is another testament of Jesus Christ, or Jesus the Messiah. Book of Mormon writers taught that all prophets speaking of the Messiah (Jacob 7:11; Mosiah 13:33). In approximately 600 B.C., LEHI taught that "redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah. . . . Behold he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin . . . that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead" (2 Ne. 2:6–10).

NEPHI wrote that since all are in a fallen state, they must rely on the Messiah, the Redeemer. He learned that the Son of God was willing to come as the Messiah, preach the gospel, serve as an example of righteous living, and be slain for the sins of all (1 Ne. 10:4–6, 11; 11:26–33; 19:9; 2 Ne. 25:11–19; 31:9–16).

King BENJAMIN described how Jesus Christ would come from heaven to dwell in a mortal body, "working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick . . . [and casting] out devils," suffering temptation and fatigue. Even blood would come "from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people." Saying that he was only a man and that "he hath a devil, [they] shall scourge him, and shall crucify him" (Mosiah 3:5–10).

ALMA said of the Messiah's ministry, "He shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities. And he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:11–12).

More than five centuries before Christ's birth, JACOB wrote, "For this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and not only we ourselves had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us" (Jacob 4:4).

METAPHYSICS

Metaphysics is the branch of PHILOSOPHY concerned with the ultimate nature of reality, including those aspects of it, if any, that are unavailable to empirical inquiry. The historical development of metaphysics in Western philosophical thought has been carried out largely by those philosophers and theologians who have aspired more to develop a unified system of ideas than to dwell upon diverse arrays of facts. Especially important to the theologians was the task of bringing abstract philosophical concepts into harmony with the concrete teachings of SCRIPTURE. Their systems differed, but their common goal was to combine philosophy and scripture into a single coherent account of the ultimate nature of things.

TENTATIVENESS. LDS metaphysics stands apart, because the Church has not developed a traditional metaphysical THEOLOGY and does not aspire to one. It has not been much influenced by philosophical thinking. LDS faith springs from two sources, scripture and ongoing RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE. The absence of any systematic metaphysics of the Church follows from the belief that scripture, as the record of divine REVELATION, may be supplemented by new revelation at any time. A metaphysical system, to be true, must be all-inclusive. But faith in continuing revelation precludes the certainty that such a system exists. Thus, LDS metaphysics remains incomplete, tentative, and unsystematic, subject to revision in the light of things yet to be revealed by God. This tentativeness about metaphysical ideas has saved the Church from the crises that can arise when a religion's beliefs are tied to philosophical ideas which are later abandoned or discredited. The Church's lack of a systematic metaphysical theology has prompted some students of its DOCTRINES who are used to such theology to assert that it has no theology at all, but it would be more accurate to say that its metaphysics and theology are not systematically formulated.

MATTER AND SPIRIT. In the absence of a metaphysical system, the LDS faith still displays some characteristic metaphysical ideas. Latter-day Saints regard MATTER as a fundamental principle of reality and as the primary basis for distinguishing particular beings. The import of this view reveals itself most strikingly in the doctrine concerning the material embodiment of God: "The Father
has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also” (D&C 130:22). This is not to be understood crassly; the matter of exalted bodies is purified, transfigured, and glorified. LDS teachings draw no ultimate contrast between spirit and matter. Indeed, “all spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure” (D&C 131:7). This position avoids traditional difficulties in explaining the interaction of spirit and body.

The reality of matter implies the reality of space and time. Scripture speaks of the place where God dwells and of “the reckoning of the Lord’s time” (Abr. 3:9). So God himself exists within a spatial and temporal environment. In accepting space, time, and matter as constitutive of reality, Latter-day Saints take the everyday world of human experience as a fairly reliable guide to the nature of things. But this acceptance is no dogma, and their belief remains open to the possibility that these three ideas, as presently understood, may be auxiliaries to more fundamental ideas not yet known.

**Pluralism.** LDS thought clearly emphasizes the importance of the fundamental plurality of the world, with its continuing novelties, changes, conflicts, and agreements: “For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things” (2 Ne. 2:11). The world is not static but dynamic, not completed but still unfolding. This unfinished and future-oriented aspect of things provides the basis for growth and improvement. A monistic world or universe in which all differences are finally absorbed in a higher unity is viewed as impossible. The LDS Church has been less inclined than some other religions to regard the world of common experience as an inferior order of that which must be distinguished from a higher and altogether different realm. Heaven itself is regarded as offering the hope of endless progression rather than the ease of final satisfaction.

**Natural and Supernatural.** Latter-day Saints see a continuity between the traditional categories of natural and supernatural. They do not deny the distinction, but view it as one of degree, not of kind. God’s creative act, for example, is not, as traditionally conceived, a creation ex nihilo, but an act of organizing material that already exists (Abr. 3:24). And creation is not a single, unique event, but an ongoing process that continues through the course of time: “And as one earth shall pass away . . . so shall another come” (Moses 1:38).

God acts upon matter within the context of space and time. In comparison with human attributes, God’s attributes are supreme and perfect. But the difference between God and mankind remains one of degree. God seeks to provide the guidance and the necessary help for human beings to overcome the differences and become like him. The injunction to be perfect “even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48) is taken to mean that mankind may indeed become like God by faithfully following his commandments. The principles or laws of goodness that underlie these commandments have their own abiding reality. God exemplifies them but does not arbitrarily create them.

**Freedom and Perfectibility.** Nothing is more central to LDS metaphysics than the principle of freedom. The weaknesses of humanity that lead to error and sin are acknowledged. But the claim that human nature is totally depraved is denied. The LDS Church affirms that ideally “men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil” and that “men are free according to the flesh, . . . free to choose liberty and eternal life . . . or to choose captivity and death” (2 Ne. 2:5, 27). Human experience has as its final goal the development of virtue and holiness in a world that is not totally the product of God’s will. Reality itself poses the challenge to overcome obstacles and achieve greater good. Everyone’s life is a response to this challenge.

**Bibliography**

**Dennis Rasmussen**

**Mexico, Pioneer Settlements in**

LDS colonization in Mexico was planned as a place of refuge from persecution in the United States and as a springboard for teaching the gospel in Latin America.

In 1875, President Brigham Young sent Daniel W. Jones and others to Mexico to look for possible places to settle. They found the Mexican gov-