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THE MARRIAGE ceremonies of the major American religions -- Protestants, Catholic and Jewish -- have many similarities, but the differences are significant. It's important, therefore, for every member of the wedding party to be familiar with the basic rules and rites of the faith in which the ceremony is performed. The bride and groom should, of course, have a thorough understanding of the religious laws and traditions affecting their marriage -- especially if it's to be a mixed marriage. The officiating clergyman should always be consulted about specific details.

PROTESTANT WEDDINGS

Almost all Protestant churches use the standard wedding service, and most require the congregation to remain standing during the solemn part of the ceremony. Although there are no laws prohibiting marriage on any day of the year, many Protestant clergymen are reluctant to perform wedding ceremonies on Sundays and

other religious feast days. Rules on music vary, but prior approval of a church authority is usually required. There are no fixed laws on attire, but bare dresses are in poor taste in any church.

The only other rules affecting Protestant marriages are the following individual variations:

EPISCOPAL: The Episcopal Church usually frowns upon formal weddings during Lent. The remarriage of divorced persons is seldom allowed, but dispensations are sometimes granted to the innocent party of a divorce. The participation of visiting clergymen in an Episcopal ceremony is rare and severely limited. The baptism of at least one party to the marriage is usually required for a church wedding. A nuptial Mass similar to the Catholic ceremony may follow a wedding in the "high" or Anglo-Catholic branch of the Episcopal Church. Head coverings are usually required for women in an Episcopal church.

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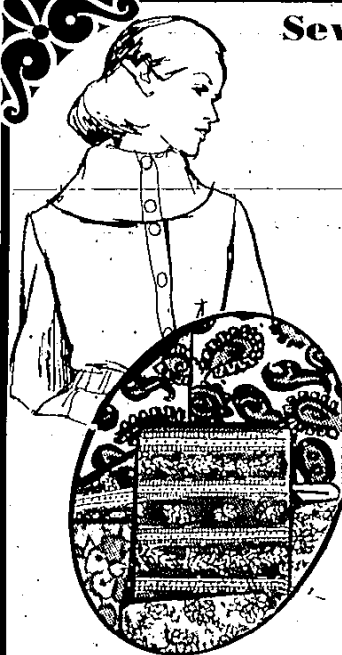
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