

But what is a shape? Only a cup for the blazing soul that  
God provides us all.     --The Fire Balloons, Ray Bradbury

#### MESSIAH

"It has to happen. Yes, I've thought it out.  
Already happened more than once, no doubt,"  
Grey voiced his thesis. As he rose to leave  
the unconvinced one's hand was on his sleeve.

"But, Reverend Grey, how can you be so sure?  
Such outer space theology's impure!  
The Bible doesn't mention other planets;  
there's work enough to do on our own granites."

"Yes, Father Black, with that I do agree.  
More reason He must go Himself, you see.  
But as for mention-- 'Other sheep have I,  
not of this fold...' We've chosen to apply  
it to the Gentiles. Yet it could refer  
to beings men have never dreamed. And were  
they given souls, would they not need Him, too?  
It's not incredible to feel it's true."

"And do they look like us?" asked Father Black,  
"or like the signs of some weird zodiac?  
Or maybe they resemble cartoon creatures  
with alien parts and wild unheard-of features.  
And will there be another virgin birth,  
another resurrection as on Earth?"

"They'll have what's needed for their own redemption.  
Their sins must be paid for without exemption.  
But as for how they look," mused Reverend Grey,  
"like us, they're also made from sacred clay,  
and in His image too. 'His image' means  
what pleases Him. In substance or in form.  
It doesn't mean we represent the norm.  
Or even that we look like Him. We're God's  
design conception-- whether peas or pods."

That night the priest slept fitfully. At dawn  
he woke, then closed his eyes. Withdrawn  
this side of dreams, he saw new scenes unfold  
as once again the old words were re-told: