

# All Things That Were Made

*On Creation, Creatures, and Their Creator*

*Edited by*

Daniel Lendman and Brandon L. Wanless



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*In memory of Fr. Matthew Lamb,  
whose life and teaching continue to be a guiding light to us.  
Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord!*



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## *Abbreviations*

|                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AB                             | Anchor Bible                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| ACW                            | Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation                                                                                                                                                        |
| ANF                            | Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Hendrickson, 2004)                                                                                                                    |
| BAC                            | Biblioteca de autores cristianos                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <i>De articulis fidei</i>      | Aquinas, <i>De articulis fidei et ecclesiae sacramentis</i>                                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>De malo</i>                 | Aquinas, <i>Quaestiones disputatae de malo</i>                                                                                                                                                                            |
| DH                             | Heinrich Denzinger, Peter Hünemann, Helmut Hoping, Robert L. Fastiggi, and Anne Englund Nash, eds., <i>Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals</i> , 43rd ed. (Ignatius, 2012) |
| DR                             | Douay Rheims Bible                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| ESV                            | English Standard Version                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <i>Expositio posteriorum</i>   | Aquinas, Commentary on Aristotle's <i>Posterior Analytics</i>                                                                                                                                                             |
| FaCh                           | Fathers of the Church                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <i>In De caelo et mundo</i>    | Aquinas, Commentary on Aristotle's <i>De caelo et mundo</i>                                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>In divinis nominibus</i>    | Aquinas, Commentary on <i>Divine Names</i>                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <i>In I, II, III, IV Sent.</i> | Aquinas, Commentary on Lombard's <i>Sentences</i>                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <i>In Phys.</i>                | Aquinas, Commentary on Aristotle's <i>Physics</i>                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <i>In ST</i>                   | Cajetan, Commentary on Aquinas's <i>Summa theologiae</i>                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <i>In Symb. Apostolorum</i>    | Aquinas, Sermons on the Apostles' Creed                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| JSNTSS                         | Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series                                                                                                                                                             |
| LBRS                           | Lexham Bible Reference Series                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## ABBREVIATIONS

|                                 |                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Leonine ed.                     | Aquinas, <i>Opera omnia iussu impensaue Leonis XIII. P. M. edita</i> (Ex Typographia Polyglotta S. C. de Propaganda Fide, 1918–1948) |
| LNTS                            | Library of New Testament Studies                                                                                                     |
| NPNF 1                          | Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series                                                                                         |
| NPNF 2                          | Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series                                                                                        |
| NRSVCE                          | New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition                                                                                        |
| OBT                             | Overtures to Biblical Theology                                                                                                       |
| PAL                             | Pontifical Academy for Life                                                                                                          |
| PCNT                            | Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament                                                                                           |
| PG                              | Patrologia Graeca, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1857–1866)                                                                         |
| PL                              | Patrologia Latina, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1841–1855)                                                                         |
| PNTC                            | Pillar New Testament Commentary                                                                                                      |
| PPS                             | Popular Patristics Series                                                                                                            |
| RRRCT                           | Ressourcement: Retrieval & Renewal in Catholic Thought                                                                               |
| RSPR                            | Routledge Studies in the Philosophy of Religion                                                                                      |
| RSV                             | Revised Standard Version                                                                                                             |
| RSVCE                           | Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition                                                                                            |
| SacPag                          | Sacra Pagina                                                                                                                         |
| <i>SBdT</i>                     | Aquinas, Commentary on Boethius's <i>De Trinitate</i>                                                                                |
| SBT 1                           | Studies in Biblical Theology, First Series                                                                                           |
| <i>ScG</i>                      | Aquinas, <i>Summa contra gentiles</i>                                                                                                |
| <i>ST</i>                       | Aquinas, <i>Summa theologiae</i>                                                                                                     |
| STDJ                            | Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah                                                                                          |
| SPHP                            | Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy                                                                                  |
| <i>Super Evangelium Ioannis</i> | Aquinas, Commentary on the Gospel of John                                                                                            |
| <i>Super Job</i>                | Aquinas, Commentary on Job                                                                                                           |
| <i>Super Psalmos</i>            | Aquinas, Commentary on the Psalms                                                                                                    |
| <i>Super Rom.</i>               | Aquinas, Commentary on Romans                                                                                                        |
| PSWML                           | The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther                                                                                    |
| TRS                             | Thomistic Ressourcement Series                                                                                                       |
| WBC                             | Word Biblical Commentary                                                                                                             |
| WSA                             | The Works of Saint Augustine                                                                                                         |

## *Introduction*

### The Relevance of a Doctrine of Creation

*Daniel Lendman and Brandon L. Wanless*

Through him were made all things; of the things that were made nothing  
was made without him.

JOHN 1:3 (AUTHOR'S TRANSLATION)

Before Pope Leo XIV celebrated the first “Mass for the Care of Creation,”<sup>1</sup> and before Pope Francis penned the groundbreaking encyclical *Laudato si'*, it was Pope Benedict XVI who was dubbed the “Green Pope,”<sup>2</sup> thanks to his consistent call to what Francis would later call a Christian “ecological conversion” unto an “integral ecology.”<sup>3</sup> Of course, Francis himself was echoing Pope St. John Paul II’s own summons to establish a truly “human ecology”<sup>4</sup> and the saintly pontiff’s warning against “a callous disregard for the hidden, yet perceivable requirements of the order and harmony which govern nature itself.”<sup>5</sup> Yet, the theme of creation was not predominant in papal pronouncements before

1. Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Decree on the Formulary and Biblical Readings for the Mass for the Care of Creation* (June 8, 2025). Unless otherwise noted, the texts of papal addresses and curial documents cited in this chapter are those found on the Vatican website.

2. David Stone, “Benedict XVI, the Green Pope,” *Newsweek*, April 16, 2008, <https://www.newsweek.com/benedict-xvi-green-pope-86391>.

3. Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*: Encyclical Letter on the Care for Our Common Home (May 24, 2015), 221–336 in *Pope Francis: The Complete Encyclicals, Bulls, and Apostolic Exhortations* (Ave Maria Press, 2016), esp. ch. IV and §216–21.

4. Pope St. John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*: Encyclical Letter on the Hundredth Anniversary of *Rerum novarum* (May 1, 1991), (United States Catholic Conference, 1991), §38–39.

5. Pope St. John Paul II, Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace XXIII: “Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation” (January 1, 1990), §5.

## INTRODUCTION

Benedict's pontificate. One could say, along with *Newsweek's* David Stone, that Pope Benedict XVI, even as early as 2008, was the first pope of the modern age who "has made being green a central part of his teachings and policy-making."<sup>6</sup> It was Benedict who prioritized the theme of creation—and especially our own status as creatures—as recurrent in his magisterium and catechesis.

For instance, in his 2010 Message for the World Day of Peace, Pope Benedict wrote:

Without entering into the merit of specific technical solutions, the Church is nonetheless concerned, as an "expert in humanity", to call attention to the relationship between the Creator, human beings and the created order.<sup>7</sup>

The harmony between the Creator, mankind and the created world, as described by Sacred Scripture, was disrupted by the sin of Adam and Eve, by man and woman, who wanted to take the place of God and refused to acknowledge that they were his creatures. . . . Human beings let themselves be mastered by selfishness; they misunderstood the meaning of God's command and exploited creation out of a desire to exercise absolute domination over it. . . . Biblical Revelation made us see that nature is a gift of the Creator, who gave it an inbuilt order and enabled man to draw from it the principles needed to "till it and keep it" (cf. Gen. 2:15). . . . Once man, instead of acting as God's co-worker, sets himself up in place of God, he ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature. . . .<sup>8</sup>

The quest for peace by people of good will surely would become easier if all acknowledge the indivisible relationship between God, human beings and the whole of creation. In the light of divine Revelation and in fidelity to the Church's Tradition, Christians have their own contribution to make. They contemplate the cosmos and its marvels in light of the creative work of the Father and the redemptive work of Christ.<sup>9</sup>

In multiple addresses and texts, Benedict repeatedly called attention to the critical need to recognize our own status as creatures, which status is directly attacked and rejected by contemporary philosophies.

In fact, in one of the final general audiences of his pontificate, the late Holy Father emphasized the Biblical revelation that "God formed man of dust from the ground (cf. Gen 2:7). This means that we are not God, we did not make ourselves, we are earth."<sup>10</sup> In the same context, he asserted that this temptation

6. Stone, "Benedict XVI, the Green Pope."

7. Pope Benedict XVI, Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace XLIII: "If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation" (January 1, 2010), §4.

8. Pope Benedict XVI, "If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation," §6.

9. Pope Benedict XVI, "If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation," §14.

10. Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience (February 6, 2013).

to refuse to properly submit to God as our Creator is at the root of all evil in the world and is the recurring temptation present in all sin. Benedict warns:

Sacred Scripture presents the temptation of Adam and Eve as the core of temptation and sin. . . . Their temptation became the temptation to build by themselves the world in which to live, to refuse to accept the limitations of being creatures, the limitations of good and evil, of morality; they saw their dependence on the love of God the Creator as a burden of which to free themselves. This is always the essence of temptation. But when the relationship with God is falsified, with a lie, putting ourselves in his place, all other relationships are altered. The other then becomes a rival, a threat. . . . Actually, in opposing their Creator people go against themselves, deny their origin and consequently their truth; and evil, with its painful chain of sorrow and death, enters the world.<sup>11</sup>

So fundamental is the relationship of creature to Creator that if it is “falsified,” it leads to an alteration of all other human relationships, relationships among humans as well as the relationships between humanity and the rest of the created world. This refusal of the creaturely status is a sinful attitude that—according to St. Thomas Aquinas—even the demons were not strictly capable of.<sup>12</sup> However, according to Benedict, for mankind, it constitutes the very essence of sin.

On the other hand, like the fallen angels, what fallen man desires in removing his creaturely status is the autonomy over self, a glory in one’s own power and accomplishment. Aquinas writes:

If someone desires . . . to be like God, he does not sin, provided that he desires to obtain such likeness to God according to the right order, namely, that he obtain it from God. Truly he would sin, however, if he were to desire, even according to justice, to be like unto God, but as of his own power, and not from the power of God.<sup>13</sup>

To no longer be subject to a Creator is also no longer to be capable of receiving supernatural gifts of grace and glory, since they exceed our innate natural capacities. Moreover, such an attitude even results in an abuse of the gifts of nature as possessions to be exploited or manipulated according to human cupidity and selfish ends.

Thus, the doctrine of creation is foundational to the human vocation to beatitude; this doctrine finds import not only with respect to our stewardship

11. Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience (February 6, 2013).

12. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, q. 63, a. 3.

13. Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, q. 63, a. 3, c. (author’s translation).

## INTRODUCTION

of the created environment, but especially as regards mankind's own creatureliness. Indeed, negligence of the latter risks completely undermining our obligation of caring for the cosmos. Pope Francis strongly stressed this necessary tension between mankind's status as creatures and the unique role of mankind within creation:

[O]ne cannot prescind from humanity. There can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself. There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology. . . . Human beings cannot be expected to feel responsibility for the world unless, at the same time, their unique capacities of knowledge, will, freedom and responsibility are recognized and valued.<sup>14</sup>

A proper theology of creation must account for the natural world, plants, animals, and so on—what has traditionally been labelled “lower creation”—while also accounting for the rational creature of the human being, integrating the two within a coherent and holistic account. In fact, as both Francis and Benedict teach us, a neglect of man's own creaturely status correlates to a neglect of lower creation.

However, the theme of creation in theology—while certainly relevant for environmental conservation efforts and the moral and anthropological questions elicited thereby—cannot be limited to the rational creature and to lower creation, let alone to higher spiritual creatures. Instead, a treatment of God as Creator is necessary and primary. Any theology of creation that neglects the Creator cannot be a true “theology.” The Catholic doctrine of creation—rather than being merely about the cosmological origin of all reality—necessarily concerns creatures in their ongoing preservation by and relations to the Creator God. As Benedict emphasized in his World Day of Peace message, we must consider not only the created natural order and the human creature, but the Creator, as well, including the relationships to be affirmed between creatures and the Creator. Thus, the doctrine of creation elicits a broad range of theological questions, from the most speculative (in natural theology, metaphysics, angelology, and anthropology) to considerations of a moral and sacramental nature. It is with this broad scope in view that this volume came to be assembled.

In June 2024, more than 150 scholars and graduate students from across the United States and abroad converged on the campus of The Saint Paul Seminary for the fourth annual academic theology conference of The Sacra Doctrina Project: “All Things That Were Made: On Creation, Creatures, and Their Creator.”

<sup>14</sup> Francis, *Laudato si'*, §118. Cf. Benedict XVI, “If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Respect Creation,” §13.

The conference—co-sponsored by the Seminary’s Institute for Catholic Theological Formation—explored the doctrine of creation with around one hundred total papers presented. This present volume features roughly a tenth of the scholarship from that gathering, containing the two keynote addresses, two plenary papers, and a half-dozen other papers topically representative of the conference sessions and of considerable quality meriting inclusion.<sup>15</sup> Other worthwhile scholarship is being published by *Lux Veritatis: A Journal of Speculative Theology*, the new academic journal of The Sacra Doctrina Project, including the plenary panel on evolution and Catholic doctrine.

In the opening essay of this volume, Christopher J. Thompson offers a sapiential *fervorino*, summoning Catholic theologians and philosophers to join him in pursuing Pope Francis’s “ecological conversion” for our minds, with an appeal to engagement with “Green Thomism” as an avenue for serious reflection on how the thought of Aquinas can adequately “supply the intellectual wherewithal” to develop “Catholic ecological sensibilities beyond sentimentality.” Especially pertinent are the Thomistic accounts of the human person, the cosmos and lower creation, and creatures’ revelatory relationships to their Creator. Thompson provides glimpses of how to employ a Green Thomist’s outlook by exploring key fundamental truths concerning epistemology, lower creation’s unfallen status, the preternatural gifts, the *preambula fidei*, natural law, and teleology. This keynote address serves as a most fitting introduction to this collection of essays, forecasting the myriad of topics to be undertaken in exploring the doctrine of creation.

Fr. Dylan Schrader, in his “The End of the World As We Know It,” articulates a critical distinction regarding a proper teleological account of God’s creative activity, unfortunately forgotten among the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century manualists. In short, he explains that the end of God’s act of creating is not God’s extrinsic glory, but his intrinsic glory; to assert the former would be to “unwittingly treat the communication itself [of God’s goodness to creatures] as a kind of acquisition” on the part of God. Instead, he says, “God is the end [of creation] because he is the good creatures seek, not because they are a good he seeks.” Schrader goes on to outline various implications of this distinction: that God could have created a material world without intelligences; that non-intelligent creatures have their own dignity; and likewise that human beings have a relatively infinite dignity. The essay thus provides a

15. The co-editors wish to note that eight of the ten essays of this volume (all but the keynotes) were subjected to double-blind peer review through the administration of *Lux Veritatis: A Journal of Speculative Theology*.

## INTRODUCTION

coherent account of the bold claim recently articulated in *Dignitas infinita*, the April 2024 document from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

John Brungardt's plenary paper takes as its starting point the verse from the Book of Wisdom, "Thou hast ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight" (Wis 11:21). From here, he lays out a cosmological view of the order of creation. Drawing widely from sources throughout the tradition, as well as engaging with contemporary scientists and philosophers, Brungardt shows how the mathematical models used in contemporary studies do see something in the measure and number, that is, the formal causes of things, but their neglect of the weight of things, that is, their neglect of final causality, renders their accounts incomplete. As Brungardt succinctly puts it, "God is far more than a mathematical physicist. God is governor of the universe."

Next, Br. Matthew T. Warnez, BH, offers an alternative interpretation of Aquinas's theory of natural evil, contending that Aquinas answers the problem by holding that natural evil is only evil *secundum quid*. After reviewing Aquinas's taxonomy of evil, Warnez distinguishes between two forms of natural evil, namely, those evils inherent to lower creation, like animal pain, and those evils which the natural world inflicts upon man, like natural disasters, arguing that Aquinas regards neither as true evils *simpliciter*, for each is ordered to the good of man and to the overall good of the universe. This "eucosmic principle," as Warnez terms it, holds that since natural evil conduces to the good of the whole, God can be identified as its cause without derogating from his goodness. Whereas much of modern theodicy takes for granted that there is true evil in the natural world, Aquinas instead invites us to recall the Biblical and patristic confidence in creation's unadulterated goodness.

In his essay "John's 'Week of the New Creation': Six or Seven Days?," Daniel M. Garland, Jr., takes up the exegetical debate about the first several days of Jesus Christ's public ministry narrated in the Fourth Gospel. In his succinct argument for the wedding at Cana occurring on the sixth day of Christ's ministry, Garland takes account of both the Gospel of John as a whole and the Gospel's "strong verbal parallels" to the creation account of Genesis 1–2 and the Sinai covenant theophany of Exodus 19. He argues that the entirety of John from Cana to Christ's toil on the Cross "takes place on the 'sixth day' of Jesus's work of bringing about a new creation." Instead of Cana as the completed new creation wrought by Christ, it is the sabbatical rest in the tomb on the seventh day and Christ's bodily resurrection on the first day of the next that inaugurate an eternal re-creation.

Continuing that theme of re-creation, David Francis Sherwood next examines the Mariology of the twentieth-century philosopher Charles De Koninck,

particularly “how [Mary] is a first principle of re-creation in the order of . . . grace.” Sherwood explains De Koninck’s claims that Mary is the personified Wisdom in the Old Testament sapiential literature of Proverbs and Sirach. De Koninck’s aim, as Sherwood demonstrates, is to show how “Mary exercises universal causality in the order of grace,” that is, how she is Mediatrix of all grace, “as the Theotokos and Co-Redemptrix.” That this is “without prejudice to her Son” is precisely because, as De Koninck himself states, “Christ assimilates the Blessed Virgin to Himself, in the hypostatic order, as regards both nature and grace.” As Theotokos, Mary is principle and origin of God in the Incarnation; as Co-Redemptrix, she is the premier cooperating (and subordinated) principle of satisfactory merit. As uniquely conceived in grace, the Blessed Mother is likewise a cooperating and subordinated principle of grace according to its “common law” among the rest of mankind.

Supporting Pope Francis’s claim in *Laudato si’* that everything is connected, Christopher Reilly argues that emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence do not operate in a moral vacuum. Instead, they are conceived and developed in a cultural context marked by a “practical relativism, the technocratic paradigm, and the primacy of instrumental rationality.” It is particularly the instrumental rationality presupposed in technological development that “is not ethically neutral, but stifles man’s capacity for moral action,” since it limits the notion of reason to the empirical and pragmatic as well as the notion of freedom to absolute individual autonomy. The concern for the good and the right is replaced by a concern for success and achieving intermediate or “instrumental” ends—“discrete, preference driven, and pragmatic”—that often do not correlate with man’s ultimate end. Such instrumentalization wedded so closely with technological progress contributes to a moral environment that threatens both human life and the natural environment, as both can easily be reduced to objects of manipulation.

Fr. John M. Wilson, in his essay “‘The Kingdom of God Is Not Food and Drink,’” addresses the ecclesial and pastoral implications surrounding Christians’ “freedom with respect to created things” in their usage thereof in a religious context. Taking up Aquinas’s commentary on the food discipline disputes arising in the apostolic age between the “weak” in faith and the “strong,” where “all involved take for granted that it matters greatly whether or not one is pleasing God by one’s eating and drinking,” Wilson argues for Aquinas’s defense of the Pauline admonitions to both weak and strong Christians alike. “[Paul] refers the created order to supernatural ends both when he thanks God for his [food] and when he abstains from it.” Thereafter, Wilson applies the same pastoral principles to contemporary questions of ecclesial discipline, which all too

## INTRODUCTION

often can be quite varied, even within a single parochial community, offering suggestions for “fruitful pastoral accompaniment” for the weak as well as those strong in faith.

John Froula’s paper takes us to the limits of the created order. In his paper he defends the definition of the supernatural given by Anscar Vonier in his book *The Human Soul and Its Relation to Other Spirits*: “The state of the created finite spiritual being into which it is raised by a direct act of God, separate from the act that created the spirit, following upon that first act, and making it capable of seeing God face to face.” As Froula argues, the beatific vision cannot be a necessary exigency or complementary aspect of any created nature, as opposed to other perfections that might be above a given nature but not above created nature simply speaking. At the same time, beatific life is a kind of infinite thing belonging to God that can be shared because of its objective character. Consequently, beatific life is the only thing that is beyond created nature and yet still givable to it, by an elevation that is the created supernatural. Froula defends Vonier’s definition by making a helpful distinction between the absolute and the relative supernatural, and a comparison of the orders of grace and trial between humans and angels.

Finally, as the conference’s final keynote speaker, William E. Carroll argues strenuously for the philosophical character of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, namely that “creation as metaphysical dependence . . . can be known by reason alone.” Mining the whole of Aquinas’s corpus, Carroll argues against the claims of some other Thomists who posit that creation is knowable only by divine revelation. Instead, after demonstrating the metaphysical distinction between creation and change, Carroll shows that within reason’s reach is a proper understanding of the relation of being “a being ‘by participation,’” which relation is what is meant by the term *creation*. Carroll also explores the eternal world hypothesis as well as creatures’ role as secondary causes. Finally, in an appendix, Carroll defends the position that Aquinas’s own understanding of the philosophical character of creation is fully congruous with that of Aristotle. Throughout, rather than dividing philosophy and theology too widely, he showcases their complementarity while outlining their distinctiveness in how each approaches the doctrine of creation.

In last summer’s inaugural Mass for the Care of Creation, Pope Leo exhorted his hearers most of all to both contemplation of creation and praise of its Creator as the key to restoring proper relationships of mankind with God and with the created world:

With infinite love, God has created all things and given them life. . . . Only a contemplative gaze can change our relationship with creation and bring us

*The Relevance of a Doctrine of Creation*

out of the ecological crisis brought on by the breakdown of our relationship with God, with our neighbors and with the earth that is the effect of sin.<sup>16</sup>

Pope Francis similarly exhorted us to remember that, “rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with praise.”<sup>17</sup> We hope that this volume, while assuredly an exercise for its authors in contemplation and praise, is especially opportune for many readers to affirm along with the Psalmist:

Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who have pleasure in them.  
PSALM 111:2 (RSVCE)

NOVEMBER 23, 2025

*Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe*

16. Pope Leo XIV, Homily at Holy Mass for the Care of Creation (July 9, 2025).

17. Francis, *Laudato si'*, §12.