



SIBYLS LOGO - ROBYN GOLDEN - HANV 28 MAY 2018

The soul wants to be acknowledged and nurtured. The True Self wants to bloom and grow. And the way to begin this spiritual flowering is to confront your false selves—the ego patterns you have created—and come home to who you really are inside.

Sue Monk Kidd

Sibyls Newsletter 117

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Editorial

Dear Sibyls

I am particularly delighted to share with you in this edition the very moving trans testimonies from Sibyl Jan and Victoria from Spain who is part of the European Forum of LGBTQ+ Christian Groups. I am sure many of us can identify with much of what they say. Both Jan and Victoria found that their gender journey was ultimately a profoundly spiritual one, that when their eyes were opened to the truth about themselves they started to see much else far more clearly as well. And as Jan says, even if our own image of ourselves remains a little blurred or flawed, God sees beyond that to the real us inside. As Victoria says, seeing the truth about ourselves can be a very humbling and painful experience. But as she also says, there are few more dangerous things in life than following the easy path.

Life for trans people has never been easy and has in recent years got quite a bit harder. In the face of this Sibyl Kate invokes the Dunkirk spirit: sometimes, where battle ships are lacking, flotillas of small boats can come to our rescue. We may be beleaguered but you won't see us flying the white flag.

Some of us will soon be having the joy of meeting in person for our residential weekend at Holy Rood House. As we gather, every Sibyl, every trans person, every oppressed and marginalised person will be held in prayer. May God bless all of you and bring you healing and peace.

Pauline xx

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Introduction to the Sibyls

We are a Christian spirituality group for gender-variant people.

The main source of information about the Sibyls is our website: www.sibyls.co.uk. This includes:

- How to join the Sibyls confidential mailing list.
- Planned events, supportive churches and inclusive faith groups.
- Resources, such as books and signposted web links.
- Recent Sibyls newsletters.
- Our listening service, if you need to talk to someone about being a trans Christian.
- How to contact us.

Sibyls Facebook groups

There are two Facebook groups which enable Sibyls and other trans Christians to communicate and exchange views and news. They are:

- Sibyls Members 'Group – send a request via Facebook to join this confidential group.
- TranschristianUK – an open group, do join up if you are not already a member.

WhatsApp Group

Sibyls has a WhatsApp group and all are welcome to join. Just click this link and an admin will admit you.

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/DIG1NE2eVzaL5BUFW5Q4FR?mode=gi t>

Meetings for personal conversation and sharing

Some of you might appreciate the opportunity for more personal conversation on Zoom, rather than the regular large sessions. We can help arrange meet-ups for e.g. just three Sibyls – this would enable easier direct conversation and sharing (with some ground rules). If you would like this to happen, please email pauline.fleck@btinternet.com and we will see what is possible.

More detailed information about our online activity is available by post if you do not have access to the internet. Please contact Pauline as above.

Services and events in 2026

Online

Sibyls Zoom services and fellowship meetings take place online, usually around the 25th day of the month, beginning at 7.00 pm.. We aim to send out invitations about a week in advance.

London group

Sibyls based in or near London are welcome to take part in our quarterly communion service, at 6.00pm, at St Anne's Church, 55 Dean Street, London W1D 6AF, followed by a meal in a nearby restaurant. There will be a Transgender Day of Remembrance service (live-streamed) at St Anne's at lunchtime on 20 November – further information nearer the time. For more information contact Susan Gilchrist at:

susan@crestcons.net

Events in North Wales / West Cheshire

Jenny-Anne Bishop OBE is the Chair of the UNIQUE Transgender Network.

See <https://www.uniquetg.org.uk/>

(there's a lot of interesting information, not just for those lucky enough to live in North Wales. The September newsletter includes helpful guidance on access to single sex loos).

Jenny-Anne hosts an online service every Sunday at 4.00pm for LGBTQ+ people. Zoom link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88502951623>

Residential Weekend 2026

Our residential weekend will be at Holy Rood House, Thirsk

(<https://www.holyroodhouse.org.uk/>) from Friday 23 October to Sunday 25 October.

Bookings for the event have now closed but it might be possible to squeeze an extra attender or two in – if you wish to attend please contact Pauline urgently.



Jan's story

John-Jan are, so to speak, two sides of the same coin for John is transgendered - Jan is his female alter-ego. Here is part of my story – but where to start?

I am what I am, Lord, and I have it on Biblical authority, that You do not make mistakes. So, here I am Lord, blessed by You, affirmed by You. But let the following tell my story. For starters..... but where to start? My story will start at the tender age of 13 and a few months, but whilst I think that the die was cast well before then, why start at 13 years and a few months? Let me cut to the chase. For a number of years I thought that I was the only person on this earth to be like I was, but fast forward to my third year at high school. In the March of that year, 1954, the popular magazine 'Picture Post' covered the story of Robert Cowell, British racing driver and WW2 fighter pilot.

The story covered the transitioning of Robert Cowell by way of gender affirming surgery to become Roberta Cowell. It was hailed as pioneering surgery and was loosely referred to as being a 'sex change'. Reading that story I can vividly remember thinking 'I wish that could be me', but whilst it showed me that I was not the only one, more importantly, in that moment it gave me a description of what I was. I continued with that 'idea' for some time as a comforting thought, before learning that other labels were current. Notably 'transvestite', how I hated, and still do, that word. The slang alternative 'Tranny' was a more comfortable term. One thing however would not change – it was my most closely guarded secret, and remained so for many years.

After that moment of enlightenment, and many 'one size fits all' - who am I? what am I? where am I? excursions into the bewildering land of gender dysphoria, I finally landed in my comfort zone – I was, like it or lump it, transgendered and there I have remained for many years. More importantly though, it was something that I just could not escape from. By the 1970's I realised that come what may my gender dysphoria was here to stay, and that begat a problem of its own.

(Living as a closet transgendered person is never easy. Secret expressions of this other identity are fraught with the risks of in-advertent discovery, and secrecy creates its own guilt! To tell or not to tell – a decision not to be taken lightly. The clock cannot be turned back and once out, the genie can never be put back into its bottle. Life has to be lived with the now public knowledge of the person you are.)

So, here I was and life was about to tighten the screws for I had grown up in a Christian home and all that I had learned could not dissuade me from the belief that because of what I did I was unacceptable to God. The 'hounds of heaven' had done a good job. I perceived the teaching of my Church as the total antithesis of how I felt and my inability to overcome my demons served only to illustrate the poverty of my faith. (Quite recently I came across a hymn by Charles Wesley in the old Methodist Hymn book. One verse caught my eye: *"At last I own it cannot be that I should fit myself for Thee.*

Here then to Thee I all resign; Thine is the work and only Thine". All along my theology had been getting it all a*** about face – pardon my lapse into the vernacular.)

Over and over again my thinking revolved around one thought only ‘can I be transgendered and still live to God’s glory’. I sought the truth, not favours. By now words written by John Bell were running through my mind. *‘Will you love the ‘you’ you hide if I but call your name?’* (StF 673, v4). By the grace of God I was about to learn that the answer to both was yes. It was not to be an Emmaus road experience, but by way of an illustration in the sermon of a visiting local preacher.

For some time I’d been waging war with my own private ‘hounds from hell’, acceptance now a given that I was transgendered and that my cross-dressing was the expression of my other gender identity. At long last I had established a base line concerning ‘the both of me’, I was what I was - change was not going to happen. Remaining unanswered was the question ‘Could I cross the bounds of gender and still live to God’s glory?’ Looking back to that Sunday morning it was as though God tapped me on the shoulder and whispered ‘Listen up, there’s something I want you to hear’.

Three things are all that I can remember about that Sunday morning’s service: it was an LPMA (Local Preachers Mutual Aid) Sunday, the preacher was an out-of-Circuit Local Preacher and, more importantly, a true story that he used by way of illustration. The story concerned a young woman, let’s call her ‘Claire’. Claire was a very keen and competent horse rider. She was also very active in her local Church serving in the Sunday School and in other Church roles.

One day whilst out riding her horse the unthinkable happened – Claire was thrown and taken to hospital, alive, but with severe injuries that had left her paralyzed from the neck down. The local preacher who was relating the story told how, some days later, he went to visit her in hospital. He admitted that he went to see Claire in some trepidation, not knowing what he could say to her or how she might respond. They talked for a while during which time Claire, reflecting on her injuries, made a remarkable statement of her personal faith that made a deep and lasting impression upon her visitor. ‘Rather than not being able to serve God because of what I (now) am’, she said, ‘because of what I (now) am, I can serve Him in a unique way’.

Through those words I realized that God had spoken to me too. They answered my question - could I cross the bounds of gender and still live to God’s glory? Because of what I was I could serve God in a unique way. Some time later I wrote this prayer, one of many that I have penned charting my journey as one of God’s transgendered children:

“It’s strange, Lord, but I never thought that I should finish up being thankful for what I am. I am thankful Lord, because I realize that rather than not being able to serve You because of what I am, because of what I am, I can serve You in a unique way!”

Somehow, and not as a result of any action on my part, that prayer has found its way onto the Internet. Somehow it has been able to reach a (potentially) far greater readership than I could ever have imagined as I left Church that Sunday morning.

In the context of my prayer, Claire's words carry an underlying message of God's love for each of us whether we be LGBTQI+, or whatever. God looks beyond the flawed image that we see of ourselves. God sees our potential and the unique way in which we can be of service. 'Accept yourself exactly as I have made you and then let Me use you in a unique way'.

BECAUSE of what ***I am*** Lord, ***I can*** serve You in a unique way! That's the message for you as it was for me - that in our own way we are all unique and each of us can serve God in our own unique way!



05
Transpeople have by the circumstances of our lives been forced to become specialists in the connections between gender, sexuality, spirituality and justice, and many congregations are in desperate need of our assistance in making those connections.

06
Because we embody the “forgotten middle – ground” or “ambiguity”, transpeople can help to heal religious addictions to certainty – addictions that are threatening the survival of our planet.

Fabulous group of Sibyls meeting at St Anne's:



Reasons Why I Believe the Lord Made Me Trans

God made me trans from my mother's womb (Matthew 19:12). He dreamed this life for me and gave me my name, Victoria, long before I was born. And for much of my life, I have prayed to Him to explain why.

First bitterly, for many years. On those years I understood my condition as a condemnation, as a punishment, as a penance, as something to try to resist, but without any solution, since it was my very nature, how He had created me, the name He had given to me. And I was really playing at being Jonah, running from the destiny and the life God had dreamed for me. Because I was afraid, because I wanted a normal and peaceful life like everyone else's, because I didn't understand anything or how all the things I felt in my head and in my heart could become reality, all those things God had placed there for me.

Because even though I didn't understand it yet, the truth is that I had been wonderfully created, just like everyone else. Because even though fear prevented me from seeing it, the truth is that the path the Lord had set before me, though full of difficulties, was also brimming with solutions. It wasn't a closed or impossible path, as it seemed to me, but one filled with beautiful, seemingly impossible realities. And that's why, among other things, I know it's from God, because it's such a difficult path, so seemingly impossible, that only with His help is it possible to complete it. Without Him, nothing would have been ever possible.

Everything changed the day I, completely desperate, prayed to Him, begging for an answer. That day I asked Him for a sign, and He, in His infinite love, gave it to me. At

that time, I was very far from the Lord; I was upset and angry with Him; deep down, I rejected Him because I didn't want the life He had dreamed for me. And yet, in His infinite grace, He gave me the sign I had asked for, the sign that gave me life, the sign He had dreamed for me before I was even born. I opened the Bible at random. A whole Bible, not just the New Testament. It could have been opened anywhere. Normally, it would have opened to a paragraph completely unrelated to my question. And yet, it opened to the parable of the talents. And everything changed that day. Because I understood that all my suffering up to that point stemmed from trying to bury the talent God had given me. That being transgender wasn't a curse, nor a punishment, but a talent, and that if God had given it to me, it was because He wanted me to put it into practice, not bury it. Because burying the talent God has given you, putting it in a closet and leaving it locked away, is how tears and gnashing of teeth come about. Because that is the true sin, where we reject ourselves, our own nature. We reject God and the life He dreamed for us, and ultimately we reject others, living a double life and hiding who we truly are from them.

But I've spoken about all of this before, many times. It's never wrong to repeat it, because there will always be someone reading it for the first time and someone who needs to be reminded of it in their own life. Because if God gave me that sign, it wasn't just for me, but for everyone. And that's why I will repeat it as many times as necessary. Because it was Good News for me, and I hope it will be for all of you. And going back to the initial question, even though I already had part of the answer, I kept asking the Lord why this path. Why not an easier one, why such a demanding talent? And over the years, little by little, I think I've found the answer, and the truth is, I couldn't be more grateful to the Lord for it all. Because without a doubt, this was the path I needed, this is the path that was meant for me, and this is undoubtedly the path He dreamed for me. And I'm sharing these reasons with you, hoping some of them will resonate with you and bring you light, as they have for me.

The main reason I believe the Lord made me trans was to heal my pride and arrogance, because if I weren't trans, I'm sure I'd think I knew everything and I will be perfect, like so many other people do. To make me sensitive to the problems of minorities and the marginalized, so I couldn't look the other way as if it didn't concern me. So that, with His help, I could work with and support other LGBTQ+ people who are suffering as I did, reaching them in a way that a cisgender heterosexual person can't, because there are things that only we can understand and help each other with. Also, to help those who judge and persecute us, by loving our enemies and making them try to understand that not loving our neighbor, not loving God's creation, and killing another person, even in thought, word, or omission, are sins far more serious than anything they try to accuse us of. Because we are all sinners, me first. And if I weren't trans, even more so. Because nothing is more dangerous than an easy path, without difficulties. The Lord said it was very difficult for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and I understand it better every day. Because being rich makes it easy for pride and arrogance to creep in, because without difficulties it's easy to think you've achieved everything on your own. Very easy to look the other way when faced with the problems of people who aren't like you. And that's why what I initially saw as a curse, a condemnation, and then as a talent, I see more and more each day as a true blessing. Blessed for weeping, for thirsting for justice, for being poor in spirit, for being insulted, persecuted, and having all kinds of evil said against us. Because it's not easy being trans, but if pride, vanity, and arrogance are

my greatest sins even with all that, I don't want to think what they would be like if my path were smoother and without difficulties.

For these reasons, I believe God made me trans, and for all of them, I am very grateful that He made me the way I am. Because it is not an easy path, it is full of problems and difficulties, but He is always by my side, helping me. Because it is the path He dreamed for me, full of blessings, to help me tame this sinful soul. And because it also helps me understand better those who judge and persecute us, since the easy path can be the most dangerous. May these words bring light to all who read them. I pray for that.

Victoria Rodriguez

I'm sure, like me, you're still reeling from the EHRC's Guidance

"Harsh" is a massive understatement of how they have interpreted the Supreme Court's judgement. The impacts on all our lives may well be extensive. For a while.

And unnecessarily so. As the previous legislation already allowed for our exclusion in the most sensitive areas like Women's Refuges and Rape Crisis Centres and other places where it was deemed necessary.

But before you fly the white flag, consider this.

We are experiencing our Dunkirk moment. That's all. Our war has not been lost.

Battered and bruised, the fight goes on.

The battleships that the Labour Government could have sent to our aid were nowhere to be seen. And things look like they'll remain that way.

But we all know what a large flotilla of small boats can achieve.

And we have plenty of those on our side.

Consider the recent polling on the use by trans women of the Hampsted bathing ponds. Massively in our favour.

Or the fallout from the WI's decision to ban trans women. Emphatically in our favour.

Take a look at the Not In Our Name petition launched by the Good Law Project. Signed by over 108,000 "cis" women.

Or the 167 MP's (at the time of writing) who signed Early Day Motion 250 which called for the EHRC guidance to be thrown out.

We are not alone. So many in OUR country are appalled by what is happening.

Take heart. Nothing is over yet. Not by a long chalk.

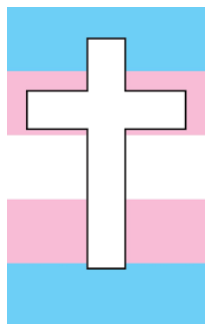
I know I'm sounding like a Poundshop Vera Lynn.

But you wouldn't like it if I sang. There's enough suffering already.

Kate Bishop



Trans Faith



Statement from the bishops of Wales on the EHRC Code:

<https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/news-and-events/statement-of-the-bench-of-bishops-of-the-church-in-wales-on-the-publication-of-the-ehrc-draft-code-of-practice/>

The publication of the EHRC's Draft Code of Practice has caused fresh pain and anxiety to many trans people. We want to respond clearly.

A year ago, following the Supreme Court's ruling, we said that every human being is a precious child of God, deserving of dignity and respect. We say so again today - without qualification.

The Code tells organisations what the law permits. It does not tell us who we are as the Body of Christ. We are not called to the legal minimum of hospitality. We are called to the radical welcome of the one who sought out the excluded and the overlooked. The Church in Wales will not use equality law exemptions to exclude trans people from our worship, our sacraments, our pastoral care, or our common life.

We ask all our churches to be places of genuine sanctuary for trans people and their families, especially now. And we call on public bodies to pursue a way forward that upholds the dignity of all, rather than treating the protection of some rights as justification for eroding others.

To trans people in Wales, in our congregations and who serve God faithfully in the Church: you are known. You are loved. You are welcome here, as you are, always.

The Bench of Bishops of the Church in Wales

The Most Reverend. Cherry Vann, Bishop of Monmouth, Archbishop of Wales

The Right Reverend. Gregory Cameron, Bishop of St Asaph;

The Right Reverend. John Lomas, Bishop of Swansea and Brecon;

The Right Reverend. Mary Stallard, Bishop of Llandaff;

The Right Reverend. Dorrien Davies, Bishop of St Davids;

We affirm that every trans person is a precious child of God, and a beloved part of the life of this Church.

Posted 16 July

Trans Life and the Catholic Church today:

<https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/trans-life-and-the-catholic-church-today-9780567706942/>

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2026/09/04/a-chance-encounter-is-the-seed-of-a-catholic-nuns-transgender-ministry/>

“ I hope for the day when transgender persons will no longer need an organization like ours because they are fully accepted by their families and society. Most transgender persons do not want charity. They want love. They want their parents to accept them, their siblings to stand beside them, and society to treat them with dignity. Until that day comes, we will continue to be with them.”

Trans Law and Politics



TransLucent brings legal challenge against EHRC Code:

<https://translucent.org.uk/translucent-challenges-the-ehrcs-code-of-practice/z-ppuncaJw>

GIRES responds to the Code:

<https://www.gires.org.uk/ehrc-code-of-practice-resources-and-guidance/>

ECHR rejects appeal by trans man (Freddie McConnell?) to be named child's father on birth certificate:

<https://todaysfamilylawyer.co.uk/echr-rejects-appeal-by-trans-man-to-be-named-as-childs-father-rather-than-mother/>

EHRC Code comes into effect:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9983lv4dlno>

Feminist Gender Equality Network on the EHRC Code:

<https://feministgenderequality.network/ehrc-code-of-practice-key-legal-questions-and-issues/>

1. Has the Government assessed whether the EHRC Code is compatible with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights?
2. How does the Government intend to avoid placing trans people in the “intermediate zone” criticised by the European Court of Human Rights in Goodwin?
3. What evidence demonstrates that existing Equality Act provisions were insufficient to manage single-sex services?
4. How will access to toilets and other essential services be guaranteed in practice?
5. How should tribunals interpret and apply Section 7 of the Equality Act following the Supreme Court judgment?
6. Has the Government assessed the impact of the Code on trans people’s dignity, privacy and ability to participate in public life?
7. What guidance will be provided to employers, schools, healthcare providers and service providers?

Lib Dems pass motion rejecting EHRC Code:

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2026/sep/21/lib-dems-reject-ruling-transgender-people-brighton-conference>

Trans Health



Netherlands review finds strong evidence for benefits of gender-affirming health care for young trans people:

<https://www.helenwebberley.com/news/netherlands-review-trans-youth-care>

Puberty blocker trial for “gender questioning” (sic) children cleared to go ahead after legal challenge fails:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0jl4np49w1o>

A trans woman talks about her experience with prostate cancer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F61vbl8v4wo>

Welsh gender service pauses referrals for surgery (apparently there are “too many”):
<https://www.thepinknews.com/2026/08/31/nhs-wales-trans-gender-affirming-surgeries-paused/>

Dr Helen Webberley debates with Kelly-Jay Keen-Minshull – trigger warning: some of Kelly-Jay’s stuff is stomach-turning:
<https://www.helenwebberley.com/real-lives/debating-trans-existence-helen-triggernometry>

Trans Life



Being trans in the 1970s: Carol Steel tells her story:
<https://www.facebook.com/reel/10155301109340659>

New Ways Ministry blog on trans women and girls in sports following US supreme court ruling:
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2026/07/03/human-dignity-trans-people-and-the-supreme-courts-sports-ruling/>

“Transgender people also do not arrive at the decision to affirm their gender casually. For generations, many of us have grown up feeling profoundly isolated, struggling to understand ourselves in communities where no one shared our experience. Transition often comes only after years of reflection, self-examination, and significant personal risk. Choosing authenticity can mean losing family support, housing, employment, or physical safety. Yet despite those costs, study after study has found that [gender-affirming care improves mental health](#) and quality of life for those who need it.”

Do take part in the Trans Actual Survey:

[RESPOND TO THE TRANS LIVES SURVEY TODAY](#)

Mermaids' explainer about statutory guidance on trans children in schools:

<https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/blog/>

“While we hope that this explainer makes it as easy as possible for trans children and young people and their parents, carers and teachers to advocate for inclusion in their schools and colleges, we are fully aware and concerned that this guidance sets out damaging limitations that will make school life even more difficult for trans children and young people. This may result in increased absenteeism, in turn leading to poorer outcomes for these children.

It is important to remember that the guidance does not remove schools and colleges' duties to listen to students, provide pastoral support, consider equality impacts, safeguard, and prevent bullying.

It is vital that schools and colleges do not overlook the needs of trans children and young people in every aspect of school life, if they are to uphold their Public Sector Equality Duty. They are required by law, the guidance explains, to “have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.”

Sibyl (and legend) Jenny-Anne Bishop OBE talks about the trans community house in Rhyl she runs with her partner Elen:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6NhoQuus9A>

Trans World



Trans Europe: TGEU survey of in EU:

https://tgeu.org/files/uploads/2026/07/Trans-Experiences-in-Europe_FRA-EU-LGBTIQ-III-2023-report_2025_FINAL.pdf

US Trans Republicans:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2026/07/13/uncloseted-media-trans-conservatives-maga/>

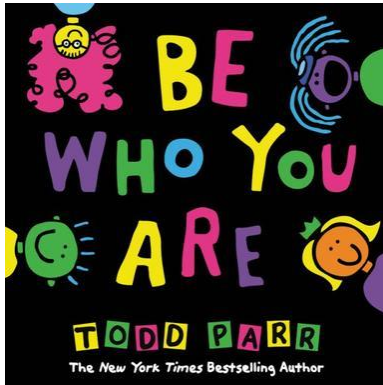
Trans bathroom bans in US:

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2026/08/04/how-should-catholics-respond-to-trans-bathroom-ban-laws/>

Cercle Hermaphrodites: trans group in 1890s Manhattan:

<https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2026/07/a-secret-trans-support-group-met-above-a-in-1890s-manhattan-it-may-have-changed-the-world/>

Trans Books and Media



Review of “Transcendent” by Laverne Cox:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2026/jul/10/transcendent-by-laverne-cox-review-success-against-the-odds>

“Most striking of all is Cox’s sharp detailing of the loneliness and loss of freedom and trust that comes with being ostracised, mocked and physically attacked for being different. She describes the exhausting burden of being out and about as a gender non-conforming person, her senses permanently on high alert, scoping out strangers for signs of hostility. “If something felt weird,” she recalls, “I’d just start running. I didn’t need to find out what was up. I knew that my life was in danger.” Back in the safety of her apartment, that tension would quickly turn into despair.”