particularly the family. As such, although liberal feminists are keen to gain equality for women within existing religions, it is clear from the evidence that patriarchy still exists with regards to the different rights men and women experience within world religions.

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