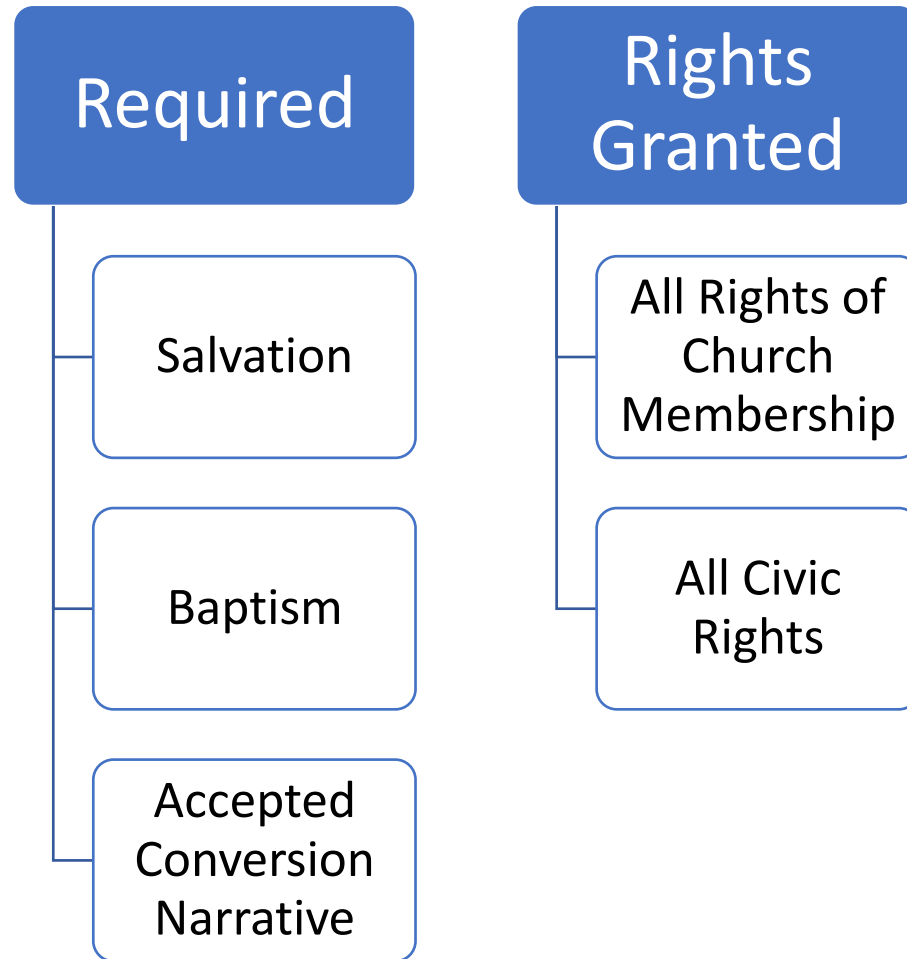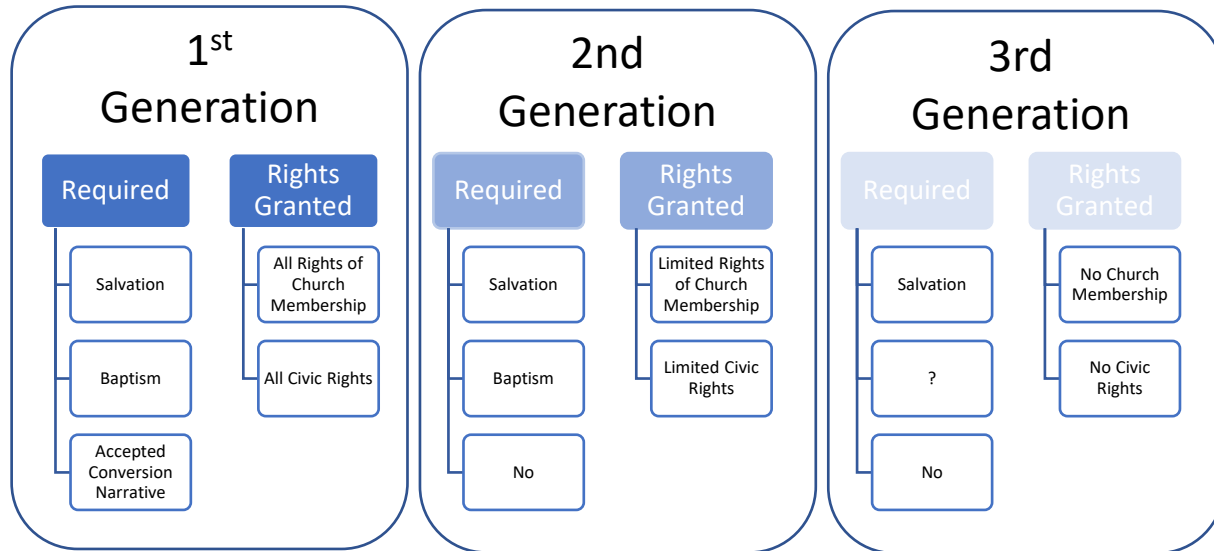# Religious Climate in New England Colonies

- Fervent religious life
- Rigorous and broadly exercised church/state discipline
- Church Covenants
  - 1st generation
  - 2nd generation
  - 3rd and subsequent generation

Required
- Salvation
- Baptism
- Accepted Conversion Narrative

Rights Granted
- All Rights of Church Membership
- All Civic Rights

The Growing Problem

1st Generation

Required	Rights Granted
Salvation	All Rights of Church Membership
Baptism	All Civic Rights
Accepted Conversion Narrative	

2nd Generation

Required	Rights Granted
Salvation	Limited Rights of Church Membership
Baptism	Limited Civic Rights
No	

3rd Generation

Required	Rights Granted
Salvation	No Church Membership
?	No Civic Rights
No	

- Generational alienation
- Declining "visible church" membership
- Restricted reach of church discipline
- Decreased opportunities for civic participation
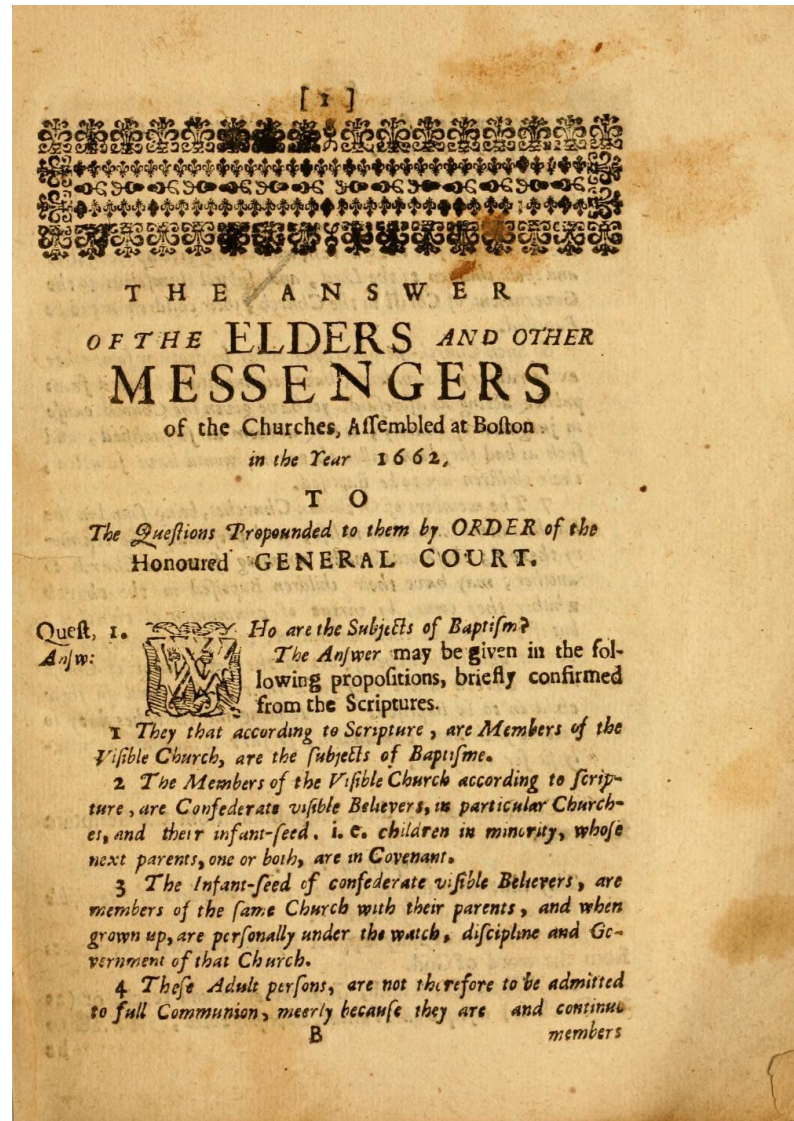 - Blended church/state

The "Half-Way Covenant"

- Early Congregationalists (Puritans) had become church members **only** after they had reported an experience of conversion acceptable to the church (approved conversion narrative) *even if they had been baptized as children*
  - *Many never reported a conversion experience*
  - They were still considered church members because they had been baptized (as infants, based on their parent's church membership)
    - They were not admitted to the Lord's Supper
    - They could not vote or hold political office
  - *Their children could not be baptized (because of their parent's status)*

The "Half-Way Covenant" (1657/1662)

- The Half-Way Covenant was created by Solomon Stoddard and 17th century New England Congregationalists (Puritans) that allowed:
  - ***Children of "baptized" (as infants, based on their parent's church membership) but unconverted church members to be baptized***
  - These children then became church members (could take the Lord's Supper)
  - These children acquired political rights (voting)
  - These children were then expected to report their experience of conversion acceptable to the church (approved conversion narrative)
- ***The Great Awakening was a response to the Half-Way Covenant idea***

The Half-Way Covenant Solution (1662)

THE ANSWER
OF THE ELDERS AND OTHER
MESSENGERS
of the Churches, Assembled at Boston
in the Year 1662.
TO
The Questions Propounded to them by ORDER of the
Honoured GENERAL COURT.

Quest. 1. Ho are the Subjects of Baptism?
Answ: The Answer may be given in the fol-
lowing propositions, briefly confirmed
from the Scriptures.

1 They that according to Scripture, are Members of the
Visible Church, are the subjects of Baptisme.

2 The Members of the Visible Church according to scrip-
ture, are Confederate visible Believers, in particular Church-
es, and their infant-seed. i. e. children in minority, whose
next parents, one or both, are in Covenant.

3 The Infant-seed of confederate visible Believers, are
members of the same Church with their parents, and when
grown up, are personally under the watch, discipline and Go-
vernment of that Church.

4 These Adult persons, are not therefore to be admitted
to full Communion, meerly because they are   and continue
B   members

Propositions concerning the subject of baptism and consociation of churches, collected and confirmed out of the word of God, by a synod of elders and messengers of the churches in Massachusetts-Colony in New England. Assembled at Boston, ... in the year 1662. ..

Seven Propositions to Answer the Question: "Who are the Subjects of Baptism?"

1. They that according to Scripture, are members of the visible church, are the subjects of baptism.

2. The members of the visible church according to scripture, are confederate visible believers, in particular churches, and their infant-seed, i.e., children in minority, whose next parents, one or both, are in covenant.

3. The infant-seed of confederate visible believers, are members of the same church with their parents, and when grown up, are personally under the watch, disciple and government of that church.

Seven Propositions to Answer the Question: "Who are the Subjects of Baptism?"

4. These adult persons, are not therefore to be admitted to full communion, merely because they are and continue members, without such further qualifications, as the word of God requireth thereunto.

5. Church-members who are admitted in minority, understanding the doctrine of faith, and publicly professing their assent thereto; not scandalous in life, and solemnly owning the covenant before the church, wherein they give up themselves and their children to the Lord, and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church, their children are to be baptized.

Seven Propositions to Answer the Question: "Who are the Subjects of Baptism?"

6. Such church-members, who either by death or some other extraordinary providence have been hindered from public acting as aforesaid, yet have given the church cause in judgement of charity, to look upon them as so qualified, and such as had they been called thereunto, would have so acted, their children are to be baptized.

Seven Propositions to Answer the Question: "Who are the Subjects of Baptism?"

7. The members of orthodox churches, being found in the faith, and not scandalous in life, and presenting due testimony thereof; these occasionally coming from one church to another, may have their children baptized in the church whither they came, by virtue of communion of churches: but if they move their habitation, they ought orderly to covenant and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church where they settle their abode, and so their children to be baptized. It being the churches duty to receive such unto communion, so far as they are regularly fit for the same.