

2. **Destiny: Where am I going?**

Hebrews 1:7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. **Hebrews 1:8** But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. **Hebrews 1:9** Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. **Hebrews 1:10** And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: **Hebrews 1:11** They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; **Hebrews 1:12** And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

The question of destiny must be asked **within** a worldview.

Destiny compared to a game:

- What is the game?
- What are the rules of the game?
- How do you (does one) score?
- How do you win? (is scoring enough?)
- Are there losers & winners? **Or, just participation awards for all?**

Does everyone go to heaven and *drink* with Jesus?

A. All is nature & Nature is all:

- No continuing personal existence
- No winners **or** losers ...just nothing
- No justice...**or really** injustice

Nature simply **doesn't** care or even have the ability to care
All else is an attempt to divine nature / mother earth

B. All is god & god is all:

- No continuing, real, personal existence

Actually, in this worldview, personal existence was all just an illusion or, at best, a condition to be escaped.
The body is the prison-house of the soul.

- No **ultimate** winners or losers

Maybe losers for a cycle or two on the wheel

- **Beyond justice! Well, actually there is no justice.**

"My Very Dear Wife" - The Last Letter of Major Sullivan Ballou

Sullivan Ballou was a successful, 32-year-old attorney in Providence, Rhode Island, when Abraham Lincoln called for volunteers in the wake of Fort Sumter. Responding to his nation's call, **the former Speaker of the Rhode Island House of Representatives enlisted in the 2nd Rhode Island Infantry, where he was elected major**. By mid-July, the swirling events in the summer of 1861 had brought Ballou and his unit to a camp of instruction in the nation's capital. With the movement of the federal forces into Virginia imminent, Sullivan Ballou penned this letter to his wife. His concern that he "should fall on the battle-field" proved all too true. **One week after composing his missive, as the war's first major battle began in earnest on the plains of Manassas, Ballou was struck and killed as the Rhode Islanders advanced from Matthews Hill.**

Regrettably, the story of Sullivan Ballou does not end with a hero's death on the field of battle and a piercing letter to a young widow. During the weeks and months that followed the battle, Confederate forces occupying the area of the battlefield desecrated the graves of many fallen Federals. As a means of extracting a revenge of sorts against the Union regiment at whose hand they had suffered, a Georgia regiment sought retribution against the 2nd Rhode Island.

Supposing they had disinterred the body of Colonel John Slocum, commanding the Rhode Islanders during the battle, the Confederates desecrated the body and dumped it in a ravine in the vicinity of the Sudley Methodist Church. Immediately following the Confederate evacuation from the Manassas area in March 1862, a contingent of Rhode Island officials, including Governor William Sprague, visited the Bull Run battlefield to exhume their fallen sons and return them to their native soil. Led to the defiled body, the party examined the remains and a tattered remnant of uniform insignia and discovered that the Confederates had mistakenly uncovered the body of Major Sullivan Ballou, not his commanding officer. The remains of his body were transported back to Rhode Island, where they were laid to rest in Providence's Swan Point Cemetery.

Of the tens of thousands of letters written in the days leading up to the First Battle of Manassas, certainly none is more famous than the last letter of Major Sullivan Ballou. As poignant as it is prescient, Ballou's epistle captures not only the spirit of patriotic righteousness that led many men to the enlistment office, but it also drives home the stark reality that casualties of war were not confined to the battlefield. There were hundreds of thousands of soldiers who would not return to their families over the next four years, leaving behind a Sarah, or a Willie and Edgar who would "never know a father's love and care." Very few, however, had the foresight or the eloquence to leave behind a legacy as touching as Sullivan Ballou's to his grief-stricken family.

Text of Sullivan Ballou's Last Letter

My Very Dear Wife:

Indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days, perhaps to-morrow. Lest I should not be able to write you again, I feel impelled to write a few lines, that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more.

Our movement may be one of a few days duration and full of pleasure and it may be one of severe conflict and death to me. **Not my will, but thine, O God be done. If** it is necessary that I should fall on the battle-field for any country, **I am ready.** I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in, the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American civilization now leans upon the triumph of government, and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and suffering of the Revolution, and I am willing, perfectly willing to lay down all my joys in this life to help maintain this government, and to pay that debt.

But, my dear wife, when I know, that with my own joys, I lay down nearly all of yours, and replace them in this life with care and sorrows, when, after having eaten for long years the bitter fruit of orphanage myself, I must offer it, as their only sustenance, to my dear little children, is it weak or dishonorable, while the banner of my purpose floats calmly and proudly in the breeze, that my unbounded love for you, my darling wife and children, should struggle in fierce, though useless, contest with my love of country.

I cannot describe to you my feelings on this calm summer night, when two thousand men are sleeping around me, many of them enjoying the last, perhaps, before that of death, **and I, suspicious that Death is creeping behind me with his fatal dart, am communing with God, my country and thee.**

I have sought most closely and diligently, and often in my breast, for a wrong motive in this hazarding the happiness of those I loved, and I could not find one. A pure love of my country, and of the principles I have often advocated before the people, and "the name of honor, that I love more than I fear death," have called upon me, and I have obeyed.

Sarah, my love for you is deathless. It seems to bind me with mighty cables, that nothing but Omnipotence can break; and yet, my love of country comes over me like a strong wind, and bears me irresistibly on with all those chains, to the battlefield. **The memories of all the blissful moments I have spent with you come crowding over me, and I feel most deeply grateful to God and you, that I have enjoyed them so long.** And

how hard it is for me to give them up, and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together, and seen our boys grow up to honorable manhood around us.

I know I have but few claims upon Divine Providence, but something whispers to me, perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar, that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed. **If I do not, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, nor that, when my last breath escapes me on the battle-field, it will whisper your name.**

Forgive my many faults, and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless, how foolish I have oftentimes been! How gladly would I wash out with my tears, every little spot upon your happiness, and struggle with all the misfortune of this world, to shield you and my children from harm. But I cannot, I must watch you from the spirit land and hover near you, while you buffet the storms with your precious little freight, and wait with sad patience **till we meet to part no more.**

But, O Sarah, if the dead can come back to this earth, and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you in the garish day, and the darkest night amidst your happiest scenes and gloomiest hours always, always, and, if the soft breeze fans your cheek, it shall be my breath; or the cool air cools your throbbing temples, it shall be my spirit passing by.

Sarah, do not mourn me dear; think I am gone, and wait for me, for we shall meet again.

As for my little boys, they will grow as I have done, and never know a father's love and care. Little Willie is too young to remember me long, and my blue-eyed Edgar will keep my frolics with him among the dimmest memories of his childhood. Sarah, I have unlimited confidence in your maternal care, and your development of their characters. Tell my two mothers, I call God's blessing upon them. **O Sarah, I wait for you there! Come to me, and lead thither my children.**

- Sullivan