

## Recalled by Life: A New Year's Resolution

Written by Kam Williams

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"I came upon a child of God, he was walking along the road  
And I asked him, tell me, where are you going and this he told me...  
We are stardust, we are golden, we are billion-year-old carbon  
And we've got to get ourselves back to the garden."  
-- Joni Mitchell, "Woodstock"

Like millions of other partygoers, I exhibited an irrational exuberance when the ball dropped at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve, as if I'd just lost my cotton-pickin' mind. But that tsunami of euphoria soon subsided, and I found myself feeling a little empty and searching for a deeper, more spiritual significance of the annual ritual.

I wondered whether the turning of the proverbial page from 2009 to 2010 alone was really worthy of such elation in and of itself. After all, what is a year, anyway, beyond a handy way of keeping track of footprints in the sand of time?

Some of my fellow revelers seized on the occasion to recite their resolutions, a mundane list reflecting mostly some rather shallow, selfish and materialistic goals. Sadly, the marketers of Madison Avenue seem to have manipulated most of humanity away from that which actually satiates the soul's thirst and replaced it with the unsettled sense that the key to happiness and fulfillment rests in being able to afford those designer clothes, that state-of-the-art gadget, this new car or a garish McMansion.

I believe that when you find yourself obsessing about acquiring anything, most likely what you really want is more of God. I'm not suggesting that people necessarily need formalized religion to get into that space. For in some instances, that merely leads to more of the same mentality, as implied by the saying, "The closer to Church, the further from God." In quiet moments of prayer or meditation, it is often possible to find all that you crave simply by challenging yourself, wherever you are, to shed the shells of conspicuous consumption and the shell of accumulation.

Since the passing of both of my parents in recent years, I spend a great deal of time in solitude, especially walking in the woods, and I guess that nature functions best for me as that place where I am able to recalibrate and tune in to the essence of what really matters most. Only away from the electronic over-stimulation of the incessant, 21st Century media assault do I find myself recalled by life. And if I'm making any New Year's resolution here, it's that that calling in 2010 won't involve purchasing any status symbols I supposedly can't live without.

Kam Williams is a syndicated film and book critic, and a member of the NJ, NY, CT, PA, MA & US Supreme Court bars.

To hear Woodstock as performed by James Taylor, visit:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2hL6iCSFxk>