

Made in the Express Image of the Father

Introduction

There are a number of statements from Ellen White's writings that use expressions that some believe support the idea that Jesus was literally begotten of the Father at some point prior to the incarnation. We will evaluate these expressions in the light of many clear statements made by her and of many Scripture passages that she drew upon in making use of these expressions.

Made in the Express Image of the Father

"The Eternal Father, the unchangeable one, gave his only begotten Son, **tore from his bosom Him who was made in the express image of his person**, and sent him down to earth to reveal how greatly he loved mankind." - *Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895

That the words "tore from His bosom" are not referring to a begetting of Jesus before the incarnation can be seen from the passage itself. Note the three expressions: "gave his only begotten son", "tore from his bosom", and "sent him down to earth". The first and last of these three expressions are clearly references to the incarnation, so the tearing of His Son "from His bosom" must also apply to that event, since it is mentioned between the other two.

The expression "tore from His bosom" is a reference to the tremendous pain that the Father experienced in sending His Son to earth - an infinite sacrifice made for the salvation of man. This can be seen from three other passages that use similar wording:

"He first loved us, and **withheld not from us** His beloved Son, but **gave Him from His bosom** to die that we might have life." - *Testimonies*, Vol. 2, pg 115

"**God has made one great condescension** to save erring, lost man: **He yielded His dearly Beloved from His bosom**, to suffer indignity, scorn and hate, to die an ignominious death upon the cross." - *Letter 1*, March 3, 1858

"They touched their harps and sung a note higher than they had done before, for the great mercy and condescension of God in yielding up his dearly Beloved to die for a race of rebels, and praise and adoration was poured forth for the self-denial and sacrifice of Jesus; that he would consent to **leave the bosom of his Father**, and **choose a life of suffering and anguish, and die an ignominious death** to give life to others. Said the angel, "Think ye that the Father yielded up his dearly beloved Son without a struggle? No, no." **It was even a struggle with the God of heaven whether to let guilty man perish, or to give his darling Son to die for them.**" - *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, 1854, pg. 47

The expression, "who was made in the express image of his person" is unique in the writings of Ellen White, occurring only in the above passage. The words "express image" occur 168 times in her writings and are based on Hebrews 1:3, which says:

Heb 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and **the express image of his person**, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

[Of significant note: the word translated "being" in Heb 1:3 (Gr. *ōn*) is the present active participle, which denotes absolute and timeless existence. This is in contrast to the word "being" in Heb 1:4 ("Being made so much better than the angels...") which is the perfect participle (Gr. *genomenos*) and means "having become".]

Some of these 168 passages refer to Jesus before His incarnation and others after it. But other than the above passage, none of these passages say that Jesus was "made" in that image.

A selection of these passages follow.

Pre-Incarnation

"In the work of creation, Christ was with God. He was one with God, equal with him, the brightness of his glory, **the express image of his person**, the representative of the Father." - *Signs of the Times*, Feb 13, 1893

"Yet he who made all things, he who was equal with the Father, one with God, who was in **the express image of his person** and character, left the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, clothed his divinity with humanity, and came into our world in order that humanity might touch divinity, and divinity sanctify humanity." - *Signs of the Times*, March 28, 1895

"Before Christ came in the likeness of men, he existed in **the express image of his Father**. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God." - *Youth's Instructor*, Dec 20, 1900

Incarnation

"Looking upon Christ in the flesh, we look upon God in humanity, and see in Him the brightness of divine glory, **the express image of God the Father**." - *Selected Messages*, book 3, pg 127,128

"The Son of God came to our world with his heart overflowing with love for fallen man. He was in the **express image of God**, and equal with God in character. He was the brightness of his Father's glory, **the express image of his person**." - *Signs of the Times*, Nov 5, 1894

"Jesus, **the express image of the Father's person**, the effulgence of His glory; the self-denying Redeemer, throughout His pilgrimage of love on earth, was a living representation of the character of the law of God." - *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings*, pg. 49

"Christ came to do the will of His heavenly Father, and He fulfilled His mission. He came in perfect love, as the full expression of the heart and mind of God. He was the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His person; and yet in personal appearance He was as a humble man, meek and lowly." - *Manuscript Releases*, Vol 18, pg 174

"Only think of it! No one could bear the stroke of God's justice but His only beloved Son. He came in **the express image of His Father's person**, one with God." - *Sermons and Talks*, Vol 1, pg 254

Post-Resurrection

"I have often seen the lovely Jesus, that He is a person. I asked Him if His Father was a person and had a form like Himself. Said Jesus, 'I am in **the express image of My Father's person.**'" - *Early Writings*, pg 77

Indefinite Time

"The Son was the brightness of the Father's glory, and **the express image of his person.** He possessed divine excellence and greatness. He was equal with God." - *Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol 2, 1877

"He who was the brightness of God's glory, and **the express image of him** took man's, nature, to suffer affliction, scorn and hatred of the very ones he came to save." - *Signs of the Times*, Aug 11, 1878

"And with clearness and power Christ set forth the attributes of God. He is 'the brightness of His glory, and **the express image of His person,**' even "the image of the invisible God;" yet He humbled Himself, taking the form of a servant." - *Signs of the Times*, May 16, 1900

"We cannot by searching find out God. But He has revealed Himself in the character of Christ, who is the brightness of the Father's glory and **the express image of His person.**" - *Manuscript Releases*, Vol 21, pg 410

"He was in the **express image of his Father**, not in features alone, but in perfection of character." - *Review & Herald*, Dec 17, 1872

"Christ alone was able to represent the Deity. He who had been in the presence of the Father from the beginning, he who was **the express image of the invisible God**, was alone sufficient to accomplish this work. No verbal description could reveal God to the world." - *Review & Herald*, June 25, 1895

"In Him is gathered all the glory of the Father, the fullness of the Godhead. He is the brightness of the Father's glory and **the express image of His person.** The glory of the attributes of God is expressed in His character." - *Christ's Object Lessons*, pg 115

From this representative selection it's apparent that Ellen White uses the words "express image" to represent Jesus' relationship to the Father throughout the whole of His existence.

The final question is, when was He **made** in the express image of the Father, as stated by Ellen White?

There are 19 instances where the word "made" is applied to Jesus in the New Testament. Nine of these occur in the book of Hebrews where the words "express image" also occur. These instances refer to either the incarnation of Jesus, His substitutionary death, or His subsequent exaltation and mediatorial work for us.

There is not a single reference to pre-incarnation times.

Joh 1:14 And the Word was **made** flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Act 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath **made** that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Rom 1:3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was **made** of the seed of David according to the flesh;

1Co 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is **made** unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

2Co 5:21 For he hath **made** him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Gal 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being **made** a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

Gal 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, **made** of a woman, made under the law,

Php 2:7 But **made** himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

Heb 1:4 Being **made** so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was **made** a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Heb 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be **made** like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Heb 5:5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be **made** an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

Heb 5:9 And being **made** perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

Heb 6:20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, **made** an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Heb 7:15,16 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is **made**, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

Heb 7:22 By so much was Jesus **made** a surety of a better testament.

Heb 7:26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and **made** higher than the heavens;

Given that Ellen White's writings are full of Scriptural allusions, and because the word "made" is never used in the New Testament to apply to Jesus before His incarnation, it's highly unlikely that she would have used the expression "Him who was made in the express image of his person" to apply to Jesus before His incarnation. It's much more likely that she had some of the above passages in mind when she wrote this, particularly since the expressions "made" and "express image" are practically in the same verse:

Heb 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the **express image** of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Heb 1:4 Being **made** so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

These verses are referring to the exaltation of Jesus after His resurrection.