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**God, an Event of Proximity, Narrated  
in Luke 10:25–37**

**Abstract:** The so-called “phenomenological turn” proposes a return to the world of lived experience, overcoming the rigidity of classical ontology. In this sense, theology also proposes to speak of God migrating from the world of the concept to life itself. Keeping in mind, then, that God gives himself in history as a Mystery of infinite love, it is necessary to find a new category that can express him, being faithful to the biblical testimony. The category chosen is “event,” as proposed by Claude Romano, who understands the event (happening) as the irruption of the unexpected that significantly affects everything that comes into contact with it. The parable of the Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) reveals God as an event of loving proximity, who mercifully bursts in through the actions of a Samaritan who saves the life of a seriously wounded man. The confirmation of the possibility of using the category “event” to speak of God is given only by means of a narrative method, for which we make use of the hermeneutical contributions of A. Wénin, who makes narrative the most appropriate language to express God’s traits, in this case, his merciful closeness.

**Keywords:** Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), Claude Romano, André Wénin, event, phenomenology, closeness

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**1. Introduction**

The following article is part of the phenomenological current that seeks to return to the world of lived experience, according to the Husserlian maxim that calls for a “return to things themselves” (“auf die Sachen selbst zuruckgehen”).<sup>1</sup> From this return, to speak of God with categories referring to the world of experience and not of ideas. We understand phenomenology as the effort to describe

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<sup>1</sup> Husserl, *Investigaciones lógicas*, I, 218.

the phenomenon as it is given, bearing in mind that it is not accessed immediately but in a process of welcoming the gift of that phenomenon. As Mena states,

rediscovering the world of life is nothing other than clarifying the experience as a relation or correlation between the individual and the other, without being able to understand it independently, since, precisely, the accent is placed on the relation and not on any of its poles.<sup>2</sup>

It is precisely in life itself, with all its real concreteness, that we can find the right way to discover the presence and action of God. This is our purpose: to be able to use a non-conventional category to speak of God, in such a way that the discourse resorts to a language more faithful to that used in Sacred Scripture; this language is, without a doubt, experiential. There, in the Bible, the grasp of God's Revelation and the language that expresses this grasp addresses the concrete experience, the "world of things" as we have already said. Therefore, we consider that some contributions of phenomenology, both in its philosophical and theological application, will provide us with a conceptual framework from which to present our understanding of the Mystery of God. This is how Arboleda puts it:

Experience is the experience of love. Both Emmanuel Lévinas and Jean Luc Marion try to understand God as uncontaminated by being. Lévinas understands it from the abrupt arrival of the Other. Marion tries to understand him as agape (1 John 4:8) who gives himself and gives himself unconditionally. God gives himself totally to donation to the point that he is both gift and donation. Love gives itself only by abandoning itself, continually transgressing the limits of its own gift, until it sets itself outside of itself. This is God without being.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mena Malet, "El fenómeno," 112.

<sup>3</sup> Arboleda, *Experiencia y Testimonio*, 4.

In order to be able to return to things themselves, it is necessary to take them in their appearance. The phenomena that are given by themselves and from themselves are, according to Marion and Romano,<sup>4</sup> the saturated phenomena (in the case of Marion)<sup>5</sup> and the event (in the case of Romano). From the two approaches, we choose, for reasons that will be offered later, the category “event.” Romano develops it philosophically, without forgetting that for Marion “the saturated phenomenon” is an event that has two characteristics: to be incomprehensible because of the force of its appearance and its absence of objectivity. As Mena suggests, events possess an irruptive and novel force that reconfigures everything, making their way into the subject, which prevents them from being understood in the light of a previous context. These events affect the subject and not vice versa.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> There are points of encounter between Marion’s presentation of the “saturated phenomenon” and Romano’s event. “Thinking, then, the phenomenon in its ‘aconteciat character’ (Romano, *L’événement et le monde*; Romano, *L’événement et le temps*) in its advenir, is, in turn, to engage in the task of thinking the subject capable of making the experience of the advent of itself from the arrival of what has been freed from any a priori condition of manifestation and, therefore, against the intentional path studied by Husserl. The individual, then, is the one who experiences the insignificant phenomenon that comes by its own means, that is not inscribed in a previous and delimiting context of manifestation, such as the saturated phenomenon (in Marion, *Étant donné*, 314) in Marion’s opinion, and which, by coming, obfuscates our understanding of itself, or, the event that for Romano is the phenomenon that fulfills the demands of “showing itself starting from itself” (Mena Malet, *The pathos*, 205).

<sup>5</sup> Mena Malet, “El fenómeno,” 118.

<sup>6</sup> Mena Malet, “El fenómeno,” 128. The phenomenologies of Romano and Marion can be considered authentic hermeneutics. The phenomenology of donation is a hermeneutic phenomenology of donation. It assumes the primacy of phenomenology insofar as it accepts the anteriority of the antepredicative instance and draws its meaning from it. And “it is a phenomenology that fulfills itself as hermeneutics because it does not accept any of the Husserlian “dogmatisms”: the constituent subject is replaced by the adonate, and the search for an absolute beginning free of assumptions is abandoned. For all search for truth starting from a foresight is replaced by a post-vision that waits for the manifestation of the phenomenon and engages in it by assuming the limitations of finitude and *Geworfenheit*” (Roggero, “Problemas de la articulación,” 342).

With this presupposition in mind, we will understand the category “event” as

that which occurs unexpectedly in the course of an individual’s life, and sooner or later its effect will radically transform his experience and his being-in-the-world [...]. Indeed, the singularity of the event, its lack of logical causal links, its unexpected and unforeseen irruption, its contingent and discontinuous character, demand new methodological procedures that make it possible to recover it, to make it intelligible, to give voice to the unspeakable that it implies; in a word, to narrate it.<sup>7</sup>

Here we find the basis of why we have chosen this category to apply to God. To achieve this objective, we will approach the parable of the merciful Samaritan in Luke 10:25–37. In this text God reveals himself as a neighbor to the one who suffers by the roadside. God does not manifest himself in this parable from the traditional attributes of metaphysics, but as an event of self-giving love. The Samaritan’s behavior will reveal God himself acting with kindness in favor of a man who has fallen into the hands of bandits.

Since the event only admits a narrative methodology to be expressed, we consider that Wénin’s proposal is the one that best corresponds to our task. This is evidenced by relating his analysis with Romano’s eventual hermeneutics, in order to justify why God can be presented as an event of closeness and not as a cold and distant concept.

We will begin with Wénin’s contribution to the parable and then we will dwell on Romano’s contribution.

## **2. The parable of the Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37): General considerations from the narrative of A. Wénin**

André Wénin, who applies the narrative method to texts of the First Testament, presents the state of the art of this analysis which has found its place among the methods of biblical exegesis. He does so by

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<sup>7</sup> Gómez-Esteban, “El acontecimiento,” 113.

showing how this scientific approach to Scripture is not an invention of exegetes.<sup>8</sup> The recognition of the literary aspect of biblical texts (studied by scholars such as Herman Gunkel, Gerhard von Rad or Luis Alonso Schökel) has allowed a dialogue between linguistics and biblical exegesis. During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, authors such as Gérard Genette, Wolfgang Iser, Paul Ricoeur, Wayne Booth developed theoretical works on narrative texts of the Bible. Even some literature professors in the United States and in Israel applied themselves to approach narrative parts of the Hebrew Bible, applying to the Bible the technical tools they used in their research on literature. Thus, in the 1970s, the first works of Shimon Bar-Efrat, Meir Sternberg, Robert Alter and Jan Fokkelman were published. These works are the result of this encounter between literary and Biblical studies.<sup>9</sup> Since then, studies of this type increased, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world. Today, it is impossible to keep track of theoretical essays and textual studies that demonstrate the fruitfulness of this approach to the narrative parts of the Bible.

According to Wénin's approach,<sup>10</sup> the ultimate purpose of the biblical narratives is "to express how God is at the heart of existence"<sup>11</sup> and not only to convey a message or give religious information. It is here that we find the contribution that this French exegete makes to the understanding, from the narrative analysis, of the text of the parable of the merciful Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). Although the above-mentioned author has been devoted to the First Testament, we will take some comments that will serve as a guide for our hermeneutical purpose.

In order to continue, it is necessary to present the approaches of other authors who are in the same line that we have been introducing.

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<sup>8</sup> Wénin, "De l'analyse," 369.

<sup>9</sup> Of these authors we highlight the following works: Bar-Efrat, *Narrative art*, 295; Sternberg, *The poetics*, 596; Alter, *The Art*, 307; Fokkelman, *Reading the Biblical Narrative*, 216.

<sup>10</sup> This French author applies the narrative method, in a particular way, to texts of the First Testament. Some cases can be cited: *Abraham, Sarah et Agar dans le récit de la Genèse. Approche narrative et interpretation*. Also available for consultation: Wénin, "Ismaël et Isaac"; Wénin, *Isaac ou l'épreuve*.

<sup>11</sup> Wénin, "La función educativa de los relatos (biblicos)," 45.

We have chosen Robert Alter and Paul Ricoeur to contrast and complement Wénin's material, which we will take advantage of in our work.

Alter describes the narrative material of the Bible as a narrative of historicized invention (citing Herbert Schneidau).<sup>12</sup> Explaining the development of the prosaic stories of the Old Testament, he discusses how the writers seek to free the characters from the laws of legend and myth. This allows the story to become an exposition of the feelings of human freedom, with all that it has of indeterminate and ambiguous.<sup>13</sup> And it is precisely in the story with these characteristics that the event of revelation takes place.

Here it is necessary to point out a detail that is developed by those who work with the method and narrative theology. Divine revelation is given as an event in tension. God's action and the realization of his plan paradoxically meet with the uncertain adventure of human freedom, so often resistant. In the words of Alter, "design and disorder, providence and freedom."<sup>14</sup>

The above can be applied to the parable of the Samaritan. It is a narrative of invention that serves Jesus as an instrument to understand and describe the way in which God intervenes in human history, above all, in favor of the helpless and those stricken by suffering. The parable ends up transcending the realm of the documentable and verifiable, because by its narrative force, what Jesus tells us always happens when someone takes pity on another human being in need of help. The tension of which we have spoken is expressed narratively in the parable: God claiming to be welcomed and helped in the figure of the wounded man and

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<sup>12</sup> For Wénin, Alter in his text not only exposes the main procedures of the narrative method, but develops the following idea: "the invention of the prose story is properly biblical. The fictional rewriting of the history of people and their ancestors comes from the need to show how the God of Israel blends with human history to enter into a complex but fruitful interaction with human freedoms." He continues: "narrative analysis provides raw material for a hermeneutic that brings biblical texts into dialogue with the reality in which the reader finds himself engaged and in which he has to make life-enhancing decisions" (Wénin, "De l'analyse," 369–370).

<sup>13</sup> Alter, *The Art*, 50–53.

<sup>14</sup> Alter, *The Art*, 55.

the human resistance embodied in the ministers of worship who pass by and, with hardened hearts, refuse to help (Luke 10:31–32). Moreover, freedom capable of accepting the divine call is also shown: in the Samaritan who knew how to react in a timely and compassionate manner (Luke 10:33).

As for Ricoeur, Kerbs studies Ricoeur's application in *Las parábolas bíblicas en la hermenéutica filosófica de Paul Ricoeur* of philosophical hermeneutics to biblical language. More specifically to the evangelical parables in order to see how this application brings out what is specific to religious language within the poetic discourse: to name the irruption of the transcendent in human existence. To achieve this goal, the parables are analyzed on the basis of his theory of poetic language, his theory of the text and his textual hermeneutics. From this study of Ricoeur's proposals, we are interested in two contributions: first, the recognition of the symbol "Kingdom of God" as a common and definitive horizon of meaning for the parables. Quoting Ricoeur in *Le 'Royaume' dans les paraboles de Jésus*, Kerbs says: "The parables make sense if they are taken together, because they form a network of intersignificance that is key to a metaphorical interpretation of them. There is no hermeneutics of a parable, but of parables."<sup>15</sup> Secondly, it is very important to recognize that the irruption of the Kingdom of God in history, of the transcendent in the immanent, is given by the "narrative extravagance" that overturns reality. In this implausible, illogical, strange element for those who listen to or read the narrative, the transformation of ordinary experience takes place, which recognizes itself "as signified, in its width, its height and its depth, by what is said (le dite) in the text."<sup>16</sup> For Ricoeur in the plot of the narrative is the very structure of the narrative and there we find the specific religious element within the poetic discourse: the extravagance.<sup>17</sup> This extravagance, says Kerbs, consists in generating a strangeness within the narrative, mixing the ordinary with the extraordinary; furthermore, opening the discourse towards the infinity of life and interpretation. Consequently, there is a tension

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<sup>15</sup> Kerbs, *Las parábolas*, 100, 101.

<sup>16</sup> Kerbs, *Las parábolas*, 26. Here Kerbs quotes the same text of Ricoeur.

<sup>17</sup> Kerbs talks about this extravagance quoting: Ricoeur, *Biblical hermeneutics*, 87.

between narrative as a form and metaphor as a process.<sup>18</sup> The narrative extravagance, then, allows us to find the Kingdom of God as a binding element of all the parables of the Kingdom, because they cease to be simple poetic discourse and become religious discourse.

Another element that must be mentioned with respect to Ricoeur's hermeneutics is the notion of text as an event that has reference to reality, to a speaking subject and to an audience.<sup>19</sup> According to the French thinker, the parable can point to an extra-linguistic referent. Ricoeur proposes a poetic approach to parables to which one cannot simply and directly apply the theory of living metaphor, since

while metaphorical tension functions at the level of the sentence and operates on the basis of the polysemy of words, parabolic discourse functions at the level of the characteristic composition of a work, that is, of something that has meaning as a whole (essay, poem, etc.).<sup>20</sup>

In addition, the meaning created by parables is not transient but can be re-actualized. It should also be noted that in the parable the totality of the narrative is told at the level of everyday life, which demands that the theory of metaphor be extended, "not only from

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<sup>18</sup> In Kerbs, *Las parábolas*, 21.

<sup>19</sup> For Ricoeur, every discourse is actualized as an event and, at the same time, every discourse is understood as meaning (*Interpretation Theory*, 26). In his proposal of the hermeneutics of parables, Ricoeur considers the parable as a "text" that must be interpreted and is open to the reader's own understanding in its relationship with the writing (Vélez Upegui, "Ricoeur y el concepto de texto," 85, 116). Espinoza, applying Ricoeur's hermeneutics to the event of Revelation, affirms in this regard: "The significant event of Christian revelation, which is understood in phenomenological terms as an event of the logic of overabundance (Ricoeur), can be interpreted as a text. It can be interpreted as an event that exceeds in its meanings, and that can be assumed and understood in new ways" (Espinoza Arce, "Christian revelation," 98). In this sense, the parables, and especially that of the Samaritan for the reasons explained in this article, are events of revelation of the Mystery of God. The parable can be understood, having said this, as a literary genre of God himself to communicate himself to men; in a significant event of his historical Revelation. Espinoza draws on Ricoeur's contribution in Ricoeur, *Hermenéutica*, 137, 170.

<sup>20</sup> Ricoeur, *Teoría*, 19.



words to sentences, but from sentences to narrative structures, until the metaphorical process can be applied to a “work” of discourse, that is, to a composition on a higher level than that of the sentence.”<sup>21</sup> In parables, therefore, the carrier of metaphor is the total structure of the narrative, not individual sentences. Now, Ricoeur considers that what structures the parable is the intrigue or plot; it is this that drives the whole metaphorical process.<sup>22</sup> This element of the plot will be discussed in more detail below.

After what has been exposed so far, relating the contributions of Wénin, Alter and Ricoeur, we can say that the biblical story, as a living body, is dynamic, flexible; thus, it clearly reflects the human condition in history, the place of God’s revelation. This changing, conflicting, ambivalent, limited condition is the theological locus of the divine events narrated in the stories of Sacred Scripture. According to Wénin, what the Bible presents, through its stories, is life, and it does so through stories that reflect its complexity, whose message is not easy to decipher.<sup>23</sup> This is where the risk of interpretation comes in, which opens up a variety of understandings of the text. This writing takes the risk of seeing God in the Samaritan, revealing his loving proximity.

Here we ask ourselves in what way the Samaritan narrates God. In the parable of the Samaritan not only God is narrated, but God

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<sup>21</sup> Ricoeur, *Teoría*, 19.

<sup>22</sup> Regarding the plot and its relation to the event, Ricoeur says: “We can show in the following way the intelligible character of the plot: the plot is the set of combinations by means of which events are transformed into a story or – cor-relatively – a story is extracted from events. The plot is the mediator between the event and the story. This means that nothing is an event if it does not contribute to the advancement of a story. An event is not just an occurrence, something that happens, but a narrative component. Broadening the scope of the plot even further, I will say that the plot is the intelligible unit that composes the circumstances, the ends and the means, the initiatives and the unintended consequences. According to an expression I quote from Mink, it is the act of “assembling” – of com-posing – those ingredients of human action which, in everyday experience, turn out to be heterogeneous and discordant. It follows from this intelligible character of the plot that the ability to follow the story constitutes a very elaborate form of understanding” (Ricoeur, *Narrativity*, 192).

<sup>23</sup> Wénin, “La función,” 47.

narrates himself. God reveals Himself in the words of Jesus that open the door to a symbolic universe of meaning through the living metaphor<sup>24</sup> that is this story. In this way, God tells us about himself in the actions and words of the Samaritan. First, in every merciful action that the Samaritan performs to save the life of the man lying dying by the roadside (Luke 10:34–35) and, then, in the words he says to the innkeeper in which he manifests his total commitment to the recovery of the man who fell into the hands of the bandits (Luke 10:35). God, then, is narrated as a merciful closeness in the person, actions and words of the Samaritan who becomes, in the text of Luke, an epiphany of the goodness of God.

### **3. Some concrete aspects of A. Wénin's proposal of narrative analysis applied to the parable of the Samaritan**

For Wénin the basis of narrative analysis is the difference between the story told (the informative content) and the precise story that is made of it, that is, the narration. When a story is told, it is always told in a particular way. This is what narrative analysis is interested in achieving: observing how the story is told and what means are used. In the story that is told in order to reach the addressee and guide him/her to the understanding of the message to be communicated. In the effects on the reader or listener, in the feelings provoked, in the concrete reactions.<sup>25</sup>

This purpose is recognized in the parable of the Samaritan. Jesus tells a story with really shocking details. However, the narrative is not limited to a literary description of a possible event that occurred on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, but the story that occurs in the narrative takes place within the layman and the readers of the text. The effects inside the people will be noticed to the extent that it is

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<sup>24</sup> Ricoeur's proposal on the "living metaphor" can be consulted in the work: Ricoeur, *La métaphore vive*, 414.

<sup>25</sup> Wénin, "De l'analyse," 372. Wénin devotes himself above all to examining texts of the First Testament. There is a study carried out by this author on Gen 3 and its relation to the so-called "original sin" from the narrative analysis of the text. The tools he uses can be applied to other texts. Also: Wénin, "Péché," 307, 319.

possible to express them verbally or they are evidenced in the behavior of the people. In this case, in the merciful behavior that replicates the actions of the Samaritan.

We shall apply some elements of Wénin's narrative analysis to the parable of the Samaritan, in order to draw theological conclusions that allow us to discover the closeness of God. The application we will make to the Samaritan text is not a rigorous exegesis, but a theological reading based on some elements of Wénin's proposal. The purpose is theological, not exegetical in the strict sense of the term.<sup>26</sup>

In narratology, we distinguish the "narrator" from the "author." The author is the one who invented the story or wrote the text. In the case of biblical texts, we speak of editorial schools, of corporate authors (for the parable discussed, the Lucan school).<sup>27</sup> The narrator, on the other hand, is a literary concept: it refers to the one who tells the story, the "voice" that shapes the story as it is told (Jesus dialoguing with the layman Luke 10:25). The reader of the biblical text is the "ear" requested by the narrator. According to what the narrator wants to achieve (to excite, to amuse, to move, to encourage reflection, to suggest a particular choice, to offer meanings, values, etc.) certain choices are made so that the narration is effective in the one who reads or listens to it.<sup>28</sup> In the case of the Samaritan, it is a matter of offering a new meaning to the category "neighbor" not only so

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<sup>26</sup> For an exegetical study of the parable, see Bedoya Bonilla – Arboleda Mora, "From Persuasion."

<sup>27</sup> The discussion on the process of elaboration of the biblical text is of the historical-critical method. In narratology, the definition of whether it is one or several authors is not essential. The important thing is that there is an author (no matter who it is), recognizable or implicit. The parable as such does not offer elements to define whether it is an individual or collective author, which is irrelevant for our case. What is necessary to affirm is that there is clearly a real author. A fact that could be interesting is to try to define the value and function of this parable as a microtext in the macrotext. The parable of the Samaritan as a response to Jesus' dialogue with a Jewish legislator on what must be done to attain eternal life, is inserted in the section called: "Ascent to Jerusalem" (Luke 9–19), which has an outstanding importance in the whole Third Gospel.

<sup>28</sup> Wénin, "De l'analyse," 373.

that the listener or reader behaves like the Samaritan, but also so that he or she encounters God and discovers him acting as a “neighbor.”

One element to highlight is the plot. A story never tells every detail. The narrator selects what should be told and what should not. There is a kind of plan to follow in a narrative,<sup>29</sup> but in practice this is not always followed in the same way. The narrator may choose to transgress, for a particular purpose, the rules of the narrative. Jesus in the parable describes what happened to the man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho (Luke 10:30), but omits things: his identity, what was stolen, the feelings of the wounded man, the reasons for the indifference of the men of worship, characteristics of the Samaritan, the final result of the wounded man’s recovery, among others. What the narrator does not tell, is where the reader awakens his active functions. What the author does not say, he leaves for the reader to incorporate directly into his work, affecting the reader through the world of values he has composed.

If we delve a little deeper into this aspect, the reader can discover how the world of values progresses in each character. We highlight three characters: the priest and the Levite (Luke 10:31–32) and the Samaritan (Luke 10:33–35). We could also dwell on the wounded man (Luke 10:30), the bandits (Luke 10:30); even the Teacher of the Law who appears at the beginning of the story as Jesus’ interlocutor (Luke 10:25–29). He is the one who hears the parable and is the first recipient of its message.

The men of worship are indifferent to the text. They look at it out of the corner of their eyes (they pass near the place, not the person), make a detour and pass by. Perhaps they are moved by prevention in the face of a wounded person (who may appear to be dead because of his critical condition). The fact that they are a priest and a Levite

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<sup>29</sup> In theory, a story progresses in four stages. First, the narrator “lays out” what he needs to know before beginning the story; he introduces the characters, the circumstances and the places of the action. Then, things “get complicated”: a problem arises and we try to solve it, but often by making what was said at the beginning worse (as in life...). The complication ends, thirdly, with a decisive action that provokes the denouement where the crisis “unravels” before an epilogue that records the final situation: things return to normal or get better. Wénin, “De l’analyse,” 374.

appears as an aggravating factor in any judgment pronounced on them. The reader could look for reasons in Scripture or in extra-biblical texts to understand a little of this indolent reaction. However, the narrative only allows us to see that they continued on their way without stopping or helping the wounded man. No thought is given to what might have happened to these characters later, because the urgency of the situation and the timely appearance of the Samaritan on the scene will capture all the attention. Any reaction or value judgment is left to the interpretation of the listener or reader of the story. It is a tense path to the Samaritan's appearance on the road. This is explained from the fact that everything is narrated from the point of view of the victim of the bandits. He tells only that the men of worship did not react favorably and went on their way.

As for the Samaritan, he will be considered in detail in the development of this article. However, the narrator's detailed presentation of feelings and actions allows us to see the progress in values (Luke 10:33–35). First, the narrator presents a view of the situation and the reaction to it; then a series of concrete and immediate actions that help the man to save his life. Finally, the decision to commit completely to the recovery of this person. There is an axiological ascent that goes from a spontaneous, humanitarian reaction to a conscious dedication that goes to the ultimate consequences. This Samaritan became a neighbor as he advanced in what he felt and did for the wounded man.

The next element we are going to comment on is the tension, the crisis, which occurs within the narrative. A situation within the narration to which the narrator focuses the attention of the listener (or reader) and in which the message to be transmitted emerges. In the case we are examining, the crisis is not only in the dramatic situation of the wounded man, but in the event that, for not being helped by the first ones who pass by, he may die at any moment.

Only a coincidence can save him and it is here that the Samaritan will enter the scene to resolve the situation. In fact, Luke puts on the lips of the narrator (Jesus) a word that explains this to introduce

the appearance of the Samaritan: “by chance” (Luke 10:31).<sup>30</sup> Within the tense moment between the indifference of the men of worship and the expectation of something to save the life of the dying man, the Samaritan who appears “by chance” implies the whole revelatory element that Jesus wants to communicate. Precisely here, in the most dramatic part of the text, when everything points to a tragic outcome, the figure of the Samaritan redirects the story towards an open horizon, in which it will be God himself who will act in the person of the merciful man who will help the wounded man.

Another element to keep in mind is the rhythm (temporality)<sup>31</sup> that will be given to the story. To this end, the narrator plays with two different temporalities. On the one hand, there is the time that passes in the story itself according to a timetable and calendar that can be discovered from the indications given by the narrator (when necessary). This is called the narrated time. On the other hand, the act of storytelling also takes place in time. The material time needed to tell the story constitutes the narrated time. The art of the storyteller consists in skillfully playing these different temporalities. As a rule, games with the rhythm of the narrative are indicative of the importance the storyteller attaches to certain facts: he devotes more time to what he considers important or significant and passes over minor facts more quickly.

In the case of the parable, the reaction of the priest and the Levite is described tersely, quickly, without further details (vv. 31–32). The verbs used are sufficient to understand what has happened. It even seems that Luke follows an almost exact outline. On the other hand, for the Samaritan, the Evangelist deploys all his narrative capacity. He has Jesus describe in detail what happened, emphasizing the following:

- The compassion (commotion of the heart) (Luke 10:33).
- The approach: while the others approach the place, the Samaritan approaches the wounded man (Luke 10:33–34).

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<sup>30</sup> *κατὰ συγκυρίαν* – adverb used only once in the entire New Testament. Possible translations: according to coincidence, by a coincidence, casually, by chance.

<sup>31</sup> Wénin, “De l’analyse,” 375.

- The actions resulting from this compassionate approach (Luke 10:34–35).

Jesus invites the hearer of the parable to become involved in what is narrated. This is what Wénin calls: “narrative methods.”<sup>32</sup> Time passes slowly and intensely. There is a life to save, there is no time to lose. That is why the listener enters into a tension that leads him to feel the same as the Samaritan and to want to help in some way so that the man does not die on the side of the road. From what Jesus describes, it would seem impossible to go on as the first passers-by did and, taking a detour, continued on. Jesus has not only put the characters on stage, to act in front of the reader, but he has also brought the listener into the plot so that he becomes involved in the parable and does not remain a simple passive spectator.

The force of the narration makes the listener avoid acting like the men of worship and is moved to act like the foreigner who helped the wounded man.

All the focus is on the Samaritan. While it is true that we observe and perhaps judge the indolence of the priest and the Levite, the scene immediately focuses our attention on the stranger who was traveling on that road. His outward actions are observed, but the narrator (Jesus) also directs our gaze inward. The verb used to speak of the feeling that accompanies the Samaritan’s reaction is internal (*σπλαγχνίζομαι*); sorrow inside.<sup>33</sup> The focus of the reader or listener transcends the exterior and reaches the interior, in this case, the Samaritan’s insides. There, not only is there a human movement of compassion,<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Wénin, “De l’analyse,” 375.

<sup>33</sup> *Σπλαγχνίζομαι* to feel mercy, compassion, commotion of bowels. For a more complete study of the use of this Greek verb, it is suggested to consult Kittel, *Grande lessico*, 903–933. In this dictionary one can trace its Greek linguistic use, its appearance in the writings of late Judaism (the LXX, Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus). Then he stops in the New Testament, especially in the Lucan parables; finally, in the writings of the early Church Fathers. It is striking how in pre-Christian Greek usage the verb never signified a mercy coming from the heart as we find it in the New Testament and in other texts of proto-Christianity. The verb in Luke speaks of divine action or of the model of human action similar to that of God as in the case of the parable of the Samaritan.

<sup>34</sup> A complete tracing of the verb *σπλαγχνίζομαι* in Sacred Scripture can be consulted in BDAG, 834.

but a divine event. In this feeling and in the subsequent actions, God himself takes place as a Mystery of infinite mercy. The Samaritan behaves like God; he acts as God himself does.

Returning to the verb used by Luke in the text, its use presupposes the attitude of a person who, from his inner self, is ready to help those in need, putting at their disposal all his means and his own life if necessary. As Jesus does, it is about seeing the tragic situation and being ready to help promptly. That is why the evangelist uses this verb to describe the feelings of God (Luke 15:20) and those of Jesus (Luke 7:13); and when he wishes to apply it to human beings, he uses it in this parable. In this way, being a neighbor is not a static virtue or a praiseworthy virtue, but a dynamism manifested in acts as is clearly seen in the Samaritan (vv. 37).<sup>35</sup>

Another element that Wénin emphasizes is the omniscience of the narrator.<sup>36</sup> He is all-knowing and can lead the reader where he wishes and subtly pushes him to make judgments and decisions. He interferes in some way with the reader.

In the parable, Jesus is “cornering” the jurist into taking a position on what he is narrating. Although the decisions are left to the freedom of the subject and may not have the effects desired by Jesus, the final question: “Which of these three do you think behaved as a neighbor to the one who fell into the hands of the bandits?” (Luke 10:36) compels the jurist by taking sides in the situation. Moreover, by inviting him to do the same, it obliges him to make an acknowledgment that will mobilize his conduct. This element is not common in parables. Usually, parables are told and within the person, value judgments and decisions are made as to what will be done next. The parables seek to make us aware of the irruption of the Reign of God. In our case, the interpretation of the parable and the conduct of the jurist from his personal conclusions are induced by a question of Jesus and an invitation to do the same. The jurist had to answer, perhaps without much pleasure, that the neighbor had been the merciful one

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<sup>35</sup> CBB, III, 104.

<sup>36</sup> Wénin, “De l’analyse,” 378–379.



(avoiding saying: the Samaritan).<sup>37</sup> However, unwittingly, he said more than he would have imagined, for his actions now define him. He is no longer just another Samaritan on a journey, but one who practices mercy. His ability to be moved in the face of the suffering person, as God himself does, gives him identity.

Jesus presents an incredible ability to raise ironies, feelings of perplexity, to break pre-established schemes. Jesus' hand as narrator reaches out to the Teacher of the Law and all the readers of the parable, to lead them along uncertain and never-before-trodden paths. Jesus "plays" with his listener, as Wénin says.<sup>38</sup> Details that confirm the above: he takes to the extreme the situation of the man lying by the side of the road, using (Luke through Jesus) the hapax: "half dead,"<sup>39</sup> which causes a feeling of deep sorrow in the face of such a great tragedy. Then he puts some characters of the cult on parade from whom we would expect a compassionate reaction that is not given in the text. Then, in the height of irony, he presents a Samaritan (with all contempt and repugnance that this gentilion generates in a Jew) as a model of charitable action. Moreover, not only will the Samaritan be a universal ethical paradigm, but a theological locus that reveals a trait of God: his proximity. Thus, Wénin states:

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<sup>37</sup> Ὁ ποιήσας τὸ ἔλεος μετ' αὐτοῦ: he who showed mercy to him (the verb was changed, but it has the same sense of feeling compassion). Of the verbs expressing "mercy" and compassionate love, Luke emphasizes the verb *σπλαγχνίζομαι*. The relation of this verb to the noun "bowels," "entrails" to *σπλάγχχνον* is important to note and can be consulted in: LSJ, 1416. Everything to affirm that mercy refers to a visceral love, that is felt in the entrails; that affects the whole being and mobilizes it. An endearing love.

<sup>38</sup> Wénin, "De l'analyse," 380. Regarding this "play with the reader," the result of the narrative modes used in biblical texts to generate emotions and feelings in the reader, Wénin himself carries out an exercise of narrative analysis on the episode of the massacre of the priests of Nob in 1 Sam 21–22. In the study, he dwells on the narrative tension, which is not exempt from curiosity and surprise. Elements that can be contrasted with the parable of the Samaritan where similar elements are present. Wénin, "David," 362, 387.

<sup>39</sup> Bedoya Bonilla, "An exegetical," 409. The same expression can be confronted in 4 Macc 4:11.

In making these choices, the narrator guides the reader into the world of his story. He deploys a “narrative strategy” to offer the reader values or counter-values, to push him to react in one way or another, or to question his vision of the world, of existence.<sup>40</sup>

The last element we want to highlight is the purpose of the narrative to cause surprise. As we go deeper into the story that Jesus tells, the surprise of the listener or reader appears. Very soon everything leaves its natural course, at least, from the cultural and religious convictions of Judaism. Within the layman, many ideas and concepts that led him to believe that eternal Life was in fulfilling the Law, loving God and neighbor (with the limits set by the Torah and the traditions of the Jewish people) are crumbling. Now he has to understand that Life is in the place where he is led by the Samaritan: where mercy is practiced without any qualms.

Let us delve into the narrative a bit, in order to go deeper into this aspect. First of all, Jesus begins by describing the situation of a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, on a dangerous road. This description does not penetrate into the interiority of the victim, but remains the description of an objective reality, which anyone can see in the same way. This man is attacked by bandits who rob him of his belongings, strip him of his clothes, beat him and leave him “half dead” on the edge of a lonely path (Luke 10:30). Each action appears progressively more serious. The man could not be in a worse condition. It seems as if Jesus wants to bring the story to a point of no return, so that there is no room for doubts, objections, justifications, excuses, explanations. In the same way that the anonymous man who is between life and death, waiting for a chance to save his life, the reader is cornered by a situation that forces him to react.

Secondly, a number of characters march before the horror of this situation. The first two are servants of the Temple of Jerusalem, whose reaction we have already described above.

The first great surprise is this: religious men have not acted accordingly to what they are. Not a hint of goodness was there in them. Not even the layman can come to their defense, since there are

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<sup>40</sup> Wénin, “De l’analyse,” 381.

no reasons, at least known, for the indifference with which the two characters who passed by reacted.

Here the story could end, with a tragic ending. If a priest and a Levite have not helped the assaulted man, no one will do so by exposing his life on that road whose danger was known.<sup>41</sup> Surely the layman has already finished the story inside, before Jesus continues. The second surprise is that Luke puts on the scene a Samaritan, with all that tends to be undesirable. If the religious men did not attend to that man, much less would a Samaritan. From this one would only expect indifference or repudiation; however, it is he who helps him and saves his life. It must have been unbearable for the layman that Jesus should put a schismatic Samaritan<sup>42</sup> as an example of mercy. It is precisely this element of surprise that allows the parable to end with an invitation to do the same, so that the message becomes practical in the life of the jurist and in all those who feel challenged by this narrative. We cannot forget that

the purpose of a good story is to provoke a reaction. Of course, it appeals to the intelligence and imagination necessary for someone to represent what is narrated. However, this is not the purpose of the story. The reactions it tries to provoke are related,

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<sup>41</sup> “Assaults in the wilderness of Judah, between Jerusalem and Jericho, used to be frequent. Jerusalem and Jericho are about 30 kilometers apart. Jerusalem is 740 meters above sea level and Jericho is 350 meters below the level of the Mediterranean. Halfway along the road there is a promontory of red earth that the Israelites called ‘the rise of blood’ (Josh 15:7)” (Carrillo Alday, *El evangelio*, 224).

<sup>42</sup> The Samaritans were considered enemies by the Jews (Sir 50:25–26; Matt 10:5; John 4:9; 8:48, etc.). In 2 Kgs 17:24–41 their origin is explained by the forced migration of five pagan groups, who settled in Samaria and contaminated it with their customs. The adjective “Samaritan” went from having geographical connotations (inhabitants of Samaria), capital of the Northern Kingdom founded by King Omri around 870 B.C., to being an ethno-religious designation, referring to the inhabitants of the east of the Jordan, the region between Galilee and Judea. The origin of the division between Jews and Samaritans, although unclear, is related to the destruction of Samaria (722 BC) by the Assyrians. Its inhabitants were deported and replaced by settlers from Babylon (2 Kgs 17:24). The topic can be studied in more detail in: Fitzmyer, *El Evangelio*; Barrios, *Texto, narrador*, 347, and Mora – Levoratti, *Evangelio*, 544.

in the first place, to emotionality and affectivity. Additionally, the art of the storyteller lies in knowing how to play with these registers.<sup>43</sup>

The story has a force that transforms the reader or listener internally. It creates meaning, convictions, values. What we would call “conversion” as a change of mentality on which the change of scale of values and the concrete actions of the subject are based. This story of the Samaritan becomes the “midwife”<sup>44</sup> of a new understanding of God as proximity, not grasped before in the same way. It is not simply a moral invitation to have a kind attitude, but to be like God who is “neighbor” to the one who suffers; to act as God does, because such “proximity” is a clear trait of his actions in favor of his children.

Jesus describes a truly moving situation, without specifying whether it is real or fictitious. Every detail of the parable is a testament to the narrative genius of the Lucan community that has embraced the discovery of Jesus of Nazareth and the mystery it contains. Listening to the parable, the immediate recipient who is the layman and all those who will later approach the text will be touched by the story. Many mixed feelings will flourish from the contact with the text that achieves empathy and emotion in the face of the tragedy of the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. The impact of the narrative is such that there is a synergy between the emotions of the Samaritan and those who allow themselves to be positively affected by the story.

It is impossible, then, to remain impassive in the face of what is described. There is an emotional reaction, since the element of surprise mentioned in previous paragraphs reaches the affectivity and overflows reason; there is only room for the spontaneous, the undetermined and uncontrolled. For what transgresses norms, canons and laws that seemed immovable. And this going beyond, by another way, reveals God. It reveals loving closeness and provokes a way of life that is no longer like that of the Samaritan, but like that

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<sup>43</sup> Wénin, *La función*, 51.

<sup>44</sup> Quoting an expression of Queiruga to speak of the Bible as the midwife of the Word of God. Cf. Torres, *What does it mean*, 331–347.

of God who is transparent in this merciful man who approached, helped the wounded man with compassion and took care of him until he was completely restored.

This whole study makes it clear that God reveals himself in life as it happens. And his way of manifesting himself can use the category event to be expressed. With all that has been said, then, we can say that God happens as “proximity.”

Below, we will explain what we understand by “event” according to Romano’s thinking, which we will apply to our study.<sup>45</sup>

#### **4. God reveals himself as an event: Contributions of Claude Romano’s phenomenology to the understanding of God from experience**

Castillo in his text *La humanización de Dios* raises the need to return to the “event” and not to limit ourselves to the Hellenistic “being” in order to speak of God. According to his position, and we share it in this writing, the Gospel is not properly interested in the “being” of God but in “what happens” or occurs when the Kingdom of God or when God simply makes himself present in the life of people and society. He states:

The knowledge of God does not spring from a kind of knowledge, but from an experience. This is the same as saying that the knowledge of God does not come from metaphysical knowledge and

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<sup>45</sup> Today we are witnessing what has been called a “return to the event.” Beck (*The event between*, 49) notes how from the last decades of the twentieth century we are witnessing a return of the concept of event, “understood as that unique and singular occurrence that marks a before and after in the flow of history. We speak of ‘return’ because we assume the point of view of the social and historical sciences that for decades displaced or denied the concept of event in favor of more general interpretation schemes, which overlooked the issue of the historical particularity of isolated events, such as the ‘long duration,’ represented above all by Fernand Braudel (1958) and the Annales School, or the anthropological structuralism of Claude Lévi Strauss (1995).”

its arguments but from the historical experience of our relationships with others.<sup>46</sup>

That is what clearly happens in the parable of the Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) as we analyzed in this article. There God reveals himself and is known through experience. What Jesus revealed about God did not do so from the schemes and concerns of Hellenistic culture, but from the biblical mentality that shows what happens when God becomes present in the concrete reality of human beings. As Castillo would affirm, Jesus made God known to us from his own way of living and taught us that God is to be found in human life and not elsewhere.<sup>47</sup>

In the same vein, Marion in the introduction to his text *Dieu sans l'être (God without Being)*, explaining the title of his work. He says:

Under the title of God without Being, we are not trying to insinuate that God is not, nor that God is not truly God. Rather, we try to meditate on what F.W. Schelling called “the freedom of God with respect to his own existence” [...] we try to question an evidence held both by philosophers who emerged from metaphysics and by theologians who emerged from neo-Thomism, God, before anything else, must be.<sup>48</sup>

According to this approach, the way of experience, of the loving event that is given, appears as the best way to approach the Mystery of God. “Not depending on being, God comes to us in and as a gift”<sup>49</sup> and as such must be welcomed, not only understood or intellectually comprehended.

In this work we want to turn to the category “event” to narrate the Mystery of God. We do not seek to make a discourse on God using the language of traditional ontotheology,<sup>50</sup> but to take advantage

<sup>46</sup> Castillo, *La humanización de Dios*, 86.

<sup>47</sup> Castillo, *La humanización de Dios*, 91.

<sup>48</sup> Marion, *God without being*, 19.

<sup>49</sup> Marion, *God without being*, 19.

<sup>50</sup> We will understand ontotheology as Marion puts it, as the understanding of theology from the presuppositions of traditional metaphysics, eclipsing all its

of the richness of a new language that is experiential and as close as possible to Revelation as witnessed in Sacred Scripture. To achieve this purpose, we draw on the contributions of Claude Romano.

Claude Romano, professor at the Sorbonne University and author of *L'événement et le monde* and *L'événement et le temps*, published in 2008 in Ediciones de la Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Colección Filosofía, *Lo posible y el acontecimiento*, his first work in Spanish. This book is an introduction to what Romano has called “evential hermeneutics” or hermeneutics of the event, approaching its most original and fundamental meaning: its way of giving itself and arriving at the subject. Claude Romano is one of the most important French phenomenologists,<sup>51</sup> succeeding authors such as Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Michel Henry or Jean-Yves Lacoste. Romano’s research has revitalized the question of the event, rigorously posed by Heidegger<sup>52</sup> and later by authors such as Maldiney. He has also given a consistency of his own to his analyses, without stopping his dialogue with authors such as Henri Bergson, Merleau-Ponty or Jean-Paul Sartre. Nor does he restrict his research to the area of phenomenology, but keeps an attentive listening to analytical philosophy, mainly Wittgenstein and Carnap. As well as to the ecological psychology of J.J. Gibson, which in some way has allowed him to expand

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experiential, sapiential and narrative (acontecencial) freshness. We refer to a text where the way Heidegger, Lévinas and Marion understand ontotheology is specified, making it clear that for Marion ontotheology does not belong to the very structure of thought, but belongs to the options of thinkers and epochs, leaving the possibility of surpassing oneself and following other alternative paths. See: Schrijvers, “Marion, Levinas and Heidegger,” 207, 239.

<sup>51</sup> To deepen the concepts of Romano’s French phenomenology, please consult: Dika – Hackett – Romano, *Les concepts*, 173, 202, and Canullo, *Claude Romano*, 87, 104.

<sup>52</sup> For Heidegger, “the event is a form of self-giving of Being that differs radically from the way in which the Western metaphysical tradition has thought Being – and time. This hermeneutic thought can be characterized as a form of active nihilism” (Leveque, *Concept of Event*, 69). What Romano seeks is “to free phenomenologically the event from its reduction, by Heidegger, to the factual fact (Tatsache) intramundane, effective and experiential; characterization or localization that has as a consequence its subordination to an ontology of the subsistent entity (Vorhandenheit)” (Vieira, *Singularidad*, 15).

the field of discussion around the proper status of the phenomenality of the event, that is to say, to its appearing. Thus, the hermeneutics of the event proposed by Romano stands as an original approach, not only in the French-speaking world. It has also been widely received in the United States, where the English translation of his opera prima, *L'événement et le monde* has appeared, as well as in Italy, Belgium, Lebanon, etc., but it is beginning to take shape and gain space in Latin America, thanks to this, his first introductory work. *The Possible and the Event* reviews the path opened by *L'événement et le monde* and *L'événement et le temps*, at the same time it is a further step taken by the author. Anibal Formari and other authors, explaining Claude Romano's event hermeneutics, say that this author proceeds from a triple movement. First, he questions himself about the phenomenality of the event, that is, about the way in which it comes, arrives, appears. Then, he asks himself how the event becomes an epoch, turning both to the metaphysics of time and to the phenomenology of time, particularly along the path initiated by Husserl. And, finally, in contrast with Heidegger, he thinks of the event as the one that makes possible all human possibilities, freeing him from his factual fact.<sup>53</sup> If the event becomes epochal, it is because in its arrival it fractures and disrupts the subject capable of the event, namely, capable of making its proof. In this sense, experience should not be thought under the empiricist concept as receptivity, repetition and habit, but refer to the danger, the crossing and the adventure that exposes the self to the alterity that comes and breaks it. Romano affirms in this regard:

The event must be understood here in its rigorous sense, not as the intramundane fact, but as that which, reconfiguring all my essential possibilities, opens a world beyond any project. If experience is then radically thought of as this crossing and this risk in which I myself am at stake, at the risk of losing myself, then there is no experience in the proper sense other than that of the event.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Romano, *Lo posible*, 94.

<sup>54</sup> Romano, *L'événement et le monde*, 196 (Romano, *Event and world*, 182).



We shall go a little deeper into the hermeneutics of the event and then apply it to the parable of the Samaritan and from there be able to maintain that God reveals himself as an event of proximity.

Romano proposes “the hermeneutic of the event” as the interpretation of the human being (the advent)<sup>55</sup> from the event; we will apply it to God. “The human adventure will be that opening to the events, and the advenient comes to himself by that history of what happens to him and above him.”<sup>56</sup> Distinguishing the event as an “intra-worldly fact” or event (*l'événementiel*) from the event in its eventual sense (*l'événe-mental*) is key to this thought.<sup>57</sup> A distinction that has its precedent in the Heideggerian distinction between *existenziell* (as indicative of the ontic of existence) and *existenzial* (as its ontological structural correspondent).

The event is characterized, then, by the fact that it never allows itself to be understood on the basis of a previous horizon of meaning, but, on the contrary, it modifies the horizon of possibilities and, therefore, signifies the advent of a new world. According to Romano's expression, the event is “initiator of the world,” insofar as it opens up

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<sup>55</sup> “The advent is the title for man insofar as he is constitutively open to events, insofar as humanity is the capacity to be oneself in the face of what comes before us. The advenient does not then come to his possibilities except on the background of an even greater possibility with respect to the events that scandalize his adventure, thus giving him a history” (Romano, *Acontecimiento y mundo*, 136). In this sense, Romano calls ipseity: “the capacity of the advenient to be open to events, insofar as they irreplaceably come to him, the capacity to be involved in that which is above him, or even the capacity to understand himself on the basis of a history and of some possibles that he articulates” (Romano, *L'événement et le monde*, 125). The Samaritan had this ipseity by being open to the event of God in the wounded and understanding himself in his encounter with him. And this ipseity is responsibility with the other, as we see clearly in the parable. This is how Romano explains it: “ipseity, that is, existence in person, already implies coexistence with others, insofar as ipseity is in reality a modality of this relationship with others.” And this relation implies responsibility (“to answer for”). See Romano, *El otro*.

<sup>56</sup> Romano, *Lo posible*, 19.

<sup>57</sup> Romano distinguishes two senses of event: 1) The *l'événementiel*, which can be translated as *aconteciario*, referring to the event as an intramundane fact. This is the usual sense. 2) The *l'événe-mental*, translated as *acontecial* and which designates the event in its arrival. It is the event as unpredictable, indatable, singularizing, unprepared (Mena Malet, “Natalidad,” 94).

new possibilities, releases completely new possibilities.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, according to the study Vinolo, citing Romano, presents the event as that which does not receive its causes from outside and is not registered in a hermeneutic context that precedes it, but imposes its own context. The event, in its eventual sense, is that which sheds light by itself; it does not receive meaning from its context, it is not its consequence, but it configures the possibilities that precede and continue it, propitiating the advent of a new world.<sup>59</sup>

God presents himself as an event in an eventual sense, according to this approach, arriving as a merciful impulse in the Samaritan's entrails that makes him a man capable of reacting and acting like God himself. The way in which the Samaritan places himself before the wounded man can be considered an "intramundane fact," produced in a dated present, as an "accomplished fact." However, there, in the human mediation of this subject, there is the divine event that is not datable, because it cannot be conditioned in any way. The Samaritan was open to the divine event that opened up space within him; his compassion gave him the capacity to welcome and get involved in what happened, understanding himself from the irruption of God that pushed him to act divinely in favor of the wounded man. For Romano, "the event overflows the facts, touching the foundations of the existing world. It reaches the possible at its root, upsetting the whole world of the person to whom it happens."<sup>60</sup>

Applying this way of understanding the event to the parable, it can be affirmed that the Samaritan's reaction to the wounded man is circumscribed in the world of the possible; it is possible to feel mercy, it is possible to feel compassion and act promptly, it is possible to attend with concern to a person in distress. However, the paradox

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<sup>58</sup> Vallée, "Au risque de soi," 155.

<sup>59</sup> Vinolo, "L'apostrophe de l'événement," 56.

<sup>60</sup> Romano, *Lo posible*, 43. On the temporalization of the event can be read: Jay, "Historical explanation," 145, 157. In this article Jay says, quoting Romano, that events should be understood as inaugurators of their own history, as adventions that open up the door to possible adventures in a future that is not yet fully determined. Unlike a historical fact, which can be clearly identified only with a date on a chronological line of comparable facts, events are those that inaugurate time and temporalize it.

lies in the fact that it is not “possible” in the Jewish scheme that a man of Samaria would behave in this way towards a Jew (assuming that the wounded man was one). Such an abyss of mercy would never be expected from a schismatic, as the Samaritans were described.

What the Samaritan feels in his gut (the event of God) reaches the possible at its root and upsets the whole world of the Samaritan who welcomes the action of God in him and the life of the wounded man, who is saved from death. In other words, God is an event in the Samaritan and, through him, in the wounded man. All the possible is disrupted and the possible is reconfigured in its totality. Reality is put in order: the Samaritan reveals the way human beings should react when encountering situations of suffering and pain such as those experienced by the wounded man on the roadside. Prejudices and cultural and religious barriers are overcome and everything is changed according to the action of God himself. What Romano affirms is fulfilled: “To shake the foundations of the world, altering what is possible in its totality, to establish a new world for the one to whom it comes: such is the phenomenological tenor of every real event.”<sup>61</sup> This is what the event of God has done in the Samaritan and in all those involved in his actions: the wounded man, the Teacher of the Law who listens to the parable and all the readers and listeners of the narrative. God establishes a new world for all; that of mercy that leads to closeness with the other, as God himself does. And he does it almost imperceptibly; he acts through the Samaritan who makes room for him in his heart. Only later, through the hermeneutic of events, do we realize that this is the action of God himself and not mere altruism or humanitarian sentiment.

## 5. Conclusion

The behavior of the Samaritan as described by the narrative analysis we offered from Wénin’s approach, becomes a divine event that sheds light on everything narrated in the parable. From these merciful actions, the total context of narration is understood and opens a new world that allows the recognition of God’s event in those who behave

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<sup>61</sup> Romano, *Lo posible*, 43.

this way; a new, unprecedented world emerges, which is divine irruption in human immanence.

According to Romano, events do not happen to the subjects, strictly speaking, but to the “advenient.” An “advenient” becomes so in the very process of becoming that, which allows a new event to exceed what has already occurred. What happens to the advenient transforms him existentially by involving him, making a more or less unified subject emerge; a subject touched and changed,<sup>62</sup> like the Samaritan who is not the same after his encounter with the event of God in the wounded man.<sup>63</sup> The Samaritan in the text, according to Romano’s approach, is an advenient<sup>64</sup> who becomes a divine event by incarnating the typical traits of God. It can even be affirmed that God becomes an advent in the Samaritan, being himself as he is, merciful, in the very act of being and acting according to his nature. This can only be admitted in this way, from the logic and dynamics of the incarnation that occurred in Jesus of Nazareth.

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<sup>62</sup> Romano, *Event and world*, 153.

<sup>63</sup> In Romano’s phenomenology as in Marion’s, following Husserl’s indication to go to the things themselves and taking into account that according to Heidegger phenomenon is that which shows itself by itself. It is necessary to renounce a founding and constituent subject. It is better to affirm that the subject is constituted by the event in its arrival, which affects it profoundly. In this case, the phenomenon would be the event of God who gives himself in all his radical and absolute otherness, which requires learning to accept him in his self-giving (Mena Malet, “Donación,” 199). He poses the task of phenomenology in this way: “to liberate the field of appearing from the conditions imposed by the constituent subject, means also to operate a profound transformation in the way of understanding the subject to whom the phenomena come. From Marion’s point of view, we can speak of a subjectivity in ‘second instance,’ in other words, a subjectivity that allows itself to be constituted by the phenomena that arrive and their mode of manifestation” (Mena Malet, “Donación,” 200).

<sup>64</sup> In Romano’s words: “The adventant is rather the event always in the instance of its advent to and as itself, starting from what comes to it: its only ‘essence’ is declared as experience, in the eventual sense of an experience of events – and consequently, also, as history. There is no advent except insofar as something comes to him, or insofar as something comes from him: not subjectivity prior by right to what happens to him, but a process of subjectivation starting from founding events” (Romano, *Lo posible*, 46).

The parable could be considered a narrative event; but we take for granted that what Jesus tells us happens in life, at least in his life. This event can only be understood in the horizon of meaning opened by Himself, since it overflows all previous contexts of possible explanation. This is proven by the surprise and resistance of the jurist, for whom it seems impossible for a Samaritan to act in this way. Moreover, a new way of seeing God is introduced: in the unexpectedness of the merciful action of one who is moved to compassion for those who suffer, regardless of whether they do not fit into the established cultural and religious canons. Thus, the Samaritan becomes a subject constituted by the divine event, completely transformed by Him, who will never again be the same.

The kind actions with which the Samaritan acts reveal this attribute of God that we are recognizing, known as proximity, the closeness that cares and saves. If the Samaritan acts as a neighbor to the one who is waiting for help and God acts in him, then we conclude that God acts as a neighbor. God became neighbor, through the Samaritan, to the wounded man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, showing that this is a distinctive trait of his identity.

### **Bóg, wydarzenie bliskości, opowiedziane w Łk 10,25-37**

**Abstrakt:** Tak zwany „zwrot fenomenologiczny” proponuje powrót do świata przeżywanego doświadczenia, przewyżając sztywność klasycznej ontologii. W tym sensie również teologia proponuje mówić o migracji Boga ze świata pojęć do samego życia. Pamiętając zatem, że Bóg daje się w historii jako Tajemnica nieskończonej miłości, trzeba znaleźć nową kategorię, która mogłaby Go wyrazić, będąc wierną świadectwu biblijnemu. Wybraną kategorią jest „wydarzenie”, zgodnie z propozycją Claude’a Romano, który rozumie wydarzenie (*happening*) jako irracjonalność tego, co nieoczekiwane, która w istotny sposób wpływa na wszystko, co się z nią styka. Przypowieść o Samarytaninie (Łk 10,25–37) ukazuje Boga jako wydarzenie miłującej bliskości, która miłosiernie wybucha poprzez działania Samarytanina ratującego życie ciężko rannemu człowiekowi. Potwierdzenie możliwości użycia kategorii „wydarzenia” do mówienia o Bogu daje dopiero metoda narracyjna, do czego wykorzystujemy hermeneutyczny wkład A. Wénina, który czyni narrację najwłaściwszym językiem do wyrażenia cech Boga, w tym przypadku Jego miłosiernej bliskości.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Przypowieść o dobrym Samarytaninie (Łk 10,25–37), Claude Romano, André Wénin, wydarzenie, fenomenologia, bliskość

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