



CHAPTER V.

Ecclesiastical History — Congregational Churches — The First Church.

THE FIRST CHURCH. — There is no record of the organization of this church. It is simply recognized by its name at the earliest mention as an established institution well known to contemporaneous writers. It has already been stated that with the Gorges Company in 1623 came Rev. William Morrell, a clergyman of good reputation in the Church of England, of culture and learning; that he remained in the plantation for perhaps a year and a half, and then gave up his charge, returning to England by way of Plymouth. He was an amiable gentleman of refinement and remarkable discretion, well suited to have the charge of an English parish, but scarcely adapted to the needs of a New England settlement at that day. Mr. Morrell brought with him a commission from the Ecclesiastical Court in England to exercise a kind of superintendency over the churches already existing or which might be established here. This commission was to empower him with authority over all churches in the colony, and as "all" meant only Plymouth, over which he was hardly in a position to claim jurisdiction, he obeyed the dictates of his good sense and refrained from any attempt to exercise his authority.

The conditions under which the settlement at Weymouth was made rendered it unnecessary to organize a parish, for it already existed as a matter of fact, and the church was a branch of the Church of England in this remote corner of its kingdom; and evidently to the

