

BOOK REVIEW

Return To Life: Extraordinary Cases of Children Who Remember Past Lives by Jim B. Tucker. New York, St. Martin's Press, 2013. 256 pp. ISBN 978-1250005847.

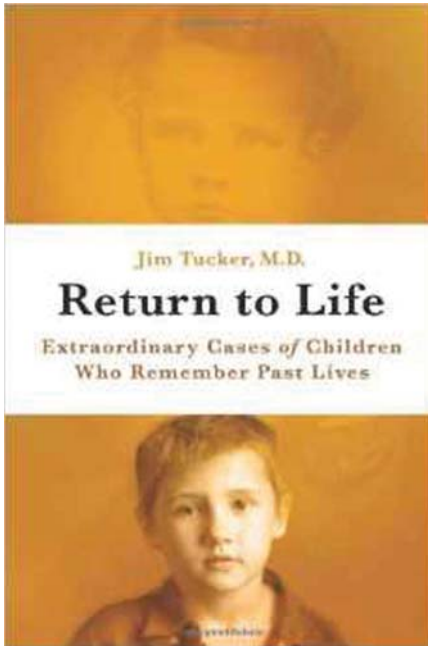
Jim B. Tucker is a child psychiatrist and successor of Ian Stevenson. He describes how he came to work with Stevenson, first as a volunteer, then as associate researcher on a regular basis as a part of his work in child psychiatry. Tucker is now the Bonner-Lowry Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia and devotes a large part of his time to continue the work of Dr. Stevenson who pioneered in the study of 'Cases of the Reincarnation Type' (CORT). *Return To Life* is about Tucker's research and studies of children who claim to remember a past life.

In recent years Tucker has primarily investigated cases in the United States and been successful in finding several of them. His first book, *Life Before Life*, and his participation in TV programs made these cases more visible to the general public. That brought in interesting and impressive cases that form the core of *Return To Life*.

Thanks to Tucker's effort we now have cases that are comparable in quality to some of the best Asian cases. They show the same general features; the child starts to speak about the previous life at an early age, does so repeatedly over some period of time, the contents of the alleged memories often find expression in play and the children show keen interest in past life activity or profession, and many of the cases involve memories of violent death. Most importantly, many of the children make statements that on scrutiny prove verifiable. As in Asia, Tucker shows that a fair number of the American cases remain unsolved however much effort is put into trying to verify them.

Having studied more than ninety cases in Sri Lanka and Lebanon, I am reminded of them reading Tucker's book, and also of some minor points that often go little noticed, such as "I used to be big, now I am little." Or, after tracing the previous family that the child has spoken much about and been keen to find, the child tends to lose interest in that family and expresses the view that he or she wants to stay with the present family, sometimes to the relief of their mothers. Then we have the emotional and psychological component, some with nightmares in the cases of violent death.

Ian Stevenson showed in numerous studies that it is comparatively easy



to find children in Asia who speak about past life memories, and that a fair number of these memories can be verified through investigation. Then the question was repeatedly asked, why do we not find such children in the USA and Europe? Do the Asian cases only appear because of the widespread belief in reincarnation?

Jim Tucker has, with consistent and patient effort, shown that cases of the reincarnation type can indeed be found in the US, impressive cases that have the same basic characteristics as the Asian cases. The cases of James Leininger in Louisiana (the World War II pilot case) and Ryan in Oklahoma (the Hollywood case)—to mention just two—are

comparable to high-grade Asian cases. It is meticulously described how the child's statements were verified one after the other as the investigation progressed. These cases are rare but they can be found. As in Asia they vary in quality and detail from highly impressive verifiable cases to meager unverifiable ones.

With *Return To Life* Jim Tucker has dispelled the idea that reincarnation cases cannot be found in Western, Christian countries. Thereby he has made a lasting contribution and completed the work that Ian Stevenson started with his last book *European Cases of the Reincarnation Type*. Tucker has an easy and gentle style of writing. For me it was a pleasure to read this book.

ERLENDUR HARALDSSON
Emeritus, University of Iceland