

John Milton and *Paradise Lost*

(1608-1674)



Biography

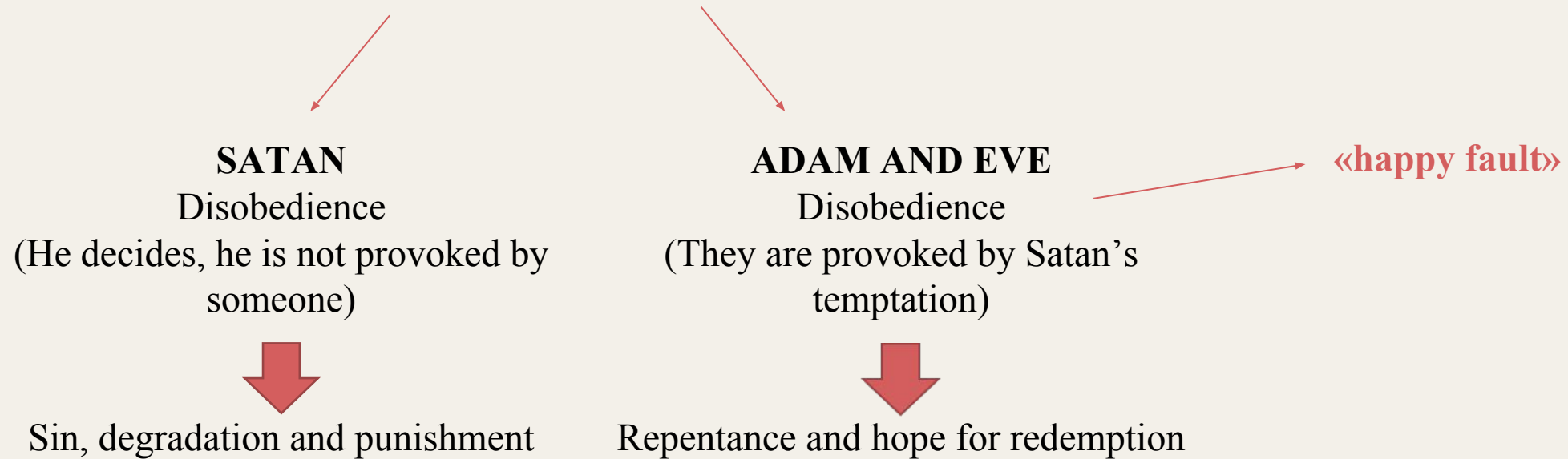
- A man of immense scholarship (Latin, Greek, Italian culture)
- He visited Europe
- He supported Cromwell during the Civil War
- 3 periods:
 1. **Italian poems**, but also English and Latin ones – devoted to study
 2. **Political pamphlets and prose works** – religious and civil rights, freedom of press, Parliament, divorce
 3. Marked by the **poet's blindness and poverty** – epic poem *Paradise Lost*

Paradise Lost [1667]

Plot (see pp. 250-251)

- The Biblical story of Satan's rebellion and Adam and Eve's disobedience

- **Two moral paths**



Themes – A universal and social hierarchy

- **Four realms** in the universe: 1) Heaven 2) Earth 3) Chaos 4) Hell
- Milton's cosmic geography has a religious meaning
- **Social hierarchy** based on the proximity to God: 1) the Son 2) archangels and cherubs 3) humans 4) animals 5) devils
- Satan doesn't accept this hierarchy and wants to defeat God

Themes – The figure of Satan

- The most **complex and fascinating character**
- At the beginning he seems the hero of the story – he is not afraid of being damned
- Milton shows respect for Satan's **determination to be free**
- He becomes the **representation of falsity** and of the **moral and physical degradation**

Style

- **Difficult to understand and imitate**
- **Allusions** and references
- **Archaic vocabulary**
- **Complex grammatical structures**
- Extended **similes**
- For a highly educated audience

Questions

1. How can we divide Milton's production?
2. Which moral paths can we find in the poem?
3. How many hierarchies are there in the poem?
4. Describe the character of Satan.
5. Describe Milton's style used in the poem.