

his presence and existed where he is, but for some reason we have been banished therefrom, and that when we are redeemed we shall return again, or as one of the inspired writers has it—"the spirit shall return to God who gave it."

This returning of the spirit to God who gave it, clearly shows to my mind that the spirit once existed with God and dwelt in his presence, otherwise the word "*return*" would be inapplicable. If I were going to China it would be inapplicable for me to say I am returning to China. Why? Because I never have been there, consequently the word "*return*" would be an improper word. So in regard to the saying of the prophet, it would be entirely improper to say that, after the body crumbles to dust the spirit would "*return*" to God who gave it, if it never had been there.

Jesus seems to have been a pattern in all things pertaining to his brethren, and we find that he had a previous existence—his spirit existed before he came and tabernacled in the flesh. This is abundantly proved in the Scriptures. In the prayer which he offered to his heavenly Father beseeching him to make his disciples one, he says, "Father, glorify thou me with that glory which I had with thee before the world was." Now if Jesus dwelt with the Father before the world was, why not the rest of the family, or in other words, the rest of the spirits? It certainly was not his tabernacle which dwelt there before the world was, for he came in the meridian of time, and his spirit entered a tabernacle of flesh and bones, and was born of a woman, just the same as all the rest of the human family. What then is the meaning of that Scripture which speaks of Jesus being the elder brother? It certainly could not

have reference to him being the eldest so far as his natural birth on this earth was concerned, for he certainly was not the eldest, for generation after generation had preceded him during the four thousand years which had passed away, from the time of creation until he was born; but yet he is called the "elder brother." In another Scripture it is said of him that he was "the firstborn of every creature." This would imply, then, that Jesus, so far as the great family of man is concerned, was the firstborn of the whole of them. How and when was he born? He was born in the eternal world, not his flesh and bones, but that intelligent spirit which dwelt within his tabernacle was born before this world was made, and he seems to have been the first spirit that was born, and for this reason he became the elder brother; and we are told in many Scriptures in the New Testament, that we are his brethren, and that he is not ashamed to call us his brethren. I look upon him as having the same origin as we had, only he was the eldest; and if he was born in the eternal world thousands of years ago, why not all the rest of his brethren, so far as their spirits are concerned? I know that the objection will immediately arise in the minds of individuals who have not reflected on this subject, if we were intelligent personages thousands of years ago, and dwelling in the presence of God, and of Jesus, our elder brother, how is it that we have no remembrance of anything that transpired in our pre-existence? I answer this question by saying, that when we came into this world from our former state of existence, and had our spirits enclosed within these mortal tabernacles, it had a tendency to take away our memories so far as the past was concerned. It did so in relation to